POWER2YOUTH

A Comprehensive Approach to the Understanding of the Dynamics of Youth Exclusion/ Inclusion and the Prospects for Youth-Led Change in the South and East Mediterranean

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Abstract

Power2Youth aims at offering a critical understanding of youth in the South East Mediterranean (SEM) region through a comprehensive interdisciplinary and multi-level approach. By combining the economic, political and socio-cultural spheres and a macro (policy/institutional), meso (organizational) and micro (individual) level analysis, Power2Youth will explore the root causes and complex dynamics of the processes of youth exclusion and inclusion in the labour market and civic/political life, while investigating the potentially transformative effect of youth agency. The project has a cross-national comparative design with the case studies of Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Occupied Palestinian Territories and Turkey.

Keywords: Youth | South Mediterranean | East Mediterranean

INTRODUCTION

The exceptional wave of anti-authoritarian protests in 2010-2013 in several countries of the South and East Mediterranean (SEM), which was largely represented as a youth-led revolt, renewed the world's attention towards the conditions of youth in the region. In fact, most analyses of the uprisings identify the region's exceptionally high rates of youth unemployment, and in general the unsustainable economic, political and social exclusion of youth (exacerbated by a dramatic demographic bulge) as the main causes of diffuse discontent and anger. At the same time, young people have been identified as a potential engine for long-needed change in the region. The rapid and unexpected mass mobilizations of the last two years, anticipated by the development over the last decade of youth-based activist groups and by the spread of new communication technologies favoured by youth, has been described as the coming on the scene of a new generation united by the shared experience of the economic, political and social failures of post-independence regimes and by new ways to protest and act.

Important as this composite phenomenon could be for the future of the SEM, it still escapes the main frames of analysis utilized by academic research. Youth studies in the SEM, while producing important findings and insights, have failed so far to give a multi-dimensional and comprehensive understanding of the economic, political and social disadvantages faced by youth in the region and of the possible evolution of young people's role in national or regional developments.

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Power2Youth aims at filling this important gap by offering a critical understanding of youth in the SEM region through a comprehensive interdisciplinary and multi-level approach. By combining the economic, political and socio-cultural spheres and a macro (policy/institutional), meso (organizational) and micro (individual) level analysis, Power2Youth will explore the root causes and complex dynamics of the processes of youth exclusion and inclusion from the labour market and civic/political life, while investigating the potentially transformative effect of youth agency. The project has a cross-national comparative design with the case studies of Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Occupied Palestinian Territories and Turkey.

Drawing on multiple fields of literature, the first part of this conceptual paper will provide a critical analysis of a number of concepts relevant to this research such as youth, youth exclusion and inclusion, youth agency and youth empowerment. The second part will describe the comprehensive analytical framework of the project, whereas the third and final part is dedicated to the overall methodology.

1. UNDERSTANDING RELEVANT CONCEPTS

Conceptualizing Youth

Although there is no internationally agreed definition of youth, its conceptualization has been based primarily on age groupings (normally defined as the 15-29 year old group).[2] An age-based definition is commonly used for statistical and instrumental purposes as it makes it possible to group young people together for comparison temporally and geographically. Alternatively, youth has been defined as the "period of transition into adulthood", emphasizing adulthood as the final destination on this path (Dhillon et al. 2009, Dhillon and Yousef 2009).[3] However, defining youth solely in terms of age or as the period of transition into adulthood provides an exceedingly narrow and insufficient conceptualization for understanding a complex phenomenon. The status of being young requires a broader conceptualization that simultaneously incorporates different approaches and definitions.

Although youth is in part an age category and thus bears an essential biological attribute, the meaning and experience of being young is subject to social and historical processes (Mitterauer 1993, Galland 2009, Wyn and White 1997). Individual or group experiences of what it means to be young are influenced by social constructions that are time and space specific (Herrera and Bayat 2010:6, Yentürk et al. 2008). That is why any project on youth today should start from acknowledging and critically analysing the growing importance of youth to contemporary global political discourse.[4] However, as some critical observers of the field of

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[2] Age-based definitions of youth vary between countries and organizations. Many international organizations which used to define youth as persons aged 15-25, now define youth as persons aged 15-29 due to the prolongation of schooling (United Nations 1993, United Nations 2005, Council of Europe 2003, World Bank 2008).

[3] See also UNESCO's definition: "Youth is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence and awareness of our interdependence as members of a community" http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/youth/youth-definition.

[4] It suffices to mention how in recent years youth has become a key development priority for organizations such as the World Bank, the United Nations and the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The global political discourse is increasingly filled with references and/or concerns about "youth extremism", "youth unemployment", "youth bulge", but also with empathy towards "youth dynamism" or calling for "youth empowerment". Parallel to

youth studies have noted, there has been a striking lack of reflexivity in asking exactly why there has been this dramatic increase in political interest in youth during the contemporary period, how youth are defined or perceived as a result of it, and what the consequences are for the youth themselves (Sukarieh and Tannock 2015).

The approach that conceptualizes youth as the period of transition to adulthood is also problematic because it is mainly focused on what youth may "become" rather than on what it may currently "be". A young person is seen as "a future adult" rather than as a "young human being" in his or her own right, thus neglecting or dismissing the present everyday realities of being young (Uprichard 2008). This approach also presumes that young people have to wait till they become adults in order to begin to participate fully in social life and obtain equal rights (McGrath 2002). Therefore, youth is defined as a not-yet adult in need of guidance and expertise from adults (Yentürk et al. 2008). A more valid analytical approach proposed by the "new social studies of childhood" emphasizes that children and youth should be understood simultaneously as "human beings" and "future adults", that is as "beings and becomings" (Uprichard 2008). The young should not be seen merely as "adults in the making", but as social actors in their own right, constructing their everyday life and exerting their youthfulness in the present.

It is furthermore critical to recognize that youth is a diversified category. The expressions, ideas and experiences of being young tend to vary across cultural, class, gender, ethnicity and other divides (Herrera and Bayat 2010:7). Young people from different social strata experience important social changes in different ways, and have different needs and demands (Yentürk et al. 2008:10). Moreover, while youth is implicitly used as shorthand for young men, the experience of being young is profoundly gender differentiated.

Understanding youth also requires taking into account their relationality to different forms of power, and particularly to adulthood (Yentürk et al. 2008:12). Youth is a relational concept and as such it exists and has meaning largely in relation to adults (Wyn and White 1997:11). The opportunities young people will have, the rights they will win and the autonomies they will experience are all determined through power struggles between adults and young people (Yentürk et al. 2008:9).

Most frameworks of analysis have constructed youth as a "problem" and a "threat" to national and regional political stability, emphasizing the daunting consequences of a youth bulge and high youth unemployment in SEM countries. For example, in most economic studies, Arab youth is commonly referred to as a demographic bulge, with Arab countries standing out with one of the youngest age profiles in the world. In this approach, youth is seen as bringing with it specific political and economic challenges for regimes in terms of job creation and social service supply (World Bank 2004, 2008). Similarly, excluded from formal political and economic participation, Arab youth has commonly been characterized as apathetic and disengaged from politics or as turning to radical Islam (Assaad and Roudi-Fahimi 2009).

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the rising political interest in youth, academic youth studies have witnessed a surge evidenced by mushrooming dedicated research projects, research centres, publications, conferences and teaching centres (Sukarieh and Tannock 2015).

Another way the youth question has been approached in the literature on the SEM countries is to describe young people as a "generation in waiting" to become full adults, struggling with securing jobs, getting married and starting families (Dhillon and Yousef 2009). Although these studies rightly acknowledge the key role played by existing institutions in generating the failed transitions of young people, young people are implicitly assumed to be waiting for resources and opportunities to be handed to them by SEM governments. Even where the youth bulge is seen as a potential opportunity, a "demographic dividend" or "demographic gift",[5] the main assumption is that young people can become a real opportunity for a country's development only if their education and skills are enhanced through adequate human capital policies. While education is undeniably an important and key asset for both young people and their countries, this approach emphasizes the contribution of young people solely as productive forces and in terms of their contribution to economic growth, thus neglecting that youth embody a force for change in a much broader sense, for both themselves and the society at large, and in both the future and the present.

While all these paradigms, with their differences, provide some useful insights for studying youth in the SEM region, they tend to treat youth "more as objects than agents of social and political reform" (Herrera 2009:369). As some studies have recently highlighted, young people in the SEM region do not constitute a passive group waiting for resources and opportunities. While it is true that young people may reproduce or even reinforce power relations and prevailing social norms, they also tend to forge new ways of thinking about what it means to be adult, often questioning the values and beliefs of the older generation (Bayat 2010a, Desrues 2012, Harb and Deeb 2007, Swedenburg 2007, Theodoropoulou 2012).

Youth Exclusion and Inclusion

When analysing the problems faced by youth in contemporary societies, the literature commonly refers to youth exclusion, a complex and multi-faced concept.

The concept of social exclusion originated in industrialized countries (notably France in the 1970s) to describe processes of marginalization and deprivation derived from the restructuring of the welfare and social protection systems (Silver and Miller 2006). More recently, however, it has been applied within development studies to allow a broader view of deprivation and poverty than is allowed by a consideration of "poverty" narrowly conceived.

Social exclusion is normally defined as a process in which individuals or groups of individuals are progressively and systematically blocked from rights, opportunities and resources (e.g., education, housing, employment, health care, civic engagement, democratic participation) preventing them from full participation in the society in which they live, thus implying a break in the social bonds that tie the excluded individual or group to the larger society.[6] Applied to youth, exclusion describes a process by which young people are deprived of opportunities for obtaining education, acquiring skills and participating fully in all aspects of society (United Nations 2007).

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[5] Examples are many, see for instance: Assaad and Roudi-Fahimi (2009), Brookings Institution (2008).
[6] Definition adapted from Silver (2007).

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Social exclusion as a concept has a number of advantages. First of all, it allows us to contextualize the study of deprivation and disadvantage in social systems and structures. It contains an important focus on causality and it involves a clear awareness on the multi-dimensionality of social disadvantage. Moreover, it is a relational concept in that it is the product of social interactions which are characterized by unequal power relations (Hickey and du Toit 2007). Authors such as Kabeer (2000) and Silver (1994) rightly emphasize that "social exclusion" should be interpreted as explicitly embracing the relational approach. So for instance, Silver (1994:543) argued that "exclusion arises from the interplay of class, status and political power". However, one major problem with the concept of "social exclusion" is that the residual rather than the relational approach has commonly prevailed. For instance, in much of social exclusion research, poverty analysis is detached from an understanding of how power relations in society underpin poverty thus emphasizing its accidental vs. systemic nature. In this sense, the concept of "social exclusion" might dangerously replace exploitation in explanations on how people are impoverished (Byrne 1999:44-59).

Another major problem derives from the fact that much of the social exclusion research tends to assume the goodness of inclusion and to proceed in terms of implicit normative assumption about how social life should be organized. This often ignores the ways in which inclusion could be disempowering or problematic. For example, inclusion of women in the labour market can be inequitable if it is not accompanied by a redistribution of women's burden work within households. This also points to a related issue, namely that the notion of exclusion is generally conceived as pertaining to the public sphere only, while completely ignoring the interrelation between public/private sphere. This is exacerbated by the fact that in reality processes of social exclusion simultaneously incorporate situations of "unequal" inclusion and exclusion. For example, (young) women might be "excluded" from the labour market in many ways, but also "included" in the household in conditions of exploitation. Or job creation programmes for youth that do not tackle structural market inequality might actually "include" certain categories of youth in a subaltern position. This is what authors Hickey and du Toit (2007) call differential or adverse incorporation into the state, market or civil society.

Due to the different understandings of the concept of "social exclusion", it is useful here to specify the main characteristics of the term "youth exclusion" as applied to our research purposes. First of all, we start from the assumption that, as a process, exclusion is the product of exclusionary power relationships. Exclusion by definition implies excluders and exclusionary institutions and policies. Powerful groups in society deliberately restrict access to resources and opportunities to enter their circle. Laws, policies or programmes as well as a predominant set of values, beliefs and institutions may operate systematically to the benefit of certain powerful groups at the expense of others (Kabeer 2000). As far as youth exclusion is concerned, the excluders are often considered to be the older generations.[7] Legal frameworks, policies, rigidly conservative power structures, patronage networks and intergenerational hierarchies are said to be neglecting young people's needs and excluding them from decision-making (McLean Hilker and Fraser 2009), whereby moral and political authorities deny young people's claims, imposing strict social and political control on young

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[7] This is not to say that adults could not be "socially excluded". However, the young are commonly perceived to be disproportionately disadvantaged (Herrera and Bayat 2010:12).

people's behaviour (Herrera and Bayat 2010:18).

However, beyond generational dynamics, the processes of exclusion/inclusion are produced at the intersection of different axes of power stemming from privileges and disadvantages, structured not only on generation, but also on gender, class, ethnicity and other social divides that act to create differences and inequalities among youth themselves. Apart from sparse evidence, however, specific studies are still lacking on how factors and dynamics of youth exclusion in the SEM region operate in marginalized/peripheral areas, in ethnic/confessional communities, across social classes and so on. Young women are more likely than young men to face exclusion. In the SEM region, young women are among the most disadvantaged groups, particularly with respect to employment (United Nations 2007, ILO 2008, Martin and Bardak 2011). The public sphere of social and political activism remains heavily male dominated, and women are either absent in traditional organizations (Khouri and Shehata 2011a) or are included in auxiliary positions with no decision-making power. Girls and young women are sometimes allowed less time for leisure activities, compared to their male counterparts (Barsoum 2010:41). They are more likely than young men to be excluded from decision-making about issues that affect their personal lives (Khouri and Shehata 2011b). Exclusion from the labour market has also gender-differentiated implications. In the case of young women, for example, postponing marriage in the absence of economic independence means that they remain under the authority of their father or legal guardian (Fargues 2005). At the same time, unmarried women are more likely than unmarried men to accept low paid, informal jobs thus contributing to the family earnings while waiting for their wedding. Unmarried men are socially expected to form and maintain their own family and are therefore more "excluded" than women from the growing informal job market in many SEM countries. The unequal gender division of household roles as well as other factors such as prevailing gender norms on women's mobility and gender stereotypes on school-to-work transition also have implications for women's work opportunities and participation in political/civic life.

Beyond and sometimes reinforcing gender inequalities, youth exclusion/inclusion depends also on different social backgrounds (e.g., urban/rural, social class, ethnic/confessional communities). In many SEM countries, for example, young upper-class urban women tend to be more "included" in civic and political life, while poor women in urban and rural areas are "excluded" although the degree or the dynamics of exclusion might for instance change depending also on their being married or unmarried. Youth unemployment tends to be much higher in poor marginalized areas where job availability is limited or informal/illegal owing to lack of infrastructure, and some young job seekers may be unable to afford the cost of daily transportation from their home to the places where jobs are available (Rosso et al. 2012, Martin 2010). Transportation problems in poor, marginalized areas are further exacerbated by gender divides. Because public transportation drivers are males, particularly in rural areas it might be unacceptable and unsafe for a young unmarried woman to take a service alone with the risk of being exposed to sexual harassment. Youth exclusion also varies according to citizenship status (migrants/refugees). For example, a young male citizen is more likely to be included in the labour market or in civic/political life than a young male refugee.

The different forms of exclusion interrelate and reinforce each other and operate at different levels from the state and society to the family (macro, meso, micro), although the exact relationship or causal sequences among the multiple dimensions and levels are often difficult

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to grasp. More so because mainstream research on youth exclusion has largely utilized uni-dimensional and uni-level analytical approaches. Much of the research has focused on the economic dimension of exclusion (particularly unemployment), while a limited number of studies have highlighted how exclusion from the labour market leads to or is influenced by other forms of exclusion (Singerman 2007, Dhillon and Yousef 2009, Dhillon et al. 2009, Boudarbat and Ajbilou 2007).

Furthermore, inasmuch as youth is a socially constructed category, the dimensions and processes of youth exclusion also vary across countries and within countries (regions, rural/urban), reflecting their specific histories, demography, institutional assets, social structures, policies, cultural and social norms, and other characteristics. Beyond common trends in the SEM region, we can expect to find important differences between countries as far as youth disadvantage is concerned, depending on productive structure, integration into the global economy, educational attainment of the youth population as well as levels of conflict and peace (see for example Dhillon and Yousef 2009). Unfortunately, broad comparative studies on youth exclusion for the SEM region are almost absent, given the paucity of comparable data and the heterogeneity of analytical and methodological approaches.

Besides being context-specific, exclusion is also experienced and constructed subjectively by young people themselves according to their place in society (gender, class, citizenship status, etc.). On the one hand, young people tend to elaborate their experience of exclusion on the basis of socially ascribed normative roles and expectations, thus accepting dominant power structures. As far as we know from available surveys, youth perspectives in the SEM region reflect these assumptions, as the major preoccupations of young people are to find a job, marry and live at a decent level (Herrera and Bayat 2010:11). On the other hand, young people themselves participate in constructing their own perceptions about opportunities and exclusion, sometimes subverting and/or re-interpreting dominant norms, roles and expectations. In the transitional phase from childhood to adulthood, young people establish their own identities, both adopting the cultural norms and values of their parents, negotiating them and/or re-adapting them to their own social and cultural environments. Moreover, as socially ascribed roles and norms vary according to gender, young women and men will have different perceptions of exclusion (Serajuddin and Verme 2012).

Youth and Social Change

Young people are not only the victims of exclusion or the object of change (target of policies, object of study, etc.), but also agents of change. Structure and agency are complementary and dynamic forces: while consolidated unequal social systems constrain or determine the action of individuals, humans collectively shape and change the social structures they inhabit. For the purpose of our research, agency is generally defined as the ability to act according to one's own desired goals. In this sense, agency is more than pure observable action as it also implies the meaning, motivation and purpose that people bring to their activities. However, taking distance from the neo-liberal view that actions by individuals are taken for the greatest individual benefit by free and autonomous actors, we conceive agency as embedded within society, meaning that young women and men do not make their choices "freely". Not only the ability to make choices, but also the choices they make are influenced by the culture, society, politics and economy of the day or, in other words, by the surrounding power structure.

Youth agency could take various forms. Young people may challenge/react/adapt to their perceived status of exclusion in a number of ways, from individual strategies to organized collective action: "they may engage in radical politics, withdraw from public life or pursue a minimal life" (Herrera and Bayat 2010:15). Young people may express their frustration and rejection of prevailing political systems by joining political movements. Being part of these movements can lead to re-configuring existing power relations vis-à-vis the older generation. For example, in post-Ben Ali Tunisia, many young Salafis have replaced old, regime-appointed imams in many mosques, thus gaining access to power and authority (Marks 2013). At the same time, those same movements can have a reinforcing effect of unequal power relations between young women and men.

However, adherence to political Islam or political activism in general is only one avenue that can be pursued (Herrera and Bayat 2010). Some youth utilize transformative "accommodating strategies", often questioning the values and beliefs of the older generation (Bayat 2010b, Desrues 2012, Harb and Deeb 2007, Swedenburg 2007, Theodoropoulou 2012). One such strategy is what Bayat (2010b) calls "subversive accommodation", by which youth operate within and thus use the dominant (constraining) norms and institutions, for instance religious rituals, to accommodate their youthful claims, but in so doing creatively redefine and subvert the constraints of those codes and norms.

Young people may also act to reinforce existing exclusionary power relations by, for instance, accepting being adversely included in the system through having internalized social hierarchies, by politically supporting a powerful political patron or by embracing socially and/or politically conservative movements. Young women, for example, may act in ways that reinforce existing inequalities of power because they have so much internalized certain aspects of traditions and norms that they take them for granted and deny that such inequalities exist. Young women may also intentionally decide not to resist the structure of male domination because their attempts to question the status quo could either carry heavy personal and social costs or not appear possible (Kabeer 1999).

Furthermore, young men and women can opt-out or voluntary exclude themselves from normatively prescribed activities and roles or from the dominant political and economic system. In other words, youth agency is not only limited to a struggle for change or for inclusion. Youth can opt-out of society and lead a "minimal life", for instance quitting education or job-searching activities, sitting in cafés dreaming about migration to a better place. Some youth, especially from the upper middle class, can decide to insulate themselves from the rest of society and from the country's difficulties, living in rich isolated suburbs and spending their leisure time on the Internet or in private clubs. In the SEM region, a very low number of eligible young people vote in national and local elections, although there are differences among countries, such as in the case of Turkey where the rate of youth electoral turnout has traditionally been high. Recent surveys point to the fact that young people in the SEM region identify less and less with formal political and social institutions, do not feel politically represented and are increasingly disenchanted with the state's capacity to provide for their well-being, especially if compared with the older generation which experienced the early benefits of welfarism (Khouri and Shehata 2011a, Murphy 2012).

All these and other forms of individual and collective youth agency may or may not lead to social change or to changing systemic inequalities and existing power relations. In other words they may or may not lead to processes of empowerment that should imply an expansion of the ability to make strategic life choices in a situation in which that ability was previously denied as much as it should imply a challenge and a destabilisation of social inequalities through a transformative process (Kabeer 1999). There is a large debate on the concept and operation of power that has resulted in a variety of interpretations of empowerment, complicated by the fact that this latter concept has been enthusiastically embraced by international development agencies promoting the neo-liberal agenda. As often used by international agencies, the idea of empowerment has been deprived of its relational and transformative connotation, thus ignoring the underlying causes of disadvantage and obscuring power inequalities.

First of all, the processes through which young men and women challenge and subvert power relations cannot be reduced to the ability to exert power over people and resources, meaning that the only way to gain power is to take it from the more powerful and to accept existing political and economic structures. So for instance, a well-being achievement for a youth, such as finding a job, could be individually inclusive, but should not be considered as empowering as it does not have a transformative effect on the dominant system of values and norms and on the inequalities it produces and as such it does not lead to social change (Kabeer 1999, Rowlands 1997).

Secondly, much of the recent literature on youth agency and social change places an almost exclusive emphasis on individual agency or on "multitudes of (young) individuals moved into actions" thus ignoring "questions of ideology, social and economic structures and position, collective social organisation and strategic, planned action" (Sukarieh and Tannock 2015:111). Yet, in a context in which dominant norms and cultural values constrain the ability of young men and women (and adults) to make strategic life choices, structural inequalities cannot be addressed by individuals alone. Young individuals can and do act against dominant norms, but their impact on the general youth disadvantage is limited and they may pay a high price for their autonomy. Youth organizations and social movements thus have an important role to play in creating the conditions for social change and in reducing the costs for individual action.[8]

Moreover, the framing of recent global uprisings as being youth-led rebellions has the effect of isolating youth agency from the larger society. For instance, the emphasis on youth as "revolutionary actors" largely underestimates the central role played by adults and by adult-led organizations protesting over issues that concern not only young people but the whole of society. Youth groups and organizations are certainly pivotal in recent mobilizations (as well as in previous ones), but they are a part of a broader spectrum of organizations, such as trade unions, peasant movements, political parties, faith-based movements, etc.

Finally, the transformative impact of youth agency cannot be measured on a linear basis. What is "empowering" for some, could be "disempowering" for others. For instance, the "empowerment of women" could be perceived as "disempowering" by men as it can affect their masculinity or their role as exclusive breadwinners. Drawing on an intersectional

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[8] Adapted from Kabeer (1999:457).

framework of analysis, youth agency should be understood through multiple lenses and as both constrained and enabled by the intersection of multiple factors such as gender, class, ethnicity, religion and so on (Muhanna 2013).

Finally, agency can produce unpredictable, contradictory outcomes that cannot be easily categorized in terms of either transforming the unequal power order or reinforcing it. This means that the outcomes of agency of young women and men, both at the individual and the collective level, require to be contextualized and cannot be assumed a priori.

2. A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYTICAL APPROACH TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF YOUTH

Given the above considerations, understanding the complex status of being young in the SEM region requires a comprehensive interdisciplinary and multi-level approach that studies prevailing power relations and dynamics in a youth-sensitive perspective.

Power2Youth provides a highly integrated research design organized so as to have interdisciplinary research teams working at three different levels of analysis (macro, meso and micro) and focusing on understanding the structural factors (power structures and relationships) that are behind youth exclusion/inclusion as well as the prospects for youth led-change. Analytically, the three levels of analysis are not separate but closely interlinked, complementing and enriching our understanding of youth. For instance, the macro/institutional context impacts on youth exclusion/inclusion at both the meso and the micro level. Therefore, in order to understand the comprehensive effects of the policy/institutional context on youth exclusion/inclusion, we need to look at the meso and micro levels as well. At the same time, meso-level factors (organizational factors of youth exclusion/inclusion and youth collective agency) and micro-level factors (individual factors of youth exclusion/inclusion and youth individual agency) change and mediate the impact of policy on youth exclusion/inclusion.

Macro-level Analysis (policy/institutional factors of youth exclusion/inclusion)[9]

The macro level is the level of state policies and institutional structures (e.g., dominant social and cultural norms, constitutional legal system, etc.). It can be described as the structure or the overarching system leading to youth exclusion/inclusion.

This level of analysis investigates the concrete impact of government actions and policies on youth and it also implies an examination of the way in which "youth" and the "youth problem" are defined in public discourses and narratives. This is because youth, besides bearing an essential biological attribute, is also a social construction with its scope and meaning continually changing. For instance, youth duration in the life of individuals may be said to be shorter or longer, or its social, cultural and political salience as a stage of life and as an identity may be said to be stronger or weaker in different times and places. Moreover, the meaning and salience of youth is not just shaped by the youth themselves, but also by a whole host of other social institutions and actors.

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[9] For the macro-level research and methodology, see Destremau and Catusse (2014).

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Concerning the analysis of state policies, the first point to make is that they are never youth-neutral. In addition to policies and legislation that explicitly target youth, other policies such as conventional economic policies, welfare policies, migration or spatial planning policies may have a more indirect but still strong impact even if they appear to have very little to do with young people. For example, a study on the social impact of the global financial crisis in Morocco shows that the fiscal stimulus packages implemented by the government to cope with the negative effects of the global financial crisis were completely insensitive to the needs of youth, particularly educated ones, and women, as a large amount of public resources was devoted to infrastructure spending, and no special programme directly targeted the large number of young women affected by job losses in the textile and clothing industry (Paciello 2010).

State policies and institutional structures do not impact equally on youth coming from different social and cultural backgrounds (e.g., rural or urban youth, youth from poor and marginalized areas, ethnic or confessional minorities, young women and men, etc.), thus contributing to producing different territorial, ethnic and gender effects among youth. In Tunisia, where the level of social spending remained relatively high under Ben Ali, it was biased against the poorest regions, thus rendering socio-economic conditions for the youth living in these areas particularly unbearable (Hibou et al. 2011, Ben Romdhane 2011). Also, as highlighted by feminist economic research, cuts to social services can have indirect impacts on employment outcomes in highly gendered ways, increasing the amount of unpaid work that women perform and, therefore, reinforcing women's exclusion from the labour market (Heintz 2006).

State policies and institutions are the product not only of domestic factors, but also of powerful external actors' pressures and influences. While the research will focus on domestic policies/institutions for each country case study, the global context and specific external actors' policies and discourses will be considered inasmuch as they directly influence the formulation of national policies or the creation/shaping of national institutions. For instance, the labour market problems faced by youth in the SEM are related to the local implementation of the global economic liberalization policies pursued in the last two decades, which completely failed to create sufficient and decent employment opportunities for the growing number of young university graduates. The case of Tunisia shows how its integration into global markets, which has taken place through low-cost outsourcing, has not brought about job creation for people with university degrees and has taken place at the expense of wage levels and working conditions. Tunisia has indeed based its export-led growth on a number of low value-added activities, such as agricultural products and low-tech manufacturing (for example, clothing/textile products), which provide very low quality and low-skilled jobs for the new entries in the labour market (Paciello 2012).

State policies may also have unintended consequences on youth. While apparently hindering youth participation, certain policies do not necessarily lead to or reinforce youth exclusion. Indeed, they can even have positive (often unintentional) repercussions. As Cavatorta and Haugbølle have recently highlighted, corrupt regimes in SEM countries had the effect of alienating many working-class youth, who, however, rather than becoming fully depoliticized, "chose 'below-the-radar' social activism based around loosely structured social networks

and developed a particular dislike for state authorities" (Cavatorta and Haugbølle 2012:187). Similarly, under Ben Ali's regime, the combination of education and new technologies was seen as crucial in developing an educated workforce that would attract further investment. However, it also had the unintended consequence of creating many technologically savvy youth who would go on to use social media as a tool of political dissent and finally of political mobilisation (Cavatorta and Haugbølle 2012:186).

In order to investigate the policy/institutional factors of youth exclusion/inclusion, a number of interrelated domains of public action will be selected in the Work Package on macro-level analysis (WP2).

Two major research questions are investigated at the macro level:
1. How are "youth" and the "youth problem" represented in public discourse at the local, national and international levels?
2. How does public action both in terms of political discourse and concrete government policies influence the processes of youth exclusion/inclusion?

Meso-level Analysis (organizational factors of youth exclusion/inclusion and youth collective agency)[10]

The meso level is the level of organized groups (e.g., political parties, networks, trade unions, charities, social movements, etc.) and of their actions and interactions.

In general, youth in SEM countries have largely remained under-represented in mainstream traditional organizations (i.e., trade unions, professional associations, public institutions and entrepreneurial organizations). Moreover, because authoritarian regimes in SEM countries have exercised tight and systematic control over political life, weakening the functions of parliaments and co-opting political parties, trade unions and other organizations, youth representation in these bodies has either been ineffective or has reflected clientelistic interests. For example, the business organizations established in some SEM countries to represent the interests of young entrepreneurs, albeit more vocal than other such organizations, are formed by politically and socially well-connected young entrepreneurs (Paciello 2012). In other words, business organisations are not representative of the real needs of the majority of entrepreneurs, particularly young, small/medium-sized and micro-entrepreneurs, who have no chance of influencing the decision-making process on economic policy. Trade unions have also tended to represent only formal male workers, and often only those working in the public sector, thus largely excluding young workers and women (Martin and Bardak 2011). This has certainly had an impact on the way youth-biased state policies have been formulated and implemented and on how certain social issues related to youth have been debated (or not debated at all) in the political scene.

Nevertheless, young people have manifested their responses to exclusion and policy constraints by engaging in various kinds of non-traditional organized political and civic activities. Some young people have created new political movements, while others have joined Islamist youth groups linked to leading organizations like Hamas, Hizbullah or the

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[10] For meso-level research and methodology, see Sika and Albrecht (2015).

Muslim Brotherhood or other Islamist movements such the Salafis in Egypt or Tunisia. Others have involved themselves in volunteer work and social entrepreneurship (Khouri and Shehata 2011a). Recent protests in the SEM region have highlighted that young people are capable of new forms of effective political mobilization also sustained by new communication technologies and social media. Historically, however, not all youth movements have been progressive. Youth movements might well tend towards (or be integrated into) authoritarian and even fascist political movements.

The factors constraining or facilitating youth participation in organizations as well as the forms of youth organized collective agency should be considered taking youth as a socially diversified category. For instance, movements led by highly educated and urban youth can have difficulties in reaching and mobilizing youth living in rural or marginalized areas who may have different needs and aspirations. Youth belonging to confessional minorities might feel excluded by Islam-based forms of mobilization. Clientelism can be a tool of inclusion for some youth, while being a factor of exclusion for others depending on their social status. Furthermore, collective activism by young women may encounter gender-specific constraints within organizations that limit their ability to influence political, economic and social change.

As said earlier, organized collective youth agency can lead to social, political and economic change only if it has a transformative effect on prevailing power relations and on the dominant system of values and norms and the inequalities it produces. The transformative impact of youth activism can be assessed in multiple dimensions. One way to assess the outcomes/influence of social movements is to look at changes at the level of immediate concrete impact on state policies and institutions (macro level). However, particularly in an authoritarian context, the impact of social movements, including youth groups, may be more subtle, wide-ranging, long-term and often unintended. For example, social movements can challenge existing power relations and bring about cultural transformations by affecting values, symbols and the political culture as well as by reshaping public debates toward key political issues (at the meso and micro level). In this regard, investigating how youth-led/youth-targeting organizations perceive, frame and elaborate the status of being young and the "problem of youth" can help us to understand the transformative impact of youth collective agency depending on whether they challenge or reinforce mainstreaming narratives on youth. Other kinds of consequences include movement spillover effects. Social movements may indeed have an impact in that they inspire and influence other forms of mobilization. The gains made by one movement can have beneficial consequences for the demands of other movements and their success can encourage further mobilizations (e.g., the labour movement vis-à-vis the youth movement). The SEM region is rich with forms of political contestation and mobilization – mostly led by youth – which, while not leading inexorably towards the expansion of civil society or democratization, still have a long-term potential transformative impact on the political culture or on the forms of participation, even though less visible (Beinin and Vairel 2011).

Major research questions to be examined in the Work Package on meso-level analysis (WP3) are:
1. How do youth relevant organizations perceive, frame and elaborate the status of being young and the "youth problem"?
2. What factors favour or constrain youth participation in organizations (both formal and

informal, including mainstream traditional organizations such as trade unions, political parties, business organizations and various kinds of youth organizations)?

3. What is the transformative role of youth organised collective agency?

Micro-level Analysis (individual factors of youth exclusion/inclusion and youth individual agency)[11]

The micro level of analysis is the level of the individual and his/her immediate entourage (family, household, community). The micro level also involves elementary social behaviour or unorganized collective behaviour (e.g., crowd dynamics).

Individual characteristics (e.g., gender, age, place of birth, family background and values, access to social media, skills and so on) impact in various ways on people's opportunities in life. For instance, belonging to an ethnic or confessional minority could mean a disadvantageous departure for a youth in the SEM region with respect to peers, due to different environments and different responses of the state. The same can be said for youth living in rural areas where mobility is more difficult, access to ICT less widespread and job opportunities limited. The household also conceals significant power inequalities between women and men, whether young or old, in control over resources, division of labour and decision-making.

The micro level is also where the inter-relation and potential cumulative process between different forms of youth disadvantage are fully displayed. So, for instance, the condition of being unemployed could be tested with respect to other forms of disadvantage such as place of residence, gender, ethnicity, religion and so forth. Moreover, micro-level analysis further enriches our knowledge of the impact of macro- and meso-level factors on youth exclusion. For example, young people who take part in collective organized forms of political and civic activism often undergo important psychological transformations from being passive subjects of adult control to more active agents of self-expression (Khouri and Shehata 2011b).[12] Also, by investigating intra-household relations, micro-level analysis sheds further light on the gender-differentiated impact of institutional and policy factors.

Young individuals react differently to their perceived status of exclusion. Some choose to become politically active, especially in the urban context and when political opportunities such as those represented by the "Arab Spring" arise. For instance, contrary to the view that youth economic exclusion leads to apathy or radicalism, a few studies have started to document that, in some SEM countries (e.g., Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria), unemployed youth have increasingly organized and mobilized to express their political and economic demands (Emperador 2007, Gobe 2010), pointing to the importance of understanding the specific effects of youth employment status on political and civic engagement. Others, maybe more often, decide to migrate, although young men are much more likely than young women to pursue this strategy, or to lead a quiet life.

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[11] Micro-level research and methodology will be developed in a dedicated concept paper by Power2Youth partner FAFO.

[12] For the literature on the biographical impact of social movements, see Giugni (2008).

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Young individuals construct their own perceptions about opportunities and exclusion. They may either define their experience of exclusion on the basis of socially ascribed normative roles and prevailing public discourses, thus accepting dominant power structures, or subvert and re-interpret dominant norms, roles and youth narratives produced by policy-makers.

Individuals also act collectively in a non-organized way. For instance, some youth reclaim their youthfulness by quietly appropriating public spaces such as malls, coffee shops, parks or streets, creating new ways of appearing in public, and quietly asserting their right to choose what to wear and what to listen to. In doing so, they not only acquire to some extent the ability to determine their own needs, beyond what adults imagine and design for them, but also significantly transform the urban space they live in and the prevailing social norms. This is what Bayat calls a "social non-movement" or the "quiet encroachment of the ordinary" – the silent, protracted, but pervasive advancement of ordinary people, appropriating public spaces in the metropolises of the Global South or slowly subverting established social or cultural norms through their everyday actions in order to survive or improve their life (Bayat 2010a:19-20 and 56-65). The social and cultural transformative impact of these actions depends on many factors, such as the number of people involved and the nature of the social system in which they take place.

The following research questions are addressed in the Work Package on micro-level analysis (WP4):
1. How do young men and women perceive the status of being young and the "youth problem"?
2. What individual and household factors influence processes of youth exclusion/inclusion?
3. What is the transformative role of youth individual agency?

3. GENERAL METHODOLOGY

Given the comprehensive interdisciplinary and multi-level analytical framework of Power2Youth described in Sections 1 and 2, an integrated innovative methodology, merging multiple approaches and sources, will be applied. While more detailed and specific methodological indications are provided in the concept papers of WP2, WP3 and WP4, the following are the main general characteristics of Power2Youth methodology:

(a) Multi-level analysis

Power2Youth examines processes and dynamics of youth exclusion/inclusion and the prospects for youth-led change through three levels of inquiry: the macro, the meso and the micro. Methodologically, it will ensure linkages between the three levels by various means. While providing different perspectives, the macro, meso and micro levels of analysis will investigate the same set of issues, that is how youth exclusion/inclusion is defined and conceptualized, what factors underline youth exclusion/inclusion and what are the prospects for youth-led change. WP2 will select a number of key domains of public action that will be taken into account in both WP3 and WP4 to assess the role of youth collective and individual agency, respectively. In order to ensure continuity with WP3 and WP4, WP2 will also prepare an internal note for meso- and micro-level analyses providing input and indications as to what the most relevant policy factors underlying youth exclusion/inclusion are. WP3, in turn,

will formulate an internal note to provide WP4 with input and indications as to what are the most relevant meso-level factors that cause youth exclusion/inclusion and favour youth-led change. In addition, while the macro-level analysis (WP2) will provide the "mainstream" conceptualization of youth exclusion produced by local, national and international institutions, the meso (WP3) and the micro (WP4) levels will deepen the conceptualization of youth exclusion by incorporating the subjective collective/individual dimensions, that is respectively how youth organizations contribute to framing and elaborating collective perceptions of youth exclusion and how young individuals, men and women, perceive and experience exclusion. Finally, in order to reach a profound and consistent understanding of dynamics of youth exclusion/inclusion and prospects for youth-led change, a comprehensive analysis linking the micro-meso-macro levels will be carried out in WP6.

(b) A gender sensitive and socially differentiated approach

The project applies a gender-sensitive and socially differentiated approach in all research levels. A gender-sensitive methodology will be applied across all the WPs since a full comprehension of factors of youth exclusion/inclusion and prospects for youth-led change requires an in-depth gender-sensitive analysis. To this end, most partner institutions have in-house gender expertise and would be committed to integrating a gender perspective in all research tasks of their respective WPs. In addition, Power2Youth involves a partner with specific gender expertise (SOAS) providing advice on conceptual and methodological issues in WP1, gender-oriented conclusions in WP2, WP3 and WP4, a comprehensive gender-sensitive understanding of youth exclusion/inclusion in WP6 and final policy recommendations that deal with gender-related specificities in WP7. Moreover, the research strongly emphasizes the need to differentiate youth coming from different social backgrounds (e.g., urban/rural, social class, ethnic/confessional communities, as well as other relevant socio-cultural divides) through an intersectional approach at all levels of research, namely in WP2, WP3 and WP4.

(c) Quantitative and qualitative methods

A qualitative cultural-political approach to the study of youth is often in divergence, if not outright contrast, with a quantitative socio-economic one. There are almost no youth studies combining both quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches. Yet combining both methods appears to be the best way to reach a broader and holistic understanding of processes and dynamics of youth exclusion as well as prospects for youth-led change in the SEM region – something that cannot be achieved by either a qualitative or a quantitative approach alone. Quantitative analyses, based on survey data and statistical methodologies, have the advantages of allowing for generalizable understandings of determinants of youth exclusion/inclusion and for comparison between different countries. Given the richness and in-depth information that qualitative approaches generate, they instead have the particular strengths of capturing the subjective sides of youth exclusion, the complex and not-quantifiable dynamics behind youth exclusion/inclusion, the differences in such processes among SEM countries, and the role of collective and individual youth agency.[13] To investigate the complex processes and dynamics of youth exclusion/inclusion and youth-led change, Power2Youth will therefore apply a mixed-method approach combining qualitative and

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[13] For an overview of qualitative and quantitative approaches, albeit not specifically applied to youth studies, see Della Porta and Keating (2008).

quantitative tools to generate research results (Creswell and Plano Clark 2007, Migiro and Magangi 2011, Johnson et al. 2007).[14] Examples of quantitative methods include indicators of youth exclusion in WP2 and sample-surveys in WP4, while qualitative methods include a critical analysis of the available data (quantitative and qualitative) as a part of the prevailing public discourse on youth, face-to-face semi-structured interviews and focus groups[15] used mainly in WP3, WP4 and WP7 (see also point "d" of general methodology below) as well as in-depth qualitative case studies on select relevant issues in WP2, WP3 and WP4 to integrate general country papers.

(d) A comparative approach

The six SEM-country Power2Youth case studies have been selected with the aim to reflect a politically, economically and socially diversified sample, spanning five Arab countries, including three from North Africa (Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco) and two from the Middle East (Lebanon and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, OPT), and one non-Arab country (Turkey). The sample of countries includes different types of regimes/political systems: one monarchy (Morocco), four republican systems (Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon and Turkey) and one country lacking a national state (OPT). In two countries, Egypt and Tunisia, popular uprisings in early 2011 led to the overthrow of previous dictators. Turkey has also experienced widespread youth-participated revolts in 2013-2014. As far as the economic structure is concerned, Tunisia and Morocco report a relatively diversified economy, although the latter is still highly dependent on agriculture; Lebanon's economy is highly service-oriented; Egypt still has an economy depending on a number of external rents, while the OPT, dominated by services, has a peculiar economy with many structural distortions given its specific political situation. The Turkish economy is considered a booming economy with a large service sector coupled with sizeable agricultural and industrial sectors. Differences and similarities among the six countries are likely to be observed in terms of other variables relevant to the project, such as the typologies and roles of youth-driven movements, the conditions of young people, the conceptualization of youth exclusion and so on. Unfortunately, comparable information on youth-related issues in the SEM region are still lacking and, therefore, hard to grasp at this stage of research. Broad comparative studies on youth exclusion in the SEM region are almost absent, given the paucity of comparable data and heterogeneity of analytical and methodological approaches. By applying a common analytical and methodological framework to the six SEM country studies, Power2Youth will allow for immediate inter-country comparisons through all the WPs, thus adding important insights to our understanding on how multiple dimensions of youth exclusion and prospects of youth-led change vary within the region. Moreover, through the WP5 on Global Youth, Power2Youth will enlarge the comparative perspective to two experiences of socio-economic transformation in Europe (Poland and Italy) and beyond (the United States).

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[14] A "mixed-methods approach" or "mixed-methods research" is not only about combining quantitative and qualitative methods to generate data; the two methods are mixed at several stages of the project/study, including in the analysis.
[15] On qualitative interviewing and focus groups see Morgan (2001). On focus groups as a tool of social movement research Blee and Taylor (2002).

(e) Young people involved in academic research and policy debates

One major component underscoring the innovative approach of Power2Youth is the integration of youth perspectives into academic research and policy debates. Engaging young people in the project has many invaluable advantages: it a) ameliorates the quality of research and our understanding of processes and dynamics of youth exclusion/inclusion as young people are the central research topic of the project; b) enhances the likelihood that the concluding policy recommendations incorporate the perspective and input of young people themselves; and c) provides positive opportunities for young people (Kirby 2004, UK National Youth Agency 2007, Fraser et al. 2004). Power2Youth will therefore involve young people as sources of information for the research and sources of input in the development of youth-sensitive policies. This will be achieved by several means such as face-to face semi-structured interviews with relevant stakeholders (e.g., youth organizations, activists, etc.) in WP2, WP3 and WP4 and focus groups in each country case study in WP3 and WP4 and in three country case studies in WP7. Focus groups will be organized with members of youth-led organizations and organizations that target young people (WP3 and WP7) and with young individuals from different social backgrounds (WP4). In addition sample surveys/polls will be organized in the six countries considered in WP4 to enrich the micro-level analysis, highlight micro-meso-macro linkages of youth exclusion, understand interaction between forms of exclusion, and allow for cross-country comparisons.

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POWER2YOUTH is a research project aimed at offering a critical understanding of youth in the South East Mediterranean (SEM) region through a comprehensive interdisciplinary, multi-level and gender sensitive approach. By combining the economic, political and socio-cultural spheres and a macro (policy/institutional), meso (organizational) and micro (individual) level analysis, POWER2YOUTH explores the root causes and complex dynamics of the processes of youth exclusion and inclusion in the labour market and civic/political life, while investigating the potentially transformative effect of youth collective and individual agency. The project has a cross-national comparative design with the case studies of Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Occupied Palestinian Territories and Turkey. POWER2YOUTH's participants are 12 research and academic institutions based in the EU member states, Norway, Switzerland and South East Mediterranean (SEM) countries. The project is mainly funded under the European Union's 7th Framework Programme.