



POWER2YOUTH

Gender, Intersectionality and Youth Policies in the South and East Mediterranean

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Ruba Salih, Lynn Welchman and Elena Zambelli¹

Abstract

This document contains a discussion of the main findings, gaps and challenges emerging from the country reports prepared by Power2Youth (P2Y) partners in specific regard to issues of gender mainstreaming and gender analysis. After a brief overview of the key principles of intersectional analysis, we undertake a discussion of some general themes and issues that cut across all or most of the country reports produced by P2Y partners. In the third part of this document, we apply our analysis down to each of the four distinct domains of public action selected for macro-level analysis: employment, family, migration and spatial planning policies.

Keywords: Youth | Women | Employment | Family | Migration | South East Mediterranean

1. INTRODUCTION

This document contains a discussion of the main findings, gaps and challenges emerging from the country reports prepared by Power2Youth (P2Y) partners in specific regard to issues of gender mainstreaming and gender analysis. After a brief overview of the key principles of intersectional analysis, we undertake a discussion of some general themes and issues that cut across all or most of the country reports produced by P2Y partners.² In the third part of this document, we apply our analysis down to each of the four distinct domains of public action selected for macro-level analysis: employment, family, migration and spatial planning policies.

2. INTERSECTIONALITY AT THE MACRO-LEVEL

The principles of intersectionality as an analytical framework can be summarized as follows:

- women's and men's conditions are structured by the interactions between inequalities in and across multiple institutions;
- different spheres of social life simultaneously undermine women's economic, legal and political positions;
- gender, class, sexuality, age, ethnicity, sect, etc. are mutually constituted and cannot simply be "added" to existing frameworks of analysis (as in the "add women and stir" approach). They have to be analysed as interlocked.

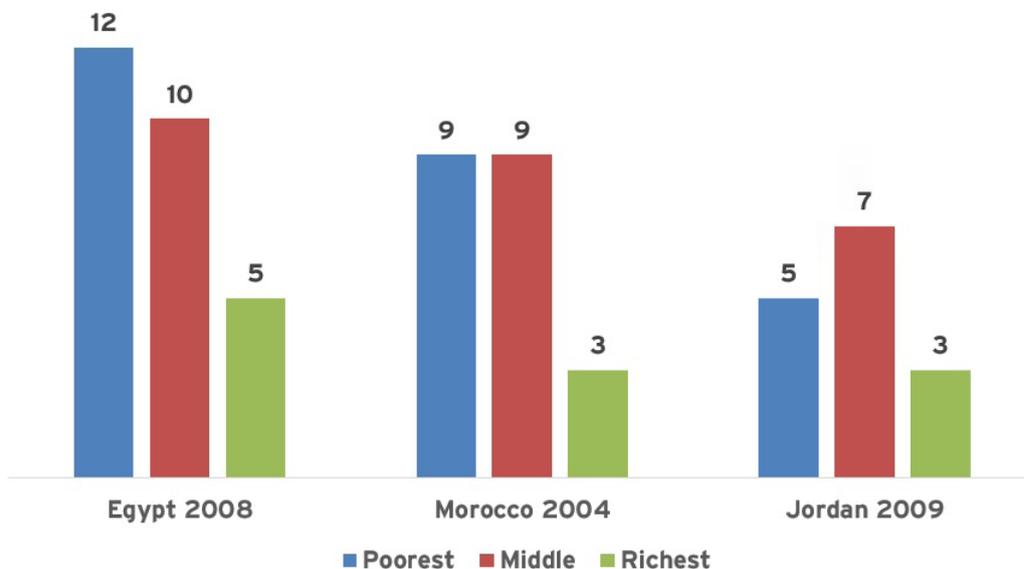
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² These are: Egypt (Sika 2016); Lebanon (Harb 2016); Morocco (Paciello et al. 2016a); Occupied Palestinian Territories (Musleh 2016); Tunisia (Paciello et al. 2016b); Turkey (Yurttagüler 2016).

An important and growing body of work on intersectionality emphasizes that women's experiences do not simply reflect male predicaments, but rather that both men and women's experiences are the result of the intertwined combination of their gender, class, race and religious positionalities (see for example Crenshaw 1991, Collins 1998, Ali et al. 2010, Cho et al. 2013). Perhaps particularly at a macro-level, where statistical data is traditionally biased towards gender blindness, there is a need for both data and analysis intersecting gender with class, age, areas of origin and other positions.

For example, in most Arab countries, women's position in the legal structures is profoundly different from men's, being subordinated in family codes and patriarchal cultural codes. However, class can be determinant in overcoming some of these oppressive constraints. Often class is tied to religious sect or to race. In many cases, class intersects with marriage, fertility and/or political participation. Marriage often coincides with the drop out of work for women, but this is highly contingent on class and legal status too. There is a need for more reflection of intersectionality in statistical data on women and men in the Middle East and the Mediterranean. Figure 1, for example, provides data showing how young women's fertility rates differ on the basis of their class (i.e., "wealth").

Figure 1 | Percent of young women ages 15-19 who are pregnant or already have given birth, by wealth quintile in selected countries



Source: Roudi-Fahimi and El Feki 2011:12.

It remains a challenge to reflect this complexity in data collected at the macro level and we would urge this to be reflected in the policy recommendations.

2.1 Questioning the “Inclusion/Exclusion” Binary

Most P2Y reports have left unchallenged the “inclusion/exclusion” framework as a binary that structures the analyses of youth predicaments in their countries, although the data points to the limitation of such a binary. A radical feminist approach cannot but question the “exclusion/inclusion” approach that does not posit a critical reading of the structural (cultural, political, economic, etc.) gendered constitutive fallacies at work in authoritarian regimes, which are characterized by an intersection between shifting, but still persisting, patriarchal cultures, gendered legal systems and neo-liberal economies that operate in gendered ways, promoting or challenging dominant masculinities and femininities according to the needs of globalized markets.

In addition, the binary inclusion/exclusion underscores a liberal understanding of factors that can impede or foster youth’s participation in the political economic or social/cultural contexts where they live, leaving unchallenged the ways in which most countries under analysis operate through suspensions of the law, emergency rule and authoritarian interventions. Furthermore, it ignores rather than assists in exploration of the question of where the “political” lies, crucial in a feminist analysis. The Middle East, which according to most of the P2Y country reports is characterized by large spheres of informality in the labour market, by family networks in the political domain and by religious networks and organizations that operate between the public and the private, needs an exploration of the political that looks beyond “civil society” to situate/locate political action (see for example Fraser 1990, Singerman 2006).

3. GENERAL REMARKS

3.1 Unpacking the Category of “Youth”

A key purpose of P2Y WP2 country papers was to discuss how the category of “youth” is constructed by the state, both in public action and in policy. Indeed, the category “youth” in itself needs to be analysed in its regulatory dimension. Juridical, legal as well as social categorizations produce political subjectivities that can be managed, controlled and surveilled, and youth is clearly one such category. Michel Foucault has long since emphasized the social, political and cultural genealogy of categories revealing how human beings are made into objectified subjects, and in gendered ways. Most of the research conducted for this project has indeed emphasized how young people are seen as both essential to and dangerous for regimes’ interests. Subjects are constructed, managed and disciplined and are given an identity, i.e., “youth.” The category “youth” has become a governance tool, in a world where 1.8 billion of the global population is between 10 and 25. The issue of how to manage, incorporate and co-opt this mass of young men and women has become an issue of youth “governance.” Youth as a category also becomes inhabited by young people as a politics of subjectivation (Foucault 1977 and 2001) though this dimension will best be addressed by P2Y country papers and case studies at the meso and micro levels (respectively in WP3 and WP4).

As Diane Singerman (2013) noted, in the past few years neo-liberal economic policies across the region have created the conditions for mass exclusion of young people from political, economic and social spheres. This exclusion fostered new alliances: in the Middle East, from Lebanon to Egypt, Turkey and Palestine, there has been the emergence of a collective group of young

people reclaiming rights to space, to justice, freedom and economic and material resources. The neo-liberal turn created shared predicaments among youth, which in turn contributed to forging a shared identity particularly visible in a multiplicity of youth-led protests which shared similar slogans, concerns and demands. This process transcends national boundaries and links young people and other activists cross-nationally in a “movement of movements” (Singerman 2013).

All P2Y country reports unpack a key ambivalence underlying the “youth” category, whereby “young men” are considered as both deserving subjects to be included (in employment, politics, etc.) or to be praised as valuable assets (that is, successful and educated migrants in Western countries), and dangerous subjects to be contained and controlled (as militants, “Islamists,” “irregular” migrants, etc.). They further show that at the roots of this ambivalent discourse lie the persisting and possibly exacerbating social and economic inequalities, to which the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) states considered in the P2Y papers respond, on the one hand, by attempting to meet “just” demands of socioeconomic inclusion (though with the “wrong” means, i.e., continuation of neoliberal receipts); while on the other hand, repressing “troublemakers” (i.e., dissidents, individuals attempting to reach the EU irregularly, etc.).

Most of the papers highlighted that however implicitly, the category of “youth” assumes “young men” as the object of public action, especially in the realm of employment and migration. Such male bias affects young women’s participation in paid employment outside of the household, and contributes to perpetuating the unequal division of roles, rights and responsibilities between women and men within the household and in the wider set of social relations. The “institutional invisibility” of “young women” in public discourse rests on and reflects a specific framing of “young women” as both vulnerable and dangerous subjects who are mainly defined by their sexuality and who, accordingly, ought to be protected and confined within their familiar and maternal roles (i.e., as daughters, wives and mothers). The “danger” for women’s (and per extension, their family’s) “respectability” entailed by their presence and movement in specific mixed settings underlies law provisions limiting women’s employment (e.g., prohibition of night work);³ and it further constitutes a more or less discursive weapon in the hands of the state to discourage their political participation side by side with men (e.g., the sexualized violence on the “girl in the blue bra” in Tahrir Square).⁴

Finally, a crucial aspect is the relation between youth, gender and nation-building. As the reports show, youth often have a dedicated Ministry of Youth and Sport which subsumes young men and women into a neutral category. However, across most countries, women’s “issues” are additionally directed by ad hoc Ministries and offices for “women and families” in charge of producing and reproducing the institutional and legal apparatuses and ideologies that perpetuate women’s roles as subordinate to men in most societies (Jabiri 2013). Women are in fact subject to interlocking forms of power as they are managed by a set of laws (e.g., personal status codes) and institutions (Ministries of Social Affairs, Family, etc.) that confine

³ According to UN ESCWA (2012:19), “All Arab countries have placed restrictions on women’s work at night, with the exception of women working in the medical profession.” See also World Bank 2013.

⁴ The incident occurred during clashes in Cairo, as the Egyptian security forces beat a woman demonstrator whose abaya had been “ripped open, exposing her naked torso and blue bra” (Coleman 2011).

them to private or domestic spheres or tasks. For example, they are embedded within and managed through a set of laws and rules that limit or shape their mobility in public spaces through the control of their sexuality. Accordingly, and as we discuss further in the section 3.2 (see *infra*), an analysis of states' gendered assumptions as reflected in and reproduced through their "youth" policies needs to encompass domains of public action that concern more or less directly issues of family, sexuality and reproduction.

The creation of Ministries of Youth and Sport across most countries as analysed by P2Y country reports also points to how the "youth" category is inscribed into gendered nation-building processes. The "nation" is the embodiment of a mass of homogeneous and young people. The historical roots and genealogy of the Ministries of Youth deserve specific attention as the physical and moral education of citizens has been crucial as a bio-political tool of nation-building, especially in authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. Mass physical education was, for example, central in Fascist Italy where Mussolini used to think of mass sport as a tool to educate fascist "men to fight in an open field." Sport is also a means to create national consensus, but it is a gendered process whereby women are constructed as "modest yet modern" and their physical undertakings have to comply with a gendered disciplined body. However, gender intersects in different ways. In some cases, ministries can be inspired by opposing gender ideologies, as in the case of Palestine, where the Ministry of Youth adopted a gender aware plan, focusing on youth development and targeting young men and women in egalitarian ways, while the PLO recruitment and National and Political Guidance Directorate operated according to a heavily military, gender-blind logic (Jad 2011).

3.2 Institutions, Data, Resources

P2Y WP2 country papers drew their analysis of the public discourse on "youth" from multiple sources. Broadly, these are national policies adopted by some ministries, especially of Youth and Sports, of Education, and of Economy; and statistics on employment, migration, marriage and the family as collected by national statistical agencies.

Consistently with the critique of gendered assumptions underlying the state's public discourse and action as unpacked in the previous section, country reports should include consideration of policies and strategies promoting gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment measures, where existent, which typically include specific actions and measures addressing young women in different realms. Typically, these policies emanate from national women's machineries such as the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) in Lebanon, the Ministry of Women's Affairs in Palestine, the Ministry of Women and the Family in Tunisia, etc.⁵ Albeit generally addressing only the needs of "women" across their life cycle, and

⁵ For example in Lebanon there is an ongoing National Strategy for Women 2011-2021 (NCLW 2011); and last year in Palestine the Cabinet endorsed the Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy 2014-2016 prepared by the Ministry of Women's Affairs, which "focuses on tackling gender-based discrimination at all levels and increasing opportunities for Palestinian women's participation in public life, with specific priority interventions to reduce gender gaps in employment, decision-making and access to services" (UN WOMEN 2014:3). Reports to and recommendations from the CEDAW Committee typically contain up-to-date information on existing discriminatory law provisions, and national policies and strategies to address them, if any (see for example Lebanon Government 2015). Finally, the worldwide Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) by the OECD Development Centre records national-level data concerning "laws, attitudes and practices" that discriminate against women and girls. See OECD Development Centre, *About the SIGI*, <http://genderindex.org/content/team>.

typically envisaging actions to “add women” on equal footing to men in different societal spheres rather than forecasting strategies rooted in the relational dimension of “gender,” these documents nevertheless usually contain useful analyses and up-to-date information on gender gaps across social life (rights, education, employment, marriage and reproduction etc.), and on state measures to tackle them, if any. Hence, they can constitute an important complement in the analysis of the public discourse on “youth.” Other ministries to include in the analysis of public action concerning young men and women are those of Social Affairs and of Public Health, which typically are concerned with policies tackling sexuality, and notably with the eradication of gender-based violence and the promotion of sexual and reproductive health (including contraceptive measures available, HIV/AIDS prevention, etc.). The inclusion of this expanded set of policies and actions would best enable an intersectional analysis of roots and effects of gender gaps in distinct however interlocked domains (e.g., the gendering of the school-to-work transition, the marriage-employment nexus, etc.).

Data encompassed and analysed in WP2 country papers was mainly produced by national statistic agencies (e.g., the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics). Including information collected by international organizations would expand the capacity to interrogate data comparatively (e.g., at the regional level).⁶

3.3 The National and the Transnational

Another dimension that needs emphasizing has to do with the limits of a methodological approach that privileges the national level as the main discursive arena of the construction of “youth” and their governance. In most P2Y WP2 country reports, the transnational dimension of economic and political processes is overlooked. The public is conflated with the state, which also translates into the underestimation of transnational, global “publics” and “discourses” and the ways they affect youth policies as well as the position of youth in the economy and society. The state in the region is undergoing challenges from within, and state and society are largely characterized by great areas of informality: most reports emphasize that the highest proportion of housing gatherings are informal, employment is mainly in the informal sector, and informal or non-institutional channels are prevalent in securing and allocating resources. Emphasizing the state as the main area or actor in the region therefore misses this reality. Equally, there are challenges from without. For example, neo-liberal economic policies affecting local economies and livelihoods, but also international organizations such as the World Bank are taking over areas of state sovereignty in the economic realm, in gendered ways. Internal political (if transnationally linked) violence and states of emergency also pose challenges to state sovereignty in different states, and impact women differently (Butler 2004:62).

Finally, it is important to stress the importance that many reports put on the NGO sector as a transnational sphere that acts as a governing, managing power, neutralizing political radicalism and sedating “youth” (Palestine post-Oslo, Tunisia).

⁶ For example, ILO publications typically contain gender-disaggregated data on work, employment and maternity legislation (see for example Chicha 2013 on Morocco; ONEQ 2013 on Tunisia), as do the World Bank reports as well (see for example World Bank 2013).

In the following section we discuss the gender dimension of the four distinct domains of public action selected for macro-level analysis: youth and employment, youth and family, youth and migration, youth and spatial planning policies.

4. THEMATIC ANALYSIS

4.1 State Policies on Youth and Employment

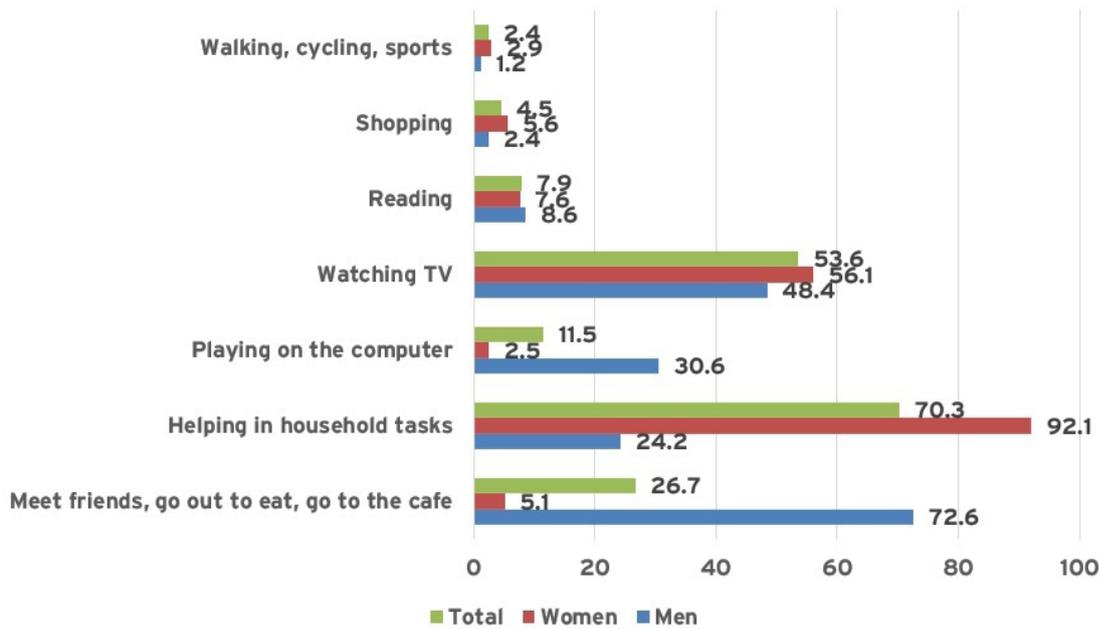
Several P2Y papers contextualize the problem of youth unemployment amidst the ascent and hegemony of a neoliberal model of development from the end of the 1970s onwards, and the “youth bulge” - an effect of which is the weakening of young women and men’s bargaining power on the labour market due to the presence of an ever-expanding reserve army of labour. For example the Tunisian country paper links neoliberal policies promoting flexibility and cheap labour to growing economic insecurity among youth, and to exacerbating internal regional inequalities. The report highlights that economic growth relies on domains which require unskilled and/or cheap workers - from, for example, young “lower class” uneducated women working in the clothing industry, to off-shore call centres. These job opportunities however prevail on the coastal areas, thereby stimulating internal migration from the inner lands especially by young men, while women stay behind and take on productive roles in the family farm and in agro-business at very low wages.

Such gendered division of employment opportunities partly reflects the constraints on women’s mobility discussed below (see “youth and spatial planning policies”). However, broadly, it mirrors the broader gender division of labour within households, according to which women are entrusted with “reproductive work,” i.e., caring for their household members and undertaking domestic work - tasks which are typically unpaid, un-recognized as “work” and naturalized as “women’s work.” The daily labour of social reproduction eats away at the time that women can invest outside the home for paid work, leisure, etc. Such unequal burden is for example well reflected in Figure 2 which shows how differently young women and young men who are out of education and employment use their time (e.g., who helps in household chores?). In turn, time use entails a differential access to and use of the “public” (i.e., non-domestic) space (e.g., who spends time out with friends and at cafés?).

Hence, and as we further argue below (see section 4.2), engendering the analysis of “youth” employment entails intersecting data concerning the gender division of the labour of social reproduction (see for example Elson 1998 and 1999, Folbre 1994). In this regard, however, the Turkish country paper reports an interesting insight on how feminist critiques of the gendered assumptions underlying the state and the market can be turned on themselves (Yurttagüler 2016). During the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, some Western second wave feminists indeed proposed to institute “wages for housework” (see for example Federici 1975), thereby advocating inter alia for the resignification of the “labour of love” as “work” which ought to be detached from “nature” and understood as allocated to women on the basis of gendered assumptions, biases and social expectations. The Turkish country report highlights that the state pays for what it terms “house girls,” i.e., women, and mostly young women, who are paid to undertake care work within their household. Hence, “house girls” receive a salary, while the state deflects responsibility for care (e.g., for elderly, differently challenged people, etc.) onto families, thereby sparing funds on investment in public care institutions. At the same

time, the lives of these women remain further confined in their home, which affects their capacity to engage in social relations outside the family and progressively diminishes their possibility of ever finding a job outside the walls of their house. Hence, behind the screen of an apparently “progressive” measure such as public salaries for women’s housework, lies the reproduction of women’s “natural destiny” as carers.

Figure 2 | Discouraged non-student youth by time use and gender in Tunisia



Source: ILO 2014:48.

The current emphasis on gender equality characterizing the policies promoted by the World Bank in the MENA region is consistent with such overturning of measures initially heralded to promote gender equality. Its MENA development report argued that “gender equality is smart economics” (World Bank 2013:3). In a nutshell, it posits that women’s “empowerment” can boost productivity and economic growth, and improve household members’ welfare, thereby reducing the cost and hence eventually the need for investment in public healthcare services,⁷ and, eventually, governance.⁸ Advocating opportunistically for gender equality as a mean for other ends (e.g., as a strategy to achieve growth and stability) rather than a right on its own is a well known strategy among Western feminists who pioneered the Women in Development (WID) approach within an overarching discourse which assumed the irrelevance of engendering development theories, frameworks and programmes to ensure women opportunities equal to those available to men. On the other hand, the discourse of the World

⁷ The assumption is that women are the carers of the family, and that mothers who are more educated and work have a higher bargaining power and can invest more in their children’s health and education.

⁸ “Providing women and men with equal access to education, economic opportunities, and assets has the potential to boost productivity. Furthermore, gender equality benefits the welfare of future generations. For example, improved education and employment opportunities for women have been shown to increase women’s bargaining power, resulting in greater investment in children’s health and education. Finally, when women and men have equal chances to be socially and politically active and to influence laws, politics, and policymaking, institutions and policies are more likely to be fair and representative of society as a whole” (World Bank 2013:3).

Bank conceals a different and arguably noxious opportunism, according to which gender equality is *smartly* traded off for cuts in public welfare. Such offsetting emerges throughout different sections of its report. First of all, and consistently with some P2Y country reports, the World Bank report observes that in the MENA region the state (i.e., the public sector) has so far been women's main employer. However, it posits next that "further expansion of the public sector is increasingly fiscally unsustainable" (World Bank 2013:4) - a statement which indirectly hints at the "excessive" scale of (the "feminized") public sector, of which it arguably recommends the downsizing, thereby exacerbating women's unemployment, at least in the short term. It is in the face of this "desirable downsizing" of the (feminized) public employment and concurrently exacerbating women's unemployment that the World Bank report urges the private sector to remove obstacles constraining women's employment (World Bank 2013:18-20).⁹ Secondly, the report blames public welfare and family subsidies for constituting a deterrent for women's engagement in paid work outside the household.¹⁰ If public welfare is downsized, the report implicitly assumes, consensus for women's *need* to work alongside men will become *compelling* if households' livelihoods are to be met. Hence, the World Bank's argument for the promotion of gender equality rests on the promotion of public policies that are likely to exacerbate precarious living conditions for all.

Another dimension that ought to be considered in the analysis of youth and employment is the influence of gender stereotypes in education, and their impact on employment prospects (i.e., "school-to-work transition"). According to Marie-Thérèse Chicha (2013:68), notwithstanding the constraining family and social context most of them face, young women in the Arab countries are on average more perseverant and successful in their studies than their male peers. Still, the rate of employment of women in the MENA countries is the lowest in the world (UN ESCWA 2012:1). For the World Bank, such a paradox of high educational scores and low employment is due to gender stereotypes in education, which affect women's concentration in the social sciences and the humanities, and in turn to their job-search in a "saturated" labour market (i.e., public employment) (World Bank 2013:3-4). However, contrary-wise, the UN ESCWA report states that women are increasingly studying scientific subjects,¹¹ and instead shifts the blame for women's unemployment on the emerging inverse relation between educational levels and prospects of employment. In fact, the report implicitly states that in an economy heavily reliant on cheap and unskilled labour, it is women's higher education that affects their employability.¹² This is for example particularly the case of Tunisia (ONEQ 2013:11), where the rate of unemployment reported for women with higher education is twice

⁹ The World Bank report lists a number of interlocked reasons why women's employment in the private sector has been so far constrained, some of which will be discussed *infra* in relation to the influence of gender stereotypes in school-to-work transition and to the marriage-employment nexus.

¹⁰ It states that welfare subsidies "increase household income levels and thereby decrease the financial incentive for women to work" (World Bank 2013:20).

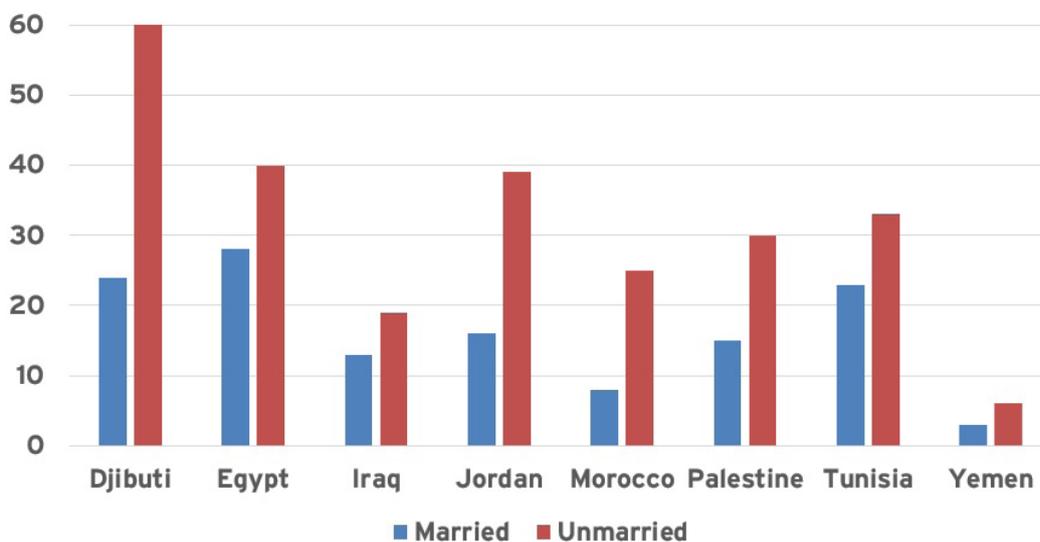
¹¹ "Contrary to past assumptions that women avoid scientific fields in the Arab region, women represent 51 per cent of graduates in the sciences in general and 73 per cent of graduates in life sciences, 61 per cent of graduates in physical sciences, 59 per cent of graduates in mathematics and statistics and 33 per cent of graduates in computing" (UN ESCWA 2012:14).

¹² "Labour market demand in the Arab region is heavily biased in favour of economic activities that do not require education, as reflected in the occupational structure of employment across the region. That is more visibly reflected in the main occupations of migrant workforce, which is typically engaged in such activities as construction and domestic and agricultural work" (UN ESCWA 2012:15).

that of those with primary education only. Similar findings are reported in the WP2 Egyptian country paper as well as in the Moroccan country paper (Sika 2016, Paciello et al. 2016a), where women’s educational level is considered as a proxy for their trade unionization¹³ and hence for their “un-docility,” in Foucauldian terms.

Overall, the curtailment of job opportunities in societies where the transition into adulthood goes through marriage and creation of new families, means that in a context of rising costs of marriage, young men, but especially young women, are trapped in a state of limbo: they are the “generation of waithood” (Singerman 2007, 2013). Waiting, as a socio-anthropological condition, translates into a prolonged status of suspension between childhood and adulthood, which are the normatively prescribed conditions in most Middle Eastern countries. As the generation of waithood sits longer in a limbo between the normative spheres of childhood and adulthood, but unable to move on to adulthood and independence, frustration and therefore radical protests can emerge and threaten the system. On the other hand, employment for women seems to entail its trading off for marriage. For young men, employment is a pathway for marriage, as work enables them to earn and save money that they can use to build up the capital they need to enter into marriage (Singerman 2007); however for young women, marriage often entails dropping out of employment.

Figure 3 | Labour force participation of women by marital status (ages 15-64) (%)



Source: World Bank 2013:68.

Figure 3 highlights the adverse effects of marriage on women’s employment, possibly suggesting that such change in women’s status severely increases their chances of dropping out of work. In fact, the patriarchal mode of production works hand in hand with the capitalist

¹³ “Young unmarried women with no professional experience, who migrated from rural areas or lived in the bidonville close to the factory, were preferred by foreign companies because they were always available to work, including during the night (as they were not absorbed by the reproductive and family work), and were more easily submitted to male authority and available to accept low salaries. On the opposite side, export-oriented firms generally refuse to employ graduated young women as they are considered politically dangerous bringing about trade unions’ ideas and threatening the social peace in the firms” (Labari 2006:9).

mode of production: women do not enter waged work as freely as men, and their access to and position in the labour market by and large reflects hegemonic gendered constructions and gender roles. Some of the P2Y country papers have indeed highlighted elements that substantiate the existence of such inverse relationship. For example, the Lebanese report observes that for women, being married is a disadvantage: single women have 59 percent greater chance of finding a job than married women, whose chances are 34 percent. The Turkish report notes that women’s labour force participation begins to decline after age 30 - i.e., most probably, with marriage. On the other hand, the Palestinian report observes that unemployment is higher for women aged 25-34, but decreases in the subsequent age bracket (35-44) - a contradictory finding that might indicate that once married, some women might stop considering themselves as “unemployed” (and hence, be counted as such in national statistics) having taken up reproductive (albeit unpaid) work.

Marriage affects women’s employment also because states in the MENA region do not sufficiently protect working women (e.g., insufficient coverage for maternity leave, lack of flexible work arrangements, etc.). For example, national provisions for maternity protection often disproportionately offset the cost of women’s maternity leave onto employers, who hence prefer to employ men (UN ESCWA 2012:23; see also World Bank 2013:18-20). The current state of maternity protection in countries included in P2Y is reported in Table 1.

Table 1 | Key national provisions for maternity protection

Country	Duration*	Wages	Source of funding	Type of funding
Bahrain	60 days	full, first 45 days; unpaid thereafter	Employer	No information
Egypt	3 months	full	75% Social security; 25% Employer	Mandatory
Iraq	62 days	full	Social security	No information
Jordan	10 weeks	full	Employer	No information
Kuwait	70 days	full	Employer	No information
Lebanon	7 weeks	full	Employer	Mandatory
Libya ^a	50 days	half	Employer	Mandatory
Morocco	14 weeks	full	Social security	Mandatory
Qatar	50 days	full	Employer	No information
Saudi Arabia ^b	10 weeks	half or full	Employer	Mandatory
Sudan	8 weeks	full	Employer	Mandatory
Syria ^c	120 days	full	Employer	No information
Tunisia	30 days	two thirds	Social security	Mandatory
UAE	45 days	full	Employer	No information
Yemen	60 days	full	Employer	No information

Notes: * Days indicate working days; a) Self-employed women receive full wages funded by Social Security; b) Percentage of wages depends on duration of employment; c) 120 days leave are granted for the first child.

Source: UN ESCWA 2012:22.¹⁴

¹⁴ OECD data reports a few changes to the data contained in the table. See OECD Development Centre, *SIGI Country Profiles*, <http://www.genderindex.org/countries>. In Tunisia, maternity leave is 30 days in the private sector and 60 days in the public sector; and Morocco introduced 3 days of paternity leave at full pay. Also Lebanon increased the

Furthermore, in some countries in the MENA region there continue to exist laws that construct women as peculiarly vulnerable subjects in need of “special protection,” especially in connection with “hazardous and dangerous working conditions, night work and retirement age” (UN ESCWA 2012:19). Practically, these norms entail women’s exclusion from such jobs. For example, Egypt and Morocco have provisions excluding women from night work, dangerous industries, and/or have a “morally harmful” clause in some labour laws (World Bank 2013:18); and also in Tunisia women are still by and large prevented from working at night.¹⁵

The patriarchal nature of state and society might work against economic interests under neo-liberal economic restructuring. In many of the countries examined, young women are finding jobs in the export-oriented labour markets, whether in textile factories or agriculture, where there is an increasing demand for low-waged, exploitable, precarious and flexible labour. It is mainly young women who fulfil these roles. The extent to which this job market allows women any independence or empowerment is highly questionable, and such forms of integration into the labour market could hardly be labelled as “participation.” Sometimes women are subject to heavy forms of control and sexual abuse when not rape. One such case is that of the Ninja women in the Berkane rural area of Morocco. Here young women are obliged to cover themselves with “ninja” style face covering, so not to be recognizable when they go to work in the orangerie. This way the men of their families can contain the shame of women being subject to sexual abuses and preserve their honour, while still sending women to work. This is revealing of the opposing and contrasting constraints that women have to negotiate under both neo-liberal economic restructuring of the economy which offers them jobs with no social security or benefits and extremely low wages on the one hand, and still heavily prevailing patriarchal powers that expect women to embody and preserve the honour of their men and extended families, on the other.

4.2 State Policies on Youth and Family

All WP2 papers analyse the “family” as a social unit geared for the reproduction of human beings, and criticize its explicit heteronormative framework, which is reflected inter alia in the stigma borne by individuals whose intimate arrangements and sexuality does not conform with it (e.g., single mothers, LGBTQI people, etc.).¹⁶ Reports further highlight to what extent and how consistently national legislation (e.g., personal status codes, family laws) enshrines the principle of equality among women and men. However, the family is more than a unit for human reproduction, and it should be analysed as an institution that affects women and men differently when it comes to their participation in education, employment, exercise of voice and agency, enjoyment of sexuality, etc. In the previous section this has been clearly shown in relation to employment, and more precisely in relation to the trade-off for young women

length of maternity leave both in public and private sectors (Lebanon Government 2015). In Palestine, women are entitled to ten weeks’ paid leave; whereas in Turkey, women are granted sixteen weeks of paid leave, the cost of 2/3 of which is paid by the state.

¹⁵ OECD Development Centre, *SIGI Country Profiles: Tunisia*, <http://www.genderindex.org/country/tunisia>.

¹⁶ For example, homosexuality is criminalized in Lebanon, and both the Tunisian and Turkish reports observe the existence of widespread forms of discrimination against LGBTQI people. On the other hand, in some cases repressive laws coexist with de facto “tolerance” provided that transgressions of the heteronormative framework are discreetly contained. Further down this line, what is officially sanctioned as “deviant” behaviour (i.e., homosexuality) can be however opportunistically turned into a national economic asset - as is the case in Lebanon, where the capital Beirut is renowned worldwide as a destination for “LGBTQI-friendly” tourism.

between marriage (i.e., transition into adulthood) and employment.

In fact, and consistently with the discussion of marriage and employment undertaken in the previous section, most WP2 reports (Lebanon, Turkey, Palestine) highlight that young people enter into their first marriage at a later age than their parents' generation. Such delayed marriage entails the prolonging of the period of time during which young people are expected to abstain from engaging in sexual relations in compliance with prevailing chastity norms. Yet, this is not necessarily happening, and some WP2 reports (Tunisia, Morocco) observe the rise of different forms of marriage conducted away from state (and family) supervision ("urfi" marriage), and an increase in abortion rates - which in turn signals youth engagement in premarital sex.

At the opposite side of the spectrum, some country reports (Morocco and Egypt) highlight the persistence of early marriage, which is further registered by the OECD in Lebanon and in Turkey.¹⁷ It is likely that early marriage further erodes women's employability.

Finally, the family can play an important role in facilitating access to employment and resources, in gendered ways. For example, in Morocco access to work mostly occurs through family and friends (63.9 percent) (Chicha 2013:31). The P2Y Lebanese country report stresses the link between sectarianism, the economy and the state and shows how it affects and co-opts initiatives supposedly aiming to empower "youth" in the political and/or economic domain (Harb 2016). It also paves the way to an analysis of how this link reproduces a specific (im)balance of gendered power relations within the family and society, amidst privileges, rewards and responsibilities. In fact, the report analyses the link between militia-mediated access to welfare, housing and employment, which attracts young *men*, in exchange for their loyalty. Hence, young men "grow" affiliated to and embedded in an intersecting clientelistic-confessional-religious-military system of loyalty through which they become the "middle men" extending party-provided resources to their families. On the one hand, young men grow accustomed to being in this position of power and control of resources essential for the livelihood of their family and especially of their dependents, that typically include women and offspring. The other side of power and control however is responsibility, which might at times translate into a feeling of being trapped in a position where the welfare of a (more or less young) man's family depends on his loyalty to a totalizing "institution" that frames his social life (geographical and social mobility, etc.).

4.3 State Policies on Youth and Migration

All WP2 reports contain a gender-based analysis of migration. For example, the Lebanese country report provides gender-disaggregated data on who migrates, and also on the main reasons for it, which are found to be mostly professional for young men (76 percent), and for "family reasons" for young women (53 percent) (Harb 2016:15). The Tunisian report states that the majority of migrants are young men, but reports that "the percentage of Tunisian women who prefer to migrate is considered the highest in the Arab world" (Paciello et al. 2016b:16) Such a gap between women's desire and capacity to migrate constitutes at least in part an indicator of the existence of informal gender-specific constraints on migration

¹⁷ OECD Development Centre, *SIGI Country Profiles*, <http://www.genderindex.org/country>.

stemming for example from chastity norms and the gender division of reproductive work. Similarly, the Egyptian report observes that the government encourages migration for young educated males in OECD countries; and also that Egypt is considered as “the largest labour-exporting country to the Gulf Cooperation Council, with almost 10 percent of its workforce migrating there;” and it highlights that this “excludes young women” (Sika 2016:17-18).

Both the Moroccan and the Tunisian reports note an ambivalence underlying public discourse on migration, which juxtaposes the young migrant as a “development tool” (i.e., the “regular” and educated migrant), with the young migrant as a problem, a threat (i.e., “irregular” migrants, with low skills and education).

Finally, the Moroccan report highlights an interesting contradiction in the matter of gender, employment and migration (Paciello et al. 2016a). In section 4.1 we showed how for young women, marriage often entails dropping out of paid employment, but this report shows that for women migrating towards the EU, marital status is a key determinant of their capacity to work. Women strawberry pickers in Spain are employed only if they are married and with dependent children, as this condition is seen as a deterrent preventing their permanent settlement in the country of destination.

4.4 State Policies on Youth and Spatial Planning Policies

All WP2 papers discuss the class-based inequalities reproduced through urban infrastructure in terms of the quality of basic services (water, electricity, waste management) and more broadly of the cost of housing. The Tunisian report explicitly connects the discussion of the rising costs of living and housing to delays in marriage, which inter alia typically depend on the marital couple’s access to a space of their own in which to set up their separate household, independent from their parents (Paciello et al. 2016b).

The observed lack of affordable housing might reveal an underlying demand of “governance” and control with which states entrust families. Hence, families of origin are called upon to absorb the socioeconomic cost of prolonged youth unemployment and “unmarriageability” while cushioning youth frustration at their prolonged dependent status. The increasing functioning of the family as a safety net for youth in a context of exacerbated economic insecurity is specifically pinpointed by the Turkish and Tunisian reports.

Most reports highlight the class-based and/or political and sectarian segmentation of leisure spaces in urban settings, which is often further reflected in gendered patterns of socialization. For example, the Tunisian country paper clearly spells out the difference between Western style cafés where mixed interaction between middle- and upper-class young women and men is practised; and male-only Arab cafés in lower-class neighbourhoods. Constraints on women’s access to and mobility through public spaces include widespread sexual harassment that has been observed in a number of countries (for example Lebanon and Egypt¹⁸). Such constraints can be further exacerbated in the absence of affordable, safe and reliable public transportation, a gap that, in turn, can affect women’s capacity to access education and jobs outside of their hometown or entailing night work.

¹⁸ See OECD Development Centre, *SIGI Country Profiles*, <http://www.genderindex.org/country>. On Egypt see also HarassMap website: <http://reports.harassmap.org>.

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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 13 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.

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