



# POWER2YOUTH

## Youth and Family Policies in Arab Countries and Turkey: The Political Stakes of Demography

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Françoise De Bel-Air<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

*The aim of the paper is to analyse the dominant trends of demographic evolution in South and East Mediterranean (SEM) countries since the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the evolution of demographic policies and popular debates surrounding the shift. It seeks to highlight from these two sources the deep socio-demographic rifts dividing youth and societies in the SEM countries today, in the mid-2010s. Additionally, it attempts to pinpoint how reforms (or attempts at reform) of family law actually reflect the goals and stakes of "high politics," regarding the role of youth as agents in the reproduction of socio-political structures.*

**Keywords:** Youth | Demography | Morocco | Tunisia | Egypt | Palestine | Lebanon | Turkey

### INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the 1970s, family structures have undergone a revolution in all South and East Mediterranean (SEM) countries. Young females' age at first marriage has risen notably, and some women could remain unmarried. Fertility levels have also declined everywhere since the 1980s: in Lebanon, Tunisia and Turkey, fertility now stands at or below the replacement level of 2.1 children per woman. Voluntary family policies promoting reproductive choice and women's empowerment, the closing of the males-to-females education gap, as well as urbanization and expanding economic globalization are among the factors underlying the generalization of this trend to almost all countries in the region, including most recently Palestine. Does this indicate, as suggested by Youssef Courbage and Emmanuel Todd (2011), a general "convergence of civilizations" between Europe, for instance, and its Mediterranean neighbours?

As a matter of facts, this evolution remains fraught with paradoxes. In spite of the increase in female education levels, females' activity rates have remained low. During the 2000s, moreover, new demographic trends also emerged, which seem to contradict previous evolutions. Increase in age at marriage and fertility decline have stalled in some countries; they have even reverted in others where young people now marry earlier than a decade ago, and give birth to more children. At the same time, a new generation of rulers who accessed power in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings advocate for a revision of family policies and dynamics on Islamic and patriarchal grounds. Does this contradict reflections (Todd 2011) linking youth uprisings in the region to upheavals in "hierarchies of gender and generation"<sup>2</sup> (Fargues 1995) generated by the increase in education and ensuing changes in family structures?

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<sup>2</sup> The pre-eminence of males over females and elders over youth.

The aim of the paper is to analyse the dominant trends of demographic evolution in SEM countries since the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the evolution of demographic policies and popular debates surrounding the shift. It seeks to highlight from these two sources the deep socio-demographic rifts dividing youth and societies in the SEM countries today, in the mid-2010s. Additionally, it attempts to pinpoint how reforms (or attempts at reform) of family law actually reflect the goals and stakes of “high politics,” regarding the role of youths as agents in the reproduction of socio-political structures. This explains the violence of the struggle for (or against) reforming personal status laws in the region.

Section 1 of the paper describes and analyses the dominant patterns in youth demographic dynamics. We focus here on marriage, fertility and family structures in the age group 15-34 whenever possible. Sections 2 and 3 focus respectively on family law until the 2000s, and after the regime changes of the 2000s-2010s. Section 4 analyses representations of youth and their social role implicitly carried by policy reforms defended by the Islamic-based regimes in the region. Part V tries to identify the “high politics” stakes involved in reforming personal status laws.

## **1. FAMILY DYNAMICS, CONTRASTED TRENDS**

In theory, the Muslim family has been for long considered as characterized by the following six traits: “extended, patrilineal, patrilocal, patriarchal, endogamous, and occasionally polygynous” (Patai 1969:84). This ideal model of family structures is said to rest on an early and universal marriage, marriage being “central to the growth and stability of the basic social unit of the society, the Muslim family” (Esposito 1982:15). That is, it is hard to pinpoint whether such a family really exists, and even harder to identify whether it is the dominant form. Several authors have indeed illustrated the diversity of family structures and dynamics across the Arab region, and within countries, even in past times. The Egyptian census of 1848 indicates that in the Egyptian countryside, households were large and often extended. By contrast, households in Cairo were mostly nuclear (70.4 percent), and small in size (3.5 persons on average). A substantial number of households, 16.5 percent, comprised one person only: widows, orphans, workers, etc. Marriage was universal for males and females, yet a fraction of the men married late and polygyny was rare. Cairene families were thus rather unstable, due to mobility and mortality. Sixteen percent of households, for instance, were female-headed (Fargues 2000a:45-46). Judith Tucker, writing about the town of Nablus in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, also reports a diversity of family structures according to income level: court records indicated that 16 percent of upper-class families in the Palestinian town were polygynous, but numbers were much lower among low-income households (Tucker 1993). In Tunisia, too, high levels of mortality hampered the generalization of the extended family model. Moreover, patriarchal domination is said to have gained momentum within the household in the 1930s, first due to colonial domination, and then with centralization of the State, which accelerated the split of large family units and the development of salaried income at the expense of family-owned small businesses where women could play an active role (Ben Salem 1994:22-23).

## 1.1 Evolution of Family Structures from the 1960s to the 2000s

Using demographic literature and surveys, we now examine the dominant demographic trends characterizing the populations of the six countries, since the countries gained independence from colonial rule in the 1960s. Our aim is to emphasize the effective convergence of behaviours that took place during the period spanning until the early 2000s. Marriage happened increasingly later and fertility levels lowered significantly almost everywhere. However, other factors remained, paradoxically, stable: levels of patrilineal endogamy, for instance, have remained high until today.

### Marriage patterns

Age at first marriage has increased notably in the Arab region and in Turkey since the 1960s, though at various paces. In Morocco, females' mean age at first marriage was just 17.2 in the mid-1960s, and reached almost 27 in 2010. In Tunisia, the evolution has been even more marked and young females in the country have been marrying at around the age of 30 since the late 2000s. Young males experienced similar changes: whereas young Moroccan men used to marry at the age of 24 in 1960, today they wait until they are 31; the age in Lebanon is 33, and 33.5 in Tunisia. In the other four countries, women's age at first union is not as high. It remains below 30 in Lebanon and below 25 in Turkey, Palestine and Egypt. In these last three countries, males also marry before the age of 30 on average: around 27 in Egypt in 2006, and around 28 in Turkey (2011 data) and in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) (2014 data). Consequently, as females' age at first marriage has increased more than that of males, the age gap between spouses has decreased between the 1960s-1970s and the late 2000s: from 5.5 (Lebanon, 1970) to 7 years (Egypt, 1960s), the gap now stands at around 4-4.5 years. Interestingly, in some of the countries (Tunisia, Palestine, Lebanon), this gap was smaller in the 1990s than in the most recent period, around 3.5 years.

As emphasized in Table 1, the rise in age at first marriage since the 1960s-70s is due to a significant, albeit unequal, decrease in the proportion of early marriages among females, as well as males. Sixty percent of young women were already married in the age group 15-19 in 1960 in Morocco for instance. In 2010, the rate had fallen to just below 10 percent, close to that of Palestine (West Bank and Gaza) and Turkey in the same period. In Tunisia and Lebanon, almost no young women were married at such an early age in the late 2000s (1.9 and 2.6 percent respectively). By contrast, Egypt<sup>3</sup> still witnesses numerous early female marriages: 15 percent of girls aged 15 to 19 years were recorded as married in 2014, among whom 6.4 percent were below 17 years of age. Even in Gaza where young and sometimes teenage marriages persisted at least until the early 2000s (Rashad et al. 2005), "only" 12.8 percent of girls were married in the 15-19 age group (as well as 2.6 percent among girls below 15) in 2014.

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<sup>3</sup> In Egypt, 40 percent of girls were married before their 16th birthday in the 1960s.

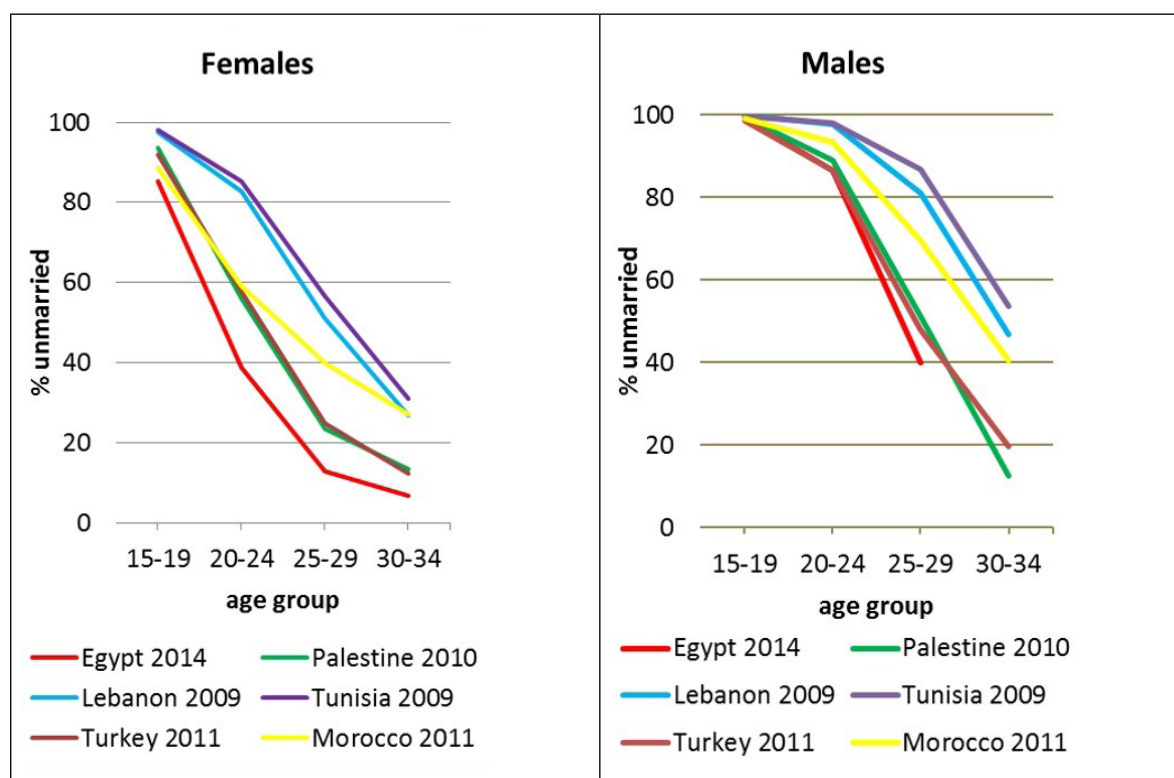
**Table 1 |** Evolution of marriage and family formation patterns: selected indicators (1985-2015)

		Ever-married women (%)	Never-married women (%)		Total fertility rates (children per woman)	Current use of contraceptive method (% married women)
	Age group Period of survey	15-19	20-24	30-34	15-49	15-49
<b>Morocco</b>	1982	18.5	59.5	6.3	5.5	35.9 (1987)
	1990-94	12.5	44.0	13.9	4.0	41.5
	1995-99	10.5	39.8	20.8	3.3	50.2
	2000-04	11.1	38.7	27.3	2.6	63.0
	2005-09					
	2010-14	11.3	40.9	27.0	2.5	67.0
<b>Tunisia</b>	1985-89	6.7	34.9	9.7	4.7	50.0
	1990-94	3.0	27.7	18.1	2.9	60.0
	1995-99					
	2000-04	2.1	16.5	28.0	2.0	
	2005-09	1.9	14.7	31.0	2.0	60.2
	2010-14	3.8	17.2	28.4	2.4	63.0
<b>Egypt</b>	1985-89	15.5	57.7	5.1	4.4	38.0
	1990-94	14.0	55.0	4.9	3.9	47.0
	1995-99	14.3	56.7	6.1	3.6	48.0
	2000-04	11.9	53.0	6.0	3.5	56.0
	2005-09	12.5	50.0	6.9	3.1	59.0
	2010-14	14.7	61.1	6.8	3.5	59.0
<b>Palestine</b>	1985-89					
	1990-94					
	1995-99	24.0	68.9	16.7	5.9	
	2000-04	18.4	58.6	12.8	5.5	51.4
	2005-09	9.1	47.0	16.0	4.6	50.2
	2010-14	9.3	43.9	13.5	4.1	57.2
<b>Lebanon</b>	1985-89					
	1990-94					
	1995-99	5.6	25.6	30.5	2.7	37.0
	2000-04	5.3	27.0	30.1		
	2005-09	2.6	17.3	26.7	1.9	54.5
	2010-14					
<b>Turkey</b>	1985-89	14.6		4.5	3.0	63.4
	1990-94	13.5	57.7	4.3	2.7	62.6
	1995-99	15.5	59.3	6.5	2.6	64.0
	2000-04	11.9	49.8	8.2	2.2	71.0
	2005-09	9.8	45.6	10.8	2.2	73.0
	2010-14	8.2	42.3	12.4		

Sources: Egypt: Abdel-Aziz Sayed et al. (1989), El-Zanaty et al. (1993, 1996), El-Zanaty and Way (2001, 2004, 2006, 2009), Egypt's Ministry of Health et al. (2015); Lebanon: Tutelian et al. (2006), CAS and UNDP (2006), UNICEF and CAS (2011), Yaacoub and Badre (2012); Morocco: Azelmat et al. (1989, 1993, 1996), Morocco's Ministry of Health et al. (2005), HCP (2011, 2012), Morocco's Ministry of Health (2012); Palestine: PCBS (1997, 2007, 2013, 2015); Tunisia:

Aloui et al. (1989), Sandron (1998), Tunisia's Ministry of Health et al. (2008), INS (2012, 2015), MDCI et al. (2013); Turkey: Turkey's Ministry of Health et al. (1994), Institute of Population Studies and Macro (1999), Institute of Population Studies (2004, 2009), TurkStat (2013).

**Figures 1-2** | Percentage of unmarried young females and males by age group (last available data)



Sources: Egypt: Egypt's Ministry of Health et al. (2015); Lebanon: UNICEF and CAS (2011); Morocco: Morocco's Ministry of Health (2012); Palestine: PCBS (2013); Tunisia: INS (2012); Turkey: TurkStat (2013).

Moreover, marriage in Egypt also stands out as it is close to universal: only 6.8 percent of females were still unmarried in the 30-34 age group in 2014, as compared with, respectively, 12.4 and 13.5 percent of Turkish and Palestinian women of the same age. Yet, close to 30 percent of Lebanese, Tunisian and Moroccan women were unmarried in that age group. This accounts for the growing phenomenon of female celibacy in the Arab world, observable since the late 1990s in almost every country in the region (De Bel-Air 2008, 2012). It is indeed likely that most of these young women could remain single at later ages, as until today procreation remains the purpose of marriage in the region (Fig. 1).<sup>4</sup> Among young males, the geographic division of marriage timing is similar. Turkish and Palestinian men, as well as Egyptians among whom 40 percent only remained unmarried in the 25-29 age group, marry earlier and probably more than Moroccans, Lebanese and especially, Tunisians. Among these, more than half (54 percent) are still unmarried in their early 30s (47 percent among Lebanese men at

<sup>4</sup> Arab populations in general display the shortest interval separating marriage and first birth worldwide: less than two years at the end of the 1990s for all generations studied in the countries of the region. See Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) data: <http://dhsprogram.com/Data>.



that age and 40 percent among Moroccan men) (Fig. 2).

However, running parallel to the growing propensity to female (and perhaps male) late marriage or celibacy is the remarkable persistence of high levels of endogamy (marriage within kinship).<sup>5</sup> Marriages with first cousins<sup>6</sup> were nowhere less than 15 percent as of the mid- to late 2000s, and the rate goes up to 24 and 28 percent for ever-married females aged 15-49 respectively in Tunisia (2001) and in Palestine (2006). Females married within kinship (with first cousins or more remote relatives) made up 45 percent of all married females in Palestine in 2006 and 31.5 percent in Egypt in 2014. The husband is twice as likely to be a relative from the father's side as from the mother's side on average, in all five countries. Interestingly, the share of females in endogamous unions is similar in every age group, for example in Egypt in 2014.<sup>7</sup> By contrast, polygyny, another phenomenon considered typical of the "traditional" Arab family, was never frequent in Arab societies. It concerns today less than 5 percent of married women according to demographic surveys conducted throughout the region.<sup>8</sup>

In general, marriages have become more stable: the frequency of divorce has greatly diminished over the years. In Egypt for instance, around a third of all marriages were terminated by a divorce in the early 1940s, as against 13 percent in the mid-2000s (Fargues 2003).<sup>9</sup> However, most divorces still happen very rapidly: 45 percent of divorces were pronounced within the five years following the marriage in Egypt in 2014 for instance, and 15 percent were registered within one year only.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, in the vast majority of the early divorces (pronounced before five years of union), the wife was below 25 and the husband below 30 years of age (respectively, 62 percent of divorced women and 60 percent of divorced men). The proportions are relatively similar in the case of divorces pronounced less than one year after the marriage.<sup>11</sup> This confirms the greater instability of early marriages.

What is the impact of such dynamics on youth empowerment? Does late marriage, for instance, mean that young people enjoy self-fulfilment and freedom from social duties? Offering a

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<sup>5</sup> Turkey may have lower levels of such marriages, which are rejected by some Muslim communities in the country, for instance the populations originating from the Caucasus. Older figures (1993) still indicated 23 percent of ever-married females in such marriages, of which 15 percent were with a first cousin (quoted in Tabutin and Schoumaker 2005:528).

<sup>6</sup> With the father's brother's son, father's sister's son, mother's brother's son and mother's sister's son.

<sup>7</sup> Sources: Rashad et al. 2005; PCBS 2007; Egypt's Ministry of Health et al. 2015.

<sup>8</sup> See for example the DHS data by country.

<sup>9</sup> Alongside polygyny, which was never frequent in Arab societies, high levels of divorce (and males' frequent remarriage) served the purpose of compensating for the imbalance in numbers of males and females, resulting from the age gap between spouses (around 7 years) commonly observed in "traditional" marriages in the past, as suggested by Fargues (1986, 1987, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> In 23.3 percent of divorce cases registered in 2014, however, the duration of marriage was missing. Divorce happening soon after the celebration of marriage is a phenomenon observed in every Arab country. It probably reflects the breaking of the marriage contract after long engagement periods, if the groom fails to make living arrangements, or he fails in organizing the marriage's social ceremony after the signature of the marriage contract (*katb al kitab*). However, the trend could be decreasing: in 2000, 68.7 percent of marriages had lasted less than five years according to civil status registration, and 51.8 percent in 2006 (Osman and Girgis 2009:24).

<sup>11</sup> 60 percent of females aged below 25 and 56 percent of males aged below 30 divorced after less than one year of marriage. See civil status registration, in CAPMAS (2014).



global response to this is impossible. However, residency patterns can suggest some answers. In Lebanon in 2009, for instance, single-person dwellings were mostly inhabited by inactive persons (65 percent), the elderly and widows, and not by young persons: three-quarters of these individuals were aged 46 and more, with half being 65 or above. Only 3 percent of such dwellings were occupied by young persons aged 15 to 24 (Yaacoub and Badre 2012:13). This means that even if young males and females marry late in Lebanon, they cannot live in independent housing and therefore are not emancipated from parental supervision. Reasons are diverse (real estate and housing prices for instance), but mostly, social pressure hampers unmarried youth seeking to live independently, even the men. Experience also suggests that some young people do not marry because they are expected to take care of their aging parents. Early marriage does not always guarantee independence from the family either. In Egypt, more than one third (38 percent) of married young people in the age group 15-29 were found living with their parents upon marriage, primarily with the husband's family (Roushdy and Sieverding 2015:88). This points to a shortage of affordable housing and high youth unemployment, which compels young couples to stay under the parents' roof. Therefore, later marriage seems to have mixed outcomes as regards youth emancipation from patriarchal and family rule.

## Fertility

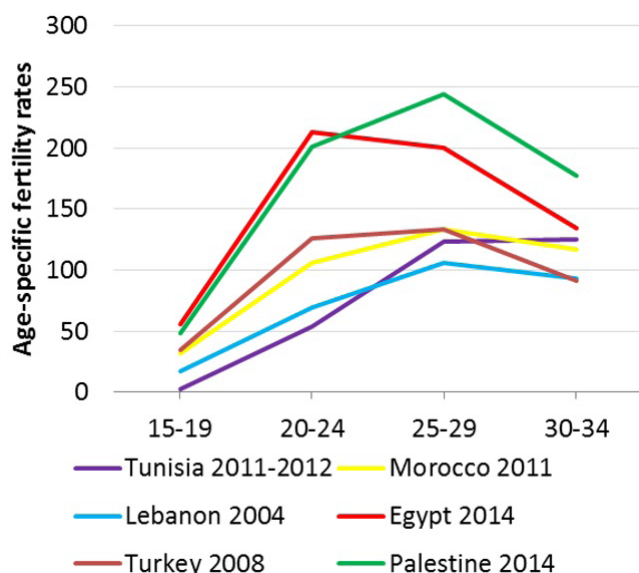
As expected in view of the rise in age at marriage since the 1960s in most countries, fertility levels have decreased rapidly since that time. From around 7 children per women in the 1960s, the total fertility rate (TFR)<sup>12</sup> fell to around 2 children on average in 2010-2011 in Morocco and Tunisia. In Morocco, the decline took off ten years later (mid-1970s) than in Tunisia (mid-1960s). Turkey, as well as Lebanon, also displayed low fertility levels in the late 2000s (2.1 and 1.9 children per woman respectively). Lebanon now stands below the 2.1 children per women threshold guaranteeing generation replacement. The country already had a lower TFR than elsewhere in the region in 1960 (5.7 children per women; Rizkallah and Moneim 1997:1224). In Egypt, the evolution was less straightforward: the total fertility rate decreased from 5.3 in 1980 to 3 in 2008, yet after erratic movements and after yet another rise during the 1970s, following an economic improvement in the country (Courbage 1994, Fargues 2000a:104-106). Moreover, fertility levels seem to have gone up since the mid-2000s. In Palestine, fertility was historically among the highest in the world in the early 1990s but eventually slowed, especially in the West Bank. The TFR in the early 2000s was 4.6 per woman, down from 5.9 a decade earlier. In Gaza, the TFR decreased more slowly, from 7.4 to 5.6 during the Second Intifada period (Khawaja et al. 2009). In 2014, it reached 4.1 children per woman (3.7 in the West Bank and 4.5 in Gaza) (Table 1).

As regards young females' fertility patterns, we see that the two most fertile countries (Palestine and Egypt), as well as Turkey, have their highest fertility levels in the young age group (between 20 and 30 years), unlike Lebanon, Morocco and mostly Tunisia where births are less concentrated in young age groups, due to delay in marriage (Fig. 3). Young Egyptian and Palestinian women already gave birth to 3 children, and more in their mid-30s (Table 2).

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<sup>12</sup> The TFR (births per women) represents the mean number of children that would be born alive to a woman during her lifetime if she were to pass through her childbearing years conforming to the fertility rates by age of a given year. The TFR is the sum of age-specific fertility rates that given year.

**Figure 3** | Youth's age-specific fertility rates (age group 15-34, last available data)



Sources: Egypt: Egypt's Ministry of Health et al. (2015); Lebanon: Tutelian et al. (2006); Morocco: Morocco's Ministry of Health (2012); Palestine: PCBS (2015); Tunisia: MDCI et al. (2013); Turkey: Institute of Population Studies (2009).

**Table 2** | Total fertility rates (last available data)

	15-34	15-49
Egypt 2014	3.0	3.5
Tunisia 2011	1.5	2.1
Morocco 2011	1.9	2.6
Lebanon 2004	1.4	1.7
Turkey 2008	1.9	2.2
Palestine 2014	3.4	4.1

Sources: Egypt: Egypt's Ministry of Health et al. (2015); Lebanon: Tutelian et al. (2006); Morocco: Morocco's Ministry of Health (2012); Palestine: PCBS (2015); Tunisia: MDCI et al. (2013); Turkey: Institute of Population Studies (2009).

The decrease in fertility levels indeed followed changes in marriage patterns. Nonetheless, family planning methods became increasingly used over the years. They are now almost universally known (99.9 percent of married Egyptian females in 2014, 99.1 percent of Moroccan females in 2004, 99.7 percent of Turkish women in 2008 for instance, according to DHS Surveys). The rate of use of any method<sup>13</sup> (traditional or modern) ranged between 54 percent in Lebanon (2009) and 73 percent in Turkey (2008) among married women aged 15 to 49. However, until today usage has increased with age, because most females in the region find it inappropriate to use birth control methods before the first child (90 percent in Egypt in 2014 for instance). This may explain the high levels of abortion recorded in Tunisia where it

<sup>13</sup> Among married women. Surveys do not publish data on the use of contraception by non-married women.

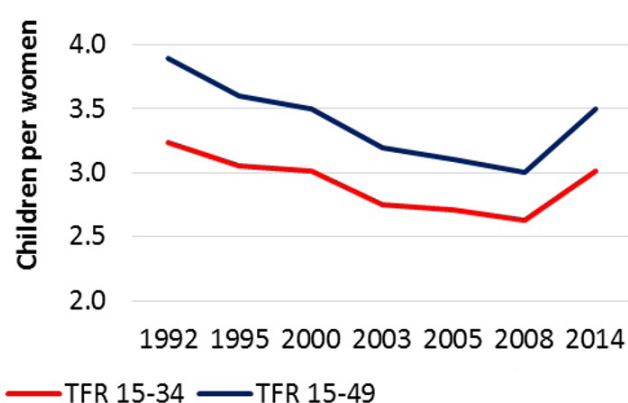
has been legalized since 1973 (cf. supra). Abortion in the country contributed to birth control on par with female sterilization, and more than the pill for instance. Until the early 1990s, the *Office National de la Famille et de la Population* (ONFP) was recording a regular 9 to 10 abortions per 100 live births. Pre-marriage sexually active women also resorted to abortion in case of undesired pregnancies. From 2 percent in 1986, the proportion of unmarried females undergoing abortion went up to 23 percent in 1992. The abortive pill was introduced in Tunisia in 2002. A study on users of the method showed that 21 percent of them were single (Blum et al. 2004, quoted in Gastineau 2012). This is indicative of the social control still surrounding females' sexuality, even in a country like Tunisia.

## 1.2 The 2000s-2010s: Reversing Trends?

In spite of the diversity of national contexts, and the corresponding variety of patterns of change in the conditions of family formation among youth, the trend towards later or no marriage, and towards controlled or decreasing fertility is confirmed in every country. Family formation patterns today contrast with those prevailing four decades ago. However, the 2000s inaugurated a period of stalling of these rapid changes, everywhere in the region. In the cases of Tunisia and Egypt, signs of reversing previous trends (increase in teenage marriage and in early fertility) can even be noticed among the youngest age groups.<sup>14</sup>

Indeed, an increase in the share of girls who are married in young age groups (12 to 15 percent in the 15-19 category and 54 to 61 percent at age 20-24) has been perceptible since the early 2000s in Egypt (Table 1). In parallel, a rise in fertility rates has also occurred among Egyptians as a whole as well as among young citizens aged 15-34 (Fig. 4). This trend took off in 2003 with the teenage groups, but spread to every age category between 2008 and 2014 (Fig. 5).

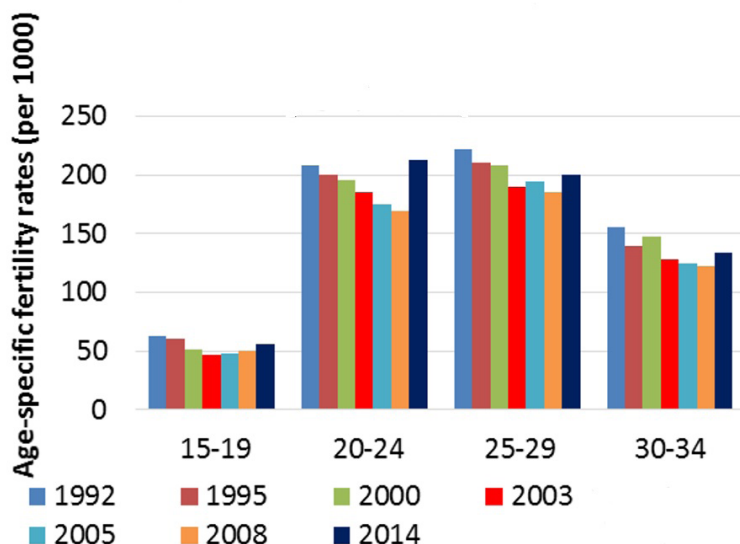
**Figure 4** | Evolution of the total fertility rates in young and total populations in Egypt (1992-2014)



Sources: El-Zanaty et al. (1993, 1996), El-Zanaty and Way (2001, 2004, 2006, 2009), Egypt's Ministry of Health et al. (2015).

<sup>14</sup> On the decrease in age at marriage and increase in fertility in Tunisia and Algeria, see Ouadah-Bedidi et al. (2012), Ouadah-Bedidi and Vallin (2013).

**Figure 5** | Evolution of age-specific fertility rates among young age groups in Egypt (1992-2014)



Sources: El-Zanaty et al. (1993, 1996), El-Zanaty and Way (2001, 2004, 2006, 2009), Egypt's Ministry of Health et al. (2015).

In Morocco and in Tunisia, too, the patterns of marriage have changed since the mid-2000s. Females' age at first marriage decreased slightly between the censuses of 2004 and 2014 (from 26.3 to 25.8 in Morocco and from 28.7 to 28.2 in Tunisia). Moreover, using civil status data that allow capturing the movements of population year by year, Tunisia's National Institute for Statistics (INS) effectively pinpointed an increase in fertility rates between 2004 and 2014: from 2.16 to 2.46 children per woman, in line with an increase in the number of marriages during the period, at all ages including young ones (INS 2015). More generally, even in the other countries where no such reversal of previous family formation patterns has been noticed so far, the evolution of some indicators seems nevertheless to have stalled. The age at first marriage among females in Lebanon, for instance, stopped increasing and remains below 30. The practice of family planning, too, has stalled everywhere in the region, at the world's average level (63 percent of married women using family planning; Clifton and Kaneda 2013) or below, save Turkey, and Morocco to a lesser extent (Table 1).

Moreover, the issue of child brides has resurfaced in every country, as actual figures may be higher than previously expected.<sup>15</sup> In Morocco, a report using data from the Ministry of Justice pinpointed the scale of the phenomenon (Table 3), which is not emphasized in surveys, as we have seen. The report stated that around 90-92 percent of such applications were accepted by judges over the period. The urban/rural division, surprisingly, indicated a similar propensity to early marriages in both settings, with the figure being a little higher in urban than in rural areas: 52 of all applications for 2013 were filed in towns (INSAF 2014:6-7).

<sup>15</sup> On Turkey and Lebanon for example see Beeston (2011). In Lebanon, an increase in child marriage is reported, among poverty-stricken Syrian refugees but also among poor Lebanese. See AFP (2014b).

**Table 3** | Number of applications for underage marriages (below 18) in Morocco (2007-2013)

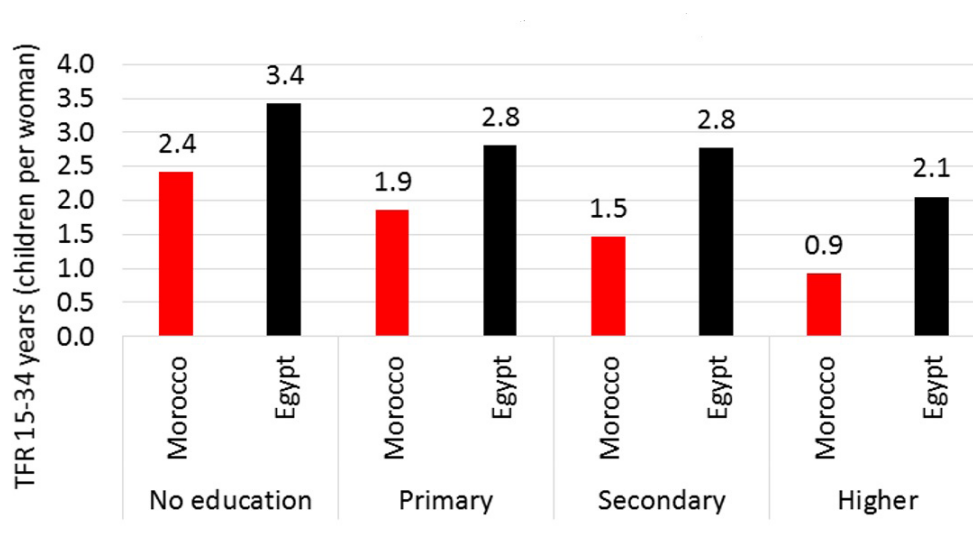
	Males	Females	Total	% of total aged		
				15 and below	16 years	17 years
2007	379	38,331	38,710	8.0	25.5	66.6
2008	308	39,296	39,604	7.5	31.7	60.8
2009	174	46,915	47,089	7.4	26.3	66.3
2010	438	44,134	44,572	1.5	20.4	78.1
2011	326	46,601	46,927	6.4	27.2	66.4
2012	106	42,677	42,783	6.1	25.6	68.3
2013	92	43,416	43,508	3.7	29.9	66.4

Source: INSAF 2014:6-7.

### 1.3 The Proximate Determinants to Family Formation Patterns: Divided Youth?

Demographic dynamics are usually explained by some powerful proximate determinants: education and female employment. As emphasized in Figure 6, education indeed plays a role. A comparison between Morocco and Egypt in 2003, for instance, indicates that fertility levels decreased as education levels increased in the two countries. Uneducated women gave birth to 3.4 children, as compared to 2.1 children on average among highly educated females in Egypt. In Morocco, uneducated women's TFR was 2.4 while the TFR among the most educated stood below one child on average. However, it appears that the national context plays a determining role too: a highly educated Egyptian gives birth to more children than a Moroccan with primary education only.

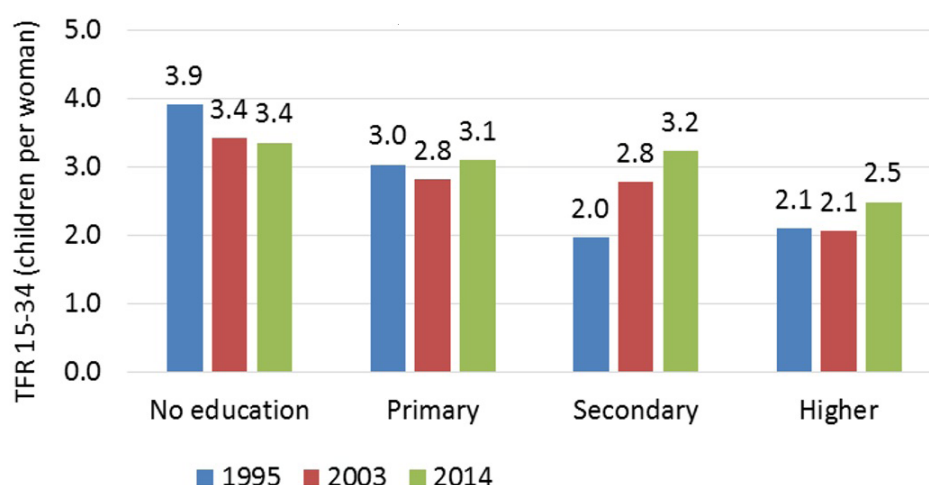
**Figure 6** | Total fertility rates for women aged 15-34, by education level (Morocco and Egypt, 2003)



Sources: El-Zanaty and Way (2004), Morocco's Ministry of Health et al. (2005).

Moreover, the evolution of behaviours in time may appear surprising: judging by the example of Egypt, increasing education is not necessarily linked with lower fertility. A highly educated young woman in 2014 gave birth to more children than a woman with secondary education ten years earlier. Additionally, the less educated females were the only ones who experienced a fertility decrease within the decade (Fig. 7).

**Figure 7** | Evolution of total fertility rates for women aged 15-34, by education level (Egypt, 1995; 2003; 2014)



Sources: El-Zanaty et al. (1996), El-Zanaty and Way (2004), Egypt's Ministry of Health et al. (2015).

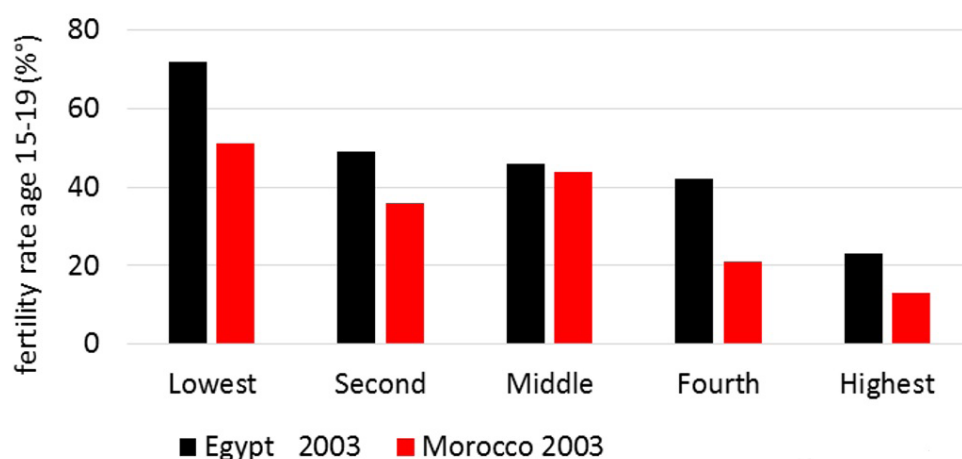
In Palestine, where females are among the most highly educated in the world,<sup>16</sup> factors of a political nature came into play. As stated by Azzouni (2010:25), in the country “the pressure to get pregnant – preferably with male children – begins as soon as women get married. Multiple births are valued as a means of compensating for deaths related to armed conflict, and more children are traditionally perceived as bringing strength to the family. They are also seen as a means of discouraging polygamy.” Women’s relatively young age at marriage, combined with their low labour force participation rate (according to the PCBS, Palestinian women’s overall labour force participation rate was 15.7 percent in 2007, 18.3 percent in the West Bank and 11 percent in Gaza), contributes to the high fertility rate (Azzouni 2010:25). Besides, the flow of Arab and international aid to Palestinians, the financial and in-kind subsidies, educational and other services made available to families by the UNRWA and other international donors, as well as by political organizations (PLO and Hamas, for instance), decreased material obstacles to high fertility by significantly reducing the “costs of procreation” (Fargues 2000a, 2000b).

<sup>16</sup> Enrolment ratios for higher education for both sexes were 48 percent in 2010 (percentage of the total population of the five-year age group following on from secondary school leaving), and women were more educated than men (Gender Parity Index: 1.55 in 2014). See World Bank data, *Gross enrolment ratio, tertiary, both sexes (%)*, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.TER.ENRR>; and *Gross enrolment ratio, tertiary, gender parity index (GPI)*, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ENR.TERT.FM.ZS>.

In Morocco, by contrast, women suffer lower levels of education than elsewhere in the region but display labour market activity rates comparable to those of Egypt and of Tunisia (around 25 percent of women aged 15 and above in the early 2010s).<sup>17</sup> There, the entry of women into the labour market spurred the drop in fertility rates, due to the economic crisis of the mid-1970s. The collapse of the price of phosphate dried up household income. Consequently, “From 1960 to 1995, the proportion of women 20 to 34 years of age (who account for 85 per cent of births) that were part of the economically active population quadrupled from less than 10 per cent to 37 per cent” (Courbage 2002:436).

In view of such a diversity of possible explanations for current marriage and fertility patterns, one phenomenon of particular importance to youth empowerment should be focussed on specifically: that of the decrease in age at marriage and ensuing earlier start of fertility. Most sources addressing the phenomenon agree that increase in poverty due to disengagement of States under neoliberal pressure, among other reasons, has played a decisive role in early marriages development. Girls’ early marriage, if motivated by poverty and desire of parents to alleviate their financial burden, should be cheap.<sup>18</sup> Under such pressure, the girls’ parents tend to decrease their demands in order to accelerate the procedure, and tend to choose socially compatible partners or family members, because “the wider the social gap, the higher the amount of the dowry” (Peristiany 1989:18).<sup>19</sup>

**Figure 8 | Fertility rates in the 15-19 age group by wealth quintile (Egypt and Morocco, 2003)**



Sources: El-Zanaty and Way (2004); Morocco’s Ministry of Health et al. (2005).

<sup>17</sup> World Bank data, *Labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+)* (modeled ILO estimate), <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS>.

<sup>18</sup> This tendency is generally seen during times of conflict.

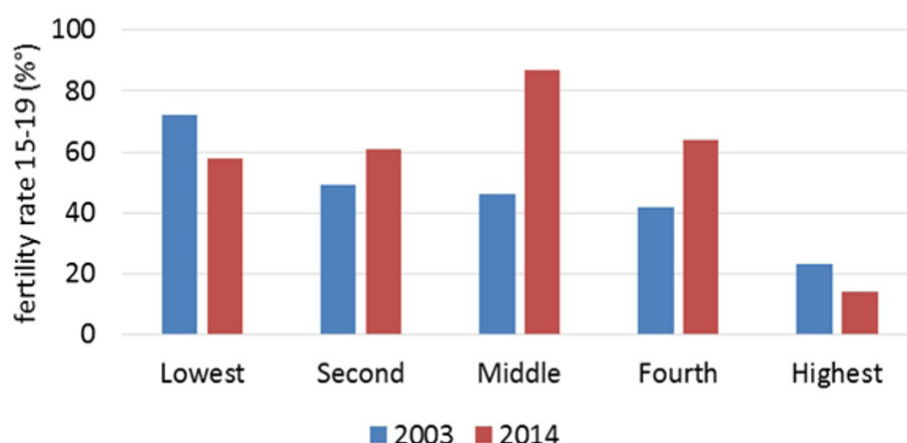
<sup>19</sup> The reproduction of an equality of status between givers and receivers - or, on the opposite side, of a hierarchy - corresponds with the fixing of the *mahr* amount: when “isogamous and endogamous,” the marriage “supports the idea of equitable exchange within the patrilineal group” thus requesting only a minimal payment; “isogamous and exogamous, it needs to be socially legitimised by a high payment which thus will mark the social status recognition of the woman and of her group of belonging” (Bonte 1994:380).



As a matter of fact, as seen in the cases of Egypt and Morocco, rates of early fertility by income level, which we use as a proxy to evaluate teenage marriage,<sup>20</sup> decrease as the family income category rises, except for a small hike in the middle-income category for Morocco (Fig. 8).

However, using data available for Egypt only, a comparison of teenage fertility levels by income category between 2003 and 2014 does not confirm the poverty argument as a possible explanation for early marriages of girls. Teenage fertility has become higher in the middle-income categories and has actually decreased among the poorest households between the two dates (Fig. 9).

**Figure 9** | Fertility rates in the 15-19 age group by wealth quintile (Egypt, 2003; 2014)



Sources: El-Zanaty and Way (2004), Egypt's Ministry of Health et al. (2015).

Although the case of Egypt may be particular to this country only, this poses questions as to how to explain demographic trends. Here, does the increase in early fertility (hence marriage) mean that girls actually decided upon such unions, with more socially distant partners as suggested by the wealth of the families concerned? This would paradoxically signal an empowerment of young girls, albeit apparently contradicting previous trends towards later marriages and decrease in fertility. Moreover, it could signal a marked change in girls' and families' socio-cultural attitudes, which could, perhaps, be linked to the Islamization of sectors of the Egyptian society. This socio-cultural drift in some parts of the Egyptian society may also be one outcome of the ousting of Hosni Mubarak's regime. Other lines of explanation suggest a multiplication of poverty-coping mechanisms including a "Malthusianism of poverty" as observed in the northwest of Tunisia (Gastineau 2012:75).

To sum up, the diversity of situations by country, within and between generations, suggests the concomitance of several models of family formation, from late marriage, high rates of

<sup>20</sup> Data on marriage by age group and income level are not available. Therefore, we use data on fertility by age group and income level. As shown earlier, we know in effect that the time gap between marriage and the first birth is minimal. Fertility data for the 15-19 age group offers proxy estimation of the intensity of early marriage.

celibacy and low fertility levels, to increasingly earlier marriages and higher fertility levels. These models coexist in each country, as suggested by the data and as confirmed in press accounts and field experience. Even in Egypt, some sectors of the population have trouble in marrying today (El Halawany 2009). Therefore, we can affirm that SEM societies are increasingly divided on the socio-demographic level. However, if certain dynamics indicate the reinforcement of a patriarchal model of family structures, the new patterns are far from those described by Raphael Patai (1969). Polygyny is very rare indeed, as are extended families sharing the same roof. The "quintessential" Arab family exists less than ever, in the troubled aftermath of the Arab uprisings.

## 2. FAMILY AND THE NATION-BUILDING PROCESSES: FAMILY POLICIES FROM THE 1960S TO THE 2000S

Family policies, to a certain extent, played a role in the early onset of the demographic changes in the region. In Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt and Turkey, population control policies were put in place in the 1960s, following decades of laissez-faire or pro-natalist policies conducted during the French Protectorate in the first two countries, leftist-developmental neutrality in Egypt<sup>21</sup> and Kemalist populationism until the late 1950s. Besides diverging views on "modernity," namely individual (especially women's) empowerment, the first three countries addressed head-on the issue of the population-to-resources ratio, with Morocco adopting an active, but less prominent policy.

Tunisia took the lead just after the country's independence from the French Protectorate when it enacted the very comprehensive and far-reaching Code of Personal Status (CPS) in August 1956. In contrast to the direction taken by Turkey's Kemal Atatürk, who cancelled any reference to Islamic laws in the civil code, Habib Bourguiba took a firm reformist stance, but kept Islamic law (Sharia)<sup>22</sup> as a source (Ben Achour 2007). In the Code the father is still "the head of the family" (Art. 23), extramarital and homosexual relations are penalized, but most notably, the text abolished polygyny, prohibited the wife's unilateral repudiation by her husband, and allowed women to claim for a divorce with the same rights and obligations as men, a first in the region. In order to tame down fertility, the law of 14 December 1960 limited family benefits to the first four children, at decreasing rates. The import of and advertisement for contraceptive drugs and devices were authorised as early as January 1961. In 1965, "social abortions"<sup>23</sup> became admitted in certain cases. The legal minimum age at marriage was raised to 17 for the woman and 20 for the man (20 February 1966). The Tunisian Association for Family Planning was set up in 1968 and the *Office National de la Famille et de la Population* (ONFP) in March 1973. In September of that same year, "social abortion" during the first three months of pregnancy became legal. Wide-ranging social policies accompanied the enactment of the CPS: the generalization of education to girls and boys from the age of 6 (in 1958), campaigns against the veil, the passing of 1959's Constitution stating equality of rights and duties between men and women in constitutional, economic, social and administrative

<sup>21</sup> However, Malthusian concerns (pertaining to the balance between resources and population growth) were expressed and debated in Egypt since the 1930s (Fargues 2000a:83-87).

<sup>22</sup> As stated in the Qur'an, the Hadiths, the jurisprudence and a new conception of *Ijtihad* (exegesis) of the texts.

<sup>23</sup> Outside circumstances which threaten the pregnant woman's life.

rights (women can both vote and be elected), as well as gender equality in the Labour Law (1966). Though remaining fiercely Malthusian, *in fine*, the ambitions and objectives of the Programme were widened after 1983, with regionalization of actions, development of policy towards family health (1980s), and later reproductive health (1990s), as well as involvement of youth and men in the policy (Gastineau and Sandron 2000).

In Egypt, birth control was declared legitimate by Al-Azhar religious authorities as early as 1935. The National Charter of 1961 was the first document designating demographic growth as an obstacle to development, and the onset of a policy advocating for birth control during the 1960s was a first among most other Arab states. The Supreme National Council for Family Planning was established in 1965, involving several ministries as well as Egypt's statistics office CAPMAS. During the decade, access to family planning clinics was liberalized and the husband's agreement, for example, was not necessary. Schoolteachers were also trained for the teaching and promotion of family planning in classes. In 1985, a presidential decree established the National Council for Population in charge of four domains of action: family planning, literacy, women's status and mother and child mortality. In 1988, the National Council's action was relayed throughout the country. Progressively, birth control became promoted everywhere, including through national media campaigns (Fargues 2000a:86-87). The Egyptian experience was much publicized with the Cairo Conference on Population and Development in 1994. However, the Conference acted as a platform voicing world and local religious (Islamic, as well as Christian) opposition to the principle of the limitation of demographic growth, of sexual education of teenagers, individual reproductive choices, etc. Despite the spate of criticism towards Malthusian policies expressed during the Conference, Egypt's stance on birth control was officially backed by Sheikh Tantawi, the Great Mufti of Egypt, by the government and by female activists. Therefore, the Conference and its provisions did not challenge Hosni Mubarak's position on the matter. His regime, until its fall, emphasized promotion of birth control in Egypt.

The personal status laws were significantly reformed after 2000. The debate over personal status law reform for Muslims focussed on the Islamic legal provision of *khul'*, a divorce process initiated by the female that does not require her husband's consent.<sup>24</sup> The provision was incorporated into Egypt's personal status law in 2000. Other reforms included a new standard marriage contract that allowed for stipulating conditions (the right to divorce in the event of a husband's contracting a second marriage, for instance), and a law allowing women to apply for a passport and to travel without spousal consent. Further reforms in 2005 also included the establishment of family courts, the creation of a Family Fund for court-ordered alimony and maintenance for female disputants, and new child custody laws. Support for the reforms by means of mobilizing and drafting came from various quarters of Egyptian society, but the final legislation counted on the support of the then National Democratic Party and the National Council for Women, headed by the former First Lady, Suzanne Mubarak (Gómez-Rivas 2011).

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<sup>24</sup> In which she forfeits financial rights and reimburses her husband the dowry paid when contracting the marriage. A period of reconciliation must ensue before the divorce is enacted, and she must state in court that she "hates living with her husband" and is "afraid to cross the limits of God."

Under Kemal Atatürk, the Turkish personal status was removed from Islamic legislation altogether. Most of the legislation in the Turkish Civil Code, the main legislative code regulating family-related issues (marriage, divorce, inheritance, custody and adoption of children), derives from the Swiss Civil Code. As for the Constitution, it provides for protections to the institution of family. The family is defined as “the foundation of Turkish society,” and the “State shall take the necessary measures [...] to protect peace and welfare of the family” (Article 41).<sup>25</sup> Article 10 of the Constitution addresses the principle of equality between men and women. The 2004 Turkish Penal Code (Articles 3 and 122) also states clearly that no discrimination shall be made between persons with respect of sex, among other legal provisions to ensure gender equality.<sup>26</sup> The Civil Code was amended in 2001, and adopted legal measures to ensure gender equality in the family, in the wake of the EU accession process and necessary compliance with EU regulation on gender equality (Müftüler-Baç 2012). Article 124 of the Code states that the minimum age for marriage is seventeen for both the groom and bride.<sup>27</sup> Yet, marriages from the age of 16 may be allowed, with court approval. In case of divorce, the household’s properties are split in two equal shares (Article 219). A woman can travel without her husband’s or guardian’s permission, which was forbidden under the previous Code. In the same vein, the labour law was also amended to include the provision of equal pay for equal work. Turkey similarly supported the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. These advocate easy access to a full range of sexual and reproductive health services, including abortion services for women.

The first family planning campaign was enacted in 1965, under the monitoring of the Ministry of Health. It included importing contraceptives, spreading reproductive health services and creating a network of family planning centres free of charge. The notion of family planning was inscribed in the first Five-Year Development Plan. The family planning law of 1983 legalised abortion until the tenth week of pregnancy, on social and economic grounds. Mother and child health and family planning services gained prominence within Turkish State policies over the years, in order to balance population and development infrastructures in education and health, and reduce inequalities in development (Institute of Population Studies 2009:9).

In Morocco, the family planning programme started in 1966, apparently under the pressure of the World Bank.<sup>28</sup> A national and a local population commission were established. The programme repealed the French Law prohibiting the advertising, sale and distribution of contraceptives in 1967. Family planning was included in the development plans after 1968, as one of the pillars of the State’s socio-economic policy but was not as publicized as in the other three countries in public calls for limiting population growth. Family planning activities were conducted within the framework of basic health services. The 1988-92 plan only states a “birth spacing” objective, within the agenda of the Public Health Ministry (Lahlou 1992:73).

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<sup>25</sup> Turkish Constitution of 1982, [https://global.tbmm.gov.tr/docs/constitution\\_en.pdf](https://global.tbmm.gov.tr/docs/constitution_en.pdf).

<sup>26</sup> Turkish Criminal Code of 2004, <http://www.legislationline.org/documents/section/criminal-codes/country/50>.

<sup>27</sup> In case of a person under the age of seventeen, the consent of the parents or the guardian is necessary (Art. 124/2). In exceptional cases a special consent to marriage can be given by the competent judge, if the parties have at least completed the age of sixteen (Art. 124/2).

<sup>28</sup> Morocco encountered an economic crisis in 1963. The World Bank accepted to grant the Kingdom a loan under the condition that structural adjustment measures of its economy would be enacted, and that birth control policies would be put in place in order to decrease the high levels of demographic growth (Lahlou 1992).

Yet family planning activities developed, notably with the Household Service Delivery programme (*Programme de visite à domicile de motivation systématique*) enacted in 1977, that made modern contraceptives available to all, including low-income and rural women, alongside other basic maternal and child health services. Since then, Morocco has expanded the coverage of family planning, maternal and child health, as well as reproductive health services. Yet, in marked contrast with the other countries in the region, Morocco did not conduct policies indirectly affecting fertility. Education, in particular, remained at low levels until recently, among women especially.

Morocco's 1996 Constitution states clearly that: "Morocco shall have a democratic, social and constitutional Monarchy" (Art. 1), and that

The King, "Amir Al-Muminin" (Commander of the Faithful), shall be the Supreme Representative of the Nation and the Symbol of the unity thereof. He shall be the guarantor of the perpetuation and the continuity of the State. As Defender of the Faith, He shall ensure the respect for the Constitution. He shall be the Protector of the rights and liberties of the citizens, social groups and organisations. The King shall be the guarantor of the independence of the Nation and the territorial integrity of the Kingdom within all its rightful boundaries. (Art. 19) The Moroccan Crown and the constitutional rights thereof shall be her[e]ditary and handed down, from father to son, to descendants in direct male line and by order of primogeniture [...] (Art. 20)<sup>29</sup>

The text of the former Constitution clearly highlights the very patriarchal nature of the ruling system in the country, which conflates the King to the father and the citizens to the children, yet also sacralizes the figure of the father, assimilated to the monarch and beyond, to a figure of religious authority. Hence the top-down nature of the reform process, especially when it tackles family issues. However, the reform of the *Mudawwana* Family Code in 2003-04 was achieved under the pressure of women's rights activists. It enacted three basic principles: legal equality between males and females, co-responsibility within the couple and the woman's access to social majority.<sup>30</sup> The minimum age for marriage is set at 18 years for both spouses, although judges can grant some derogations (Art. 19). Males and females are equal in the decision-making process within the family, as well in each spouse's rights and duties (faithfulness, respect, economic management, education, etc.): marriage is a pact resting on mutual agreement (Art. 4). Repudiation is made more difficult and females are entitled to claim divorce in conditions identical to those for men, under a judge's supervision (Art. 79). Representation of the woman by her *wali* (male guardian) is not repealed, but is not mandatory as before, for women aged 18 and more. However, polygamy (Art. 40-46) is not abolished, even if made more difficult: it became conditional to acceptance by the first wife and by a judge, and on the claimant's material wealth to ensure equal treatment to both families. Since 2007, a reform of the nationality code also allows women to pass their nationality to their children. In general, in Morocco, "the legal strategy was, first, to emphasise that the reform of the Family Code could reconcile Islamic, national and international laws and sustain societies" evolution ("the patriarchal system generates inequality, not the Qur'an"); and second, "to use

<sup>29</sup> Morocco's Constitution of 1996, [http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/text.jsp?file\\_id=191428](http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/text.jsp?file_id=191428).

<sup>30</sup> An unofficial translation is available in the website of the Human Rights Education Associates (HREA): <http://www.hrea.org/?p=2094>.

every resource of Islamic law in order to counter Islamists' arguments" (Bras 2007:115).

In Lebanon, the situation is different as public bodies are not actively involved in conceiving or implementing family policies. Marriage is governed by religious sects' personal status laws. Thus, there are about fifteen laws linked to the seventeen Lebanese religious communities (Rarrbo 2005:16).<sup>31</sup> Civil marriage is not recognized in Lebanon and provisions regarding divorce, child custody and inheritance for instance, are taken from religious jurisprudence. Religious tribunals handle all so-called personal status issues, including setting the age of consent for brides and grooms (AFP 2014b). This has also implications for mixed marriages: they must be celebrated before the religious authority of the future husband's community, unless both parties agree to choose that of the future wife. A foreign woman has the right to obtain the nationality of her Lebanese husband, but a Lebanese woman cannot confer her nationality on her foreign-born husband. A Lebanese woman cannot pass her nationality on to her child, except in the event of his foreign father's death or if the child is illegitimate (Tabet 2005).

Regarding family planning:

Non-governmental family planning services have been offered mainly by the Lebanon Family Planning Association. Since the late 1970s, the Government has become increasingly involved in providing direct support to family planning services. In 1983, an amendment to the Penal Code of 1 March 1943 repealed articles 537 and 538. These two articles, which were based on the French contraception law of 1920, prohibited the use of contraceptives. In the same year, the Ministry of Health made a decision to allocate funds for family planning services, including sterilization, which is not regulated by State law. Prior to that time, the Penal Code had prohibited, under penalties of imprisonment and a fine, advertising or publishing any information about contraceptives, as well as the sale of contraceptives. In practice, however, there was nearly uncontrolled trade in contraceptives in Lebanon. [...] The National Population Council in Lebanon was created by the Minister of Health in 1984 in an attempt by the Government to monitor population trends and their impact on development and to motivate the general public to become aware of population issues (UNDESA 2002:101).

In Palestine,<sup>32</sup> the third draft constitution (The Basic Law) of Palestine<sup>33</sup> views Palestinians as equal before the law (Art. 9), but women are discriminated against in personal status laws, which are inherited from different sources (Jordanian and Egyptian, for instance), themselves partly derived from the Sharia (Islamic law) and from the *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). In Palestine, the Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence prevails, which sets out particular rules, for example regarding delays for abortion. Ecclesiastical courts rule on personal status issues for each Christian community (Greek-Orthodox, Catholics (Latin), and the Protestants). Civil

<sup>31</sup> Article 9 of the Lebanese Constitution of 1926 guarantees total freedom of religion to the 17 religious communities and grants them the right to have specific personal status laws.

<sup>32</sup> Sources include Tabet (2005) and Abdullahi A. An-Na'im, *Islamic Family Law: Legal Profiles: Palestine*, <https://scholarblogs.emory.edu/islamic-family-law/?p=69>.

<sup>33</sup> Palestinian Basic Law (2003 Amended Basic Law), 18 March 2003, <http://wp.me/PcaoE-a>.



marriages registered abroad are recognized; marriage and divorce in the Palestinian Territories are governed by the Palestinian Personal Status Code, based on Jordanian personal status law of 1976 in the West Bank, and on the Egyptian personal status law of 1954 in the Gaza Strip. These set a minimum legal age at marriage of 16 for the girl and 17 for the boy in Gaza, and 15 and 17 respectively for the girl and the boy in the West Bank. East Jerusalem Muslims have recourse either to that law or to the law applied in Israel. Women need a male guardian in marriage decisions; unilateral repudiation of the wife by the husband is permitted; while women claiming divorce have to provide proofs (e.g., of the husband's inability to provide, to procreate, to pay the *mahr*, etc.) (Azzouni 2010). Article 20 of personal status law 1 of 2000 states that the couple can agree on the *khul'* on condition that the wife forgoes all her financial rights and that she returns the dowry. Palestinian inheritance law is in accordance with Islamic law. Moreover, Article 340 of the Jordanian Penal Code, still in effect in the West Bank, enables male relatives to benefit from a reduced sentence for committing a "crime of honour" (i.e., the murder of a female relative over a suspicion she endangered the family's honour).

The provision of family planning was not addressed by any "public" body, probably due to a natalist stance on the part of leaders of the Palestinian Resistance. The first ever family planning clinic in Gaza opened in 1995. Nonetheless, at that time 34 percent of Gazans were using family planning (50 percent in the West Bank), a level close to that of other Arab States (Fargues 2000b:220-221).

### 3. THE 2000S AND BEYOND: FAMILY POLICIES AT THE HEART OF THE POLITICAL STRUGGLE

The 2000s saw several policy breakthrough achievements in the legal setup governing youth, with the revision of the family codes in Morocco and Egypt for instance. A few years later, Islamist political actors gained prominence or accessed power in five of the six countries studied, for some as a result of regime changes spurred by the Arab revolts since 2011. These regimes, however, define themselves as "middle ground" Islamist parties and acknowledge democracy. We now explore the policy measures, discourses and debates characterizing the post-2011 period, since the recent political changes in these countries.

Lebanon and Palestine did not undergo regime changes as a result of the Arab revolts.<sup>34</sup> As regards policy reforms in Palestine, tensions with Israel and the geographic and political rift between Gaza and the West Bank significantly hamper the progress of modernization of personal status laws. For instance, under the law in the West Bank, women retain custody of their children until the age of 15. In Gaza, women retain custody of their children until the age of 9 only, and recent changes to the law further deepened women's marginalization in case of divorce (Salah 2015, Abou Jalal 2016). Improvements to existing laws are slow and scattered. In May 2014 the president of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) issued a presidential decree that amended articles of the penal code by removing provisions for leniency with regard to honour crimes. The Palestinian Cabinet, in the West Bank, also approved a national referral system for women victims of violence, the "Family Protection from Violence" law.

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<sup>34</sup> Palestine had experienced a regime change in 2006, when Hamas was elected and took power in Gaza.



This comprehensive law criminalizing violence against women, including domestic violence, sexual violence and human trafficking, is still under discussion (EuroMed Rights 2015). In 2008, a more progressive Personal Status Law was drafted by the National Campaign for the Family Law, which would raise the minimum age of marriage to 18 and place restrictions on polygamy (Azzouni 2010). The decision is still pending with the Palestinians Legislative Council.

Among the many debates on-going in Lebanon, the implementation of civil marriages, which are constrained by religious belonging, have been fiercely discussed for decades. The Lebanese government recognizes civil marriages carried out abroad but rejects the practice in the country. However, in October 2012,

[a couple] cited Decree 60 L.R, which dates back to 1936 and stipulates that citizens who do not belong to a religious sect in Lebanon, of which there are eighteen currently recognised, can resort to civil law. The couple made use of the 2008 memo promulgated by then-Minister of Interior Ziad Baroud which brought attention to the right of removing one's sect from governmental records and then signing a civil marriage contract before a notary. To avoid accusations of cohabitation, the couple received a religious blessing but have not registered the union at the relevant religious court. Sadly, however, their attempt was rejected by the Ministry of Justice's legislative consulting committee due to the lack of laws regulating civil personal status affairs including divorce and inheritance, thereby rendering their marriage symbolic at best (El-Richani 2013).

Following the event, Sunni religious figures, led by Grand Mufti Sheikh Mohammad Rashid Qabbani, took a firm stand against the legalization of civil marriage. They issued a *fatwa* saying: "Every Muslim official, whether a deputy or a minister, who supports the legalization of civil marriage, even if it is optional, is an apostate and outside the Islamic religion" (Aziz 2013b). The Sheikh called civil marriage "a germ" (Saadawi 2013). The violence of the terms used highlights the very far-reaching structural stakes of liberalizing spousal choice in Lebanon, characteristic of the country's sectarian-based political system. There again, the family, as well as the sect, not only prevail over the individual, but the patterns of family formation sustain the political structure of the country, and civil marriage could be the "end [of] Lebanon's confessional system" (Muhanna 2013).

Violence against women was finally addressed in the Law on Protection of Women and Family Members from Domestic Violence passed by Lebanon's parliament on 1 April 2014. The law, which is an amended version of a draft written by KAFA, a Lebanese NGO, had been pending in Parliament since 2010, and spurred tremendous opposition (Aziz 2013a). Thus, its eventual passing was considered a "watershed event," "given how constitutive sexual difference and masculinist supremacy are to Lebanese law" whereby "personal status laws - all fifteen of them - distinguish between the rights and duties of male and female identified persons" (Mikdashi 2015). The actual version of the text, in spite of including positive elements, is said to define domestic violence "narrowly," as it does not acknowledge many abuses which happen within the family (Human Rights Watch 2014). Consequently, also, it does not take into account the domestic workers, women who work and live within local households: "In Lebanon sex, sect, class, gender and race together make female identified people vulnerable

to violence" (Mikdash 2015).

Statements made by AKP members and by President Erdoğan against Turkey's secular family policies started a few years after their access to power in 2002. Turkey attempted to pass a law criminalizing adultery in 2004, which was however quickly abandoned under EU pressures.<sup>35</sup> The AKP programme, nonetheless, clearly affirms the Party's commitment against discrimination and violence affecting females,<sup>36</sup> and the Turkish parliament actually enacted a new law on protection from domestic violence in 2012.<sup>37</sup> Turkey was the first country in the Council of Europe to ratify the treaty on violence against women known as the Istanbul Convention in 2011. However, the Party's programme also states, "Women should be considered as individuals before everything else primarily effective for the raising of healthy generations." This displays a representation of women as agents of reproduction intrinsically bound to the family unit, added to the representation of female as "complementary" to male.<sup>38</sup>

Attacks on females' reproductive rights started in the 2000s. Abortion became a public issue in 2012 when the President deemed it a "murder" (AFP 2012). The government proposed a draft law that, among other restrictions, aimed to introduce the right for doctors to refuse to perform an abortion on the grounds of their conscience, and a mandatory "consideration time" for women requesting a termination. The bill was dropped, but, according to women's rights activists, the attitude of doctors and other health professionals changed and abortion has become more difficult (Letsch 2015). Birth control was also targeted in public speeches; and since the mid-2000s, President Erdoğan has repeatedly called on Turks to give birth to three children at least:

They operated birth-control mechanisms for years in this country. They nearly castrated our citizens, our people going as far as using medical procedures. This is what caesarean section is all about. While they were doing that, it was like committing murder. They fooled people. They said, "You are going to die; we are going to save you." But their goal was different. [...] Their objective was to reduce the population of this nation and for this nation to lag behind in the competition of nations. We are disrupting this game. We have to. That is why there is much to do by our families. I am especially calling on mothers, on our women. You are the primary force to disrupt this game. You have to take a stand.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> "Erdogan Defends Plans to Criminalise Adultery in Turkey", in *EurActiv*, 6 September 2004, <http://eurac.tv/sbO>.

<sup>36</sup> See paragraph 5.7 (Women) and 5.8 (Family and social services). AKP Party Programme, <http://www.akparti.org.tr/english/akparti/parti-programme>.

<sup>37</sup> Law No. 6284 of 8 March 2012: Protection of Family and Prevention of Violence against Women, <http://www.lawsturkey.com/law/law-to-protect-family-and-prevent-violence-against-woman-6284>.

<sup>38</sup> "Turkey President Erdogan: Women are not Equal to Men", in *BBC News*, 24 November 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30183711>.

<sup>39</sup> Speech delivered in June 2013 in Ankara at the launching ceremony of "To Be a Family", a project of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies. Earlier during a 2008 panel meeting in the Anatolian city of Usak, on the occasion of World Women's Day, he advised, "at least three children." He said: "I am not talking to you as a prime minister but as a pained brother. We must preserve our young population as is. In an economy what counts are the people. They want to obliterate the Turkish nation. This is exactly what they are doing. Have at least three children to keep our young population intact." See Gursel (2013).

On other occasions, calling birth control a “treason” “seeking to dry up our generation” and a betrayal of Turkey’s ambition to make itself a flourishing nation with an expanding young population, he explained that: “One or two [children] is not enough. To make our nation stronger, we need a more dynamic and younger population. We need this to take Turkey above the level of modern civilizations” (AFP 2014a, Tremblay 2013). The strength of a nation lies in its families and the strength of families lies in the number of their children.<sup>40</sup>

Following these statements, financial incentives were introduced in the run-up to the general elections of June 2015.<sup>41</sup> The “Protection of Family and Dynamic Population Structure Program Action Plan” released in January 2015 provides more fertility incentives for working women (Kar Onum 2015). It also reaffirms family as the core unit of society, that needs protection for the development of social welfare and social capital. More generally, the text promotes early marriage among youth (MFSP 2015:23), through “dowry” support and through interest-free loans of up to 10,000 Turkish lira (about 3,700 euros in January 2015) intended for young couples getting married between 18 and 25 years old (Yurttagüler 2016:19). In general, such an emphasis on family at the expense of the individual or “the dual commitment to the protection of the family unit and the one who is oppressed in the patriarchal institution of the family is a dilemma that needs to be resolved and critically analyzed.”<sup>42</sup>

In Tunisia, the other country most advanced in the granting of reproductive rights and means, the heads of the Islamist party Ennahdha are today careful to reaffirm their commitment to these rights. So far, their access to power in 2011 has not led to effective policy changes in that matter. Rached Ghannouchi opposes the CPS on only the two issues of adoption of children (as opposed to the Islamic *kafala*)<sup>43</sup> and of polygyny, which he hopes to restore, even with restrictions.<sup>44</sup> Yet, these issues were initially hotly discussed and other women’s rights were challenged by the new regime at times. For instance, the proposed article 28 of the first version of the new Constitution, which called women the “complement” of men within the family, led to public demonstrations that raged during the summer of 2012. The Constitution approved in January 2014 eventually stated the equality between men and women without any discrimination (Art. 21). Notwithstanding the wording of the Constitution, however, individuals’ rights to social existence and especially, those of women individuals, have divided the Tunisian population.

Most debates focus on the marriage issue, on how to curb its delay and celibacy, and on its corollary, the building of a stable family. The programme of the Ennahdha party (point

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<sup>40</sup> Speech at the International Family and Social Policies Summit, Ankara, 2 January 2013. See “Turkish PM Erdoğan Reiterates His Call for Three Children”, in *Hürriyet Daily News*, 3 January 2013, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/Default.aspx?pageID=238&nid=38235>.

<sup>41</sup> Under a law approved in April 2015, families were entitled to one-off assistance of 300 Turkish lira (108 dollars) for the birth of their first child, 400 Turkish lira (144 dollars) for the second and 600 Turkish lira (215 dollars) for the fourth and any further children. In fact, the first incentives had been introduced in 2013 in the form of flexible working hours and kindergarten support for working women, who represent the group with the lowest fertility rate. See Cetingulec (2015).

<sup>42</sup> Gülsen Ülker, quoted in Executive Committee for NGO Forum on CEDAW (2015).

<sup>43</sup> Not a full adoption, it is guardianship with no inheritance rights, for instance.

<sup>44</sup> See “Rached Ghannouchi: La polygamie n’est pas une obligation en Islam”, in *Shems FM*, 11 June 2013, <https://youtu.be/VKu1q-sjOVw>.

16) states: "We seek to safeguard family structure and balance, to develop child care and address social phenomena related to delayed marriage, increasing rate of divorce and the risk of becoming an ageing society."<sup>45</sup> The chapter dealing with "Family: stability and prosperity" promotes strengthening family structures, concertation, cohesion and stability; implementing measures to help young people set up a family; encouraging media to defend the family's integrity and immunize it against all that challenges its stability; limiting divorces; and revising work hours in order to reconcile family and labour.<sup>46</sup>

In promoting early and universal marriage, Rached Ghannouchi "encouraged young people to wed women of advanced age:" "Today, 30, 35, and 40, is still young," he said, telling older women not to give up "hope of marrying." "We also encourage youths and men not to be put off by divorcees. Our divorced girls deserve respect."<sup>47</sup> Ennahdha indeed perceives family dynamics and the inheritance of the CPS as socially damaging, or even lethal:

Le Tunisien ne peut même plus se marier. Il est souvent chômeur et pauvre et n'est même plus en mesure de subvenir aux besoins d'une seule femme. C'est pourquoi, d'ailleurs, il ne se marie plus. Beaucoup de jeunes dépassent l'âge de 40 ans sans se marier. La femme qui travaille, elle aussi, ne veut pas avoir d'enfants. Résultat: on est en train de fermer des écoles parce qu'il n'y a plus d'enfants à scolariser. Voilà le projet de société initié par Bourguiba et poursuivi par Ben Ali. Et qui est totalement biaisé (Bahri 2012a).

Ennahdha leaders do not adamantly call for restoring polygyny as a solution to late marriage and celibacy. 'Urfi marriages (a "customary" Sunni Muslim marriage contract that is not registered with State authorities, and does not require witnesses), although expressly forbidden by the CPS, are said to be on the rise in Tunisia, among Salafi groups especially, in poor areas and in universities. The practice is said to solve the issue of high wedding costs and avoid premarital sex (Bensaïed 2012). Calls are made to legalize such marriages. Collective weddings have also taken place since 2011, with the support of Ennahdha and organized and financed by Islamic associations collecting donations such as Al-Afef ("chastity"), and Ithar. These finance the marriage party in a public place and supply the basic equipment of the house, the bride's trousseau, etc., to poor brides and grooms, with the aim to "encourage healthy marriages."<sup>48</sup>

The issue of legal marriage as healthy is also addressed in the rejection of homosexuality (which is a crime in Tunisia). The phenomenon of single mothers, similarly, was deemed "a disgrace" by one of the Party's MPs (Guizani 2015). The MP (a woman) also declared that single mothers "ethically, do not have the right to exist," because "there is no room for full or absolute freedom [from Islamic rules]."<sup>49</sup> A poll conducted in 2015 revealed that 89 percent

<sup>45</sup> Ennahda Movement Programme: *For Freedom, Justice and Development in Tunisia*, September 2011, [https://issuu.com/khalilamiri/docs/annahdha\\_election\\_program\\_-\\_english](https://issuu.com/khalilamiri/docs/annahdha_election_program_-_english).

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., points 348 to 354.

<sup>47</sup> During a recording broadcast on private radio station Mosaique FM on Women's Day, the commemoration of the enactment of the Code of Personal Status in 1956. See AFP (2014c).

<sup>48</sup> See Cavaillès (2012) and Bahri (2012b). Collective weddings have been commonly held in Jordan, Palestine and Syria for instance, since the early 2000s. See De Bel-Air (2008).

<sup>49</sup> Interview with Monte Carlo Doualiya. See Mahjar-Barducci (2011) and Massi (2016).

of Tunisians supported such a view on single mothers (Massi 2016). However, in general, it is worth noting that today's leaders refrain from advocating higher fertility levels as necessary outcomes of earlier marriages. Such calls happen rarely, are mocked or stir uproar (Abdennebi 2015). In Tunisia, as in Morocco, activists and civil societies are very divided over family and women's issues, as highlighted in the debates over the rejection of the CEDAW convention by the Ennahdha government in 2013 (Sbouaï 2013).

In Morocco, too, the discourse on family articulates around the two poles of women in the family, and marriage. Article 32 of the Constitution states that "The family, founded on the legal ties of marriage, is the basic unit [cellule] of society. The State works to guarantee, by the law, the protection of the family under the juridical, social and economic plans, in a manner to guarantee its unity, its stability and its preservation." Article 19, however, indicates that "The man and the woman enjoy, in equality, the rights and freedoms of civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental character."<sup>50</sup>

The PJD party, which came to power in 2011, advocated in its programme for "the establishment of structures of monitoring [*accompagnement*] of families, and for the promotion of the marriage institution," as well as for putting in place "mechanisms of conciliation and mediation" and "a preventive and evolutionary approach for the prevention of family dislocation [*sic*]."<sup>51</sup> Whereas the PJD's official discourse defends the principles of gender equity, with the socio-economic and political participation of women enshrined in the Constitution, its speeches most often emphasize the essential role of the mother in the family. Mothers are praised as the "lights" within the household, as stated by Prime Minister Benkirane, the ones who keep the family tightly knit, as well as educating and raising the children (Marot 2014), or as the "queens" of the family. Working women are depicted as victims, whom the State should honour by granting them monthly incomes to spare them the hurdles of alienating paid employment (Jaabouk 2014). Extension of parental leave for women is being discussed (Charrad 2015). The *Fonds de solidarité familiale* (Family Support Fund) established in 2012 provides financial support to divorced mothers and their minor children, in place of the failing husband (Sembene 2013). The patriarchal State takes over to protect the family structures.

Marriage is encouraged and collective weddings are also held in Morocco. However, the marriage issue is the site of many confrontations between human rights activists and the government. As the provision of the Family Code allowing marriage below the age of 18 upon a judge's approval led to a hike in early unions, the Ministry of Justice suggested to lower females' legal age at marriage to 16. The proposal also included discarding any marriage application at lower ages and ensuring the girl's personal (not the *wal*'s) agreement to the union (Tchounand 2012). Activists opposed the proposal, pointing out that the civil status of girls is anyway forged to allow such marriages, as they are too immature psychologically to take such a decision – and that such marriage, in any case, contravenes the International Convention on the Rights of Children signed by Morocco in 1993 (INSAF 2014). In general, the merging of women's issues with family (and childhood) issues paralyzes progress and reform, as is the case for example in the project of law against gender violence (Frangieh 2013). One

<sup>50</sup> Morocco's Constitution of 2011, [https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Morocco\\_2011](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Morocco_2011).

<sup>51</sup> PJD Electoral Programme: *Pour un Maroc nouveau*, October 2011, point 100, <http://fr.scribd.com/doc/74250256/Le-programme-du-PJD-nouveau-parti-au-pouvoir-au-Maroc>.



exception was the abrogation of Article 475 of the Penal Code (lifting charges against a rapist if he marries his victim) in 2014, following intense mobilization from grassroots associations.<sup>52</sup> The revelation of very high levels of clandestine, unsafe abortions in Morocco also spurred a debate on the dysfunctions of Morocco's family, socio-political and health systems. Yet, legalization of abortion is still pending (Blum 2015). Other reforms stall, like that of the Penal Code and the Family Codes to eliminate articles and provisions contradicting Article 19 of the Constitution on gender equality.

Defenders of human rights, individual freedoms and sexual minorities are always accused of spreading "foreign influence" (regarding rights of homosexuals for instance).<sup>53</sup> In June 2012, following a call by the Moroccan Association for Human Rights to abrogate Article 19 of the Penal Code, which criminalizes extramarital sexual relationships, a member of the PJD opposed that: "The West which suffers from the decadence of its moral and familial values can in no case be taken as a model for our society" and called for "a return to Islamic values adopted by Moroccans for centuries" (Midech 2012).

In a similar vein, the PJD's 2009 Congress pinpointed the targets of the Party's social and family-related action to defend the "ethics and values" of Moroccan society.<sup>54</sup>

combat the "sexual frenzy" linked to the foreign influence and the "individualist consumerist" ideology, combat the increase in celibacy and prostitution, combat abortion and domestic violence, preserve the wife-mother "guardian of the reproduction of societal values," etc. The aim being to pave the way for a conservative resistance or counter-offensive to the "international treaties" that endanger the role of family, women and religion in Morocco (Seniguer 2015:239).

After the fall of Hosni Mubarak's regime, the Islamist government of President Mohamed Morsi has continued financing family planning programmes,<sup>55</sup> but "health officials have taken a starkly different view of climbing birthrates, presenting the problem as one of economic management - not the size of the population" (Fahim 2013). Article 41 of the new Constitution voted in 2014, after the overthrow of M. Morsi's regime by the military, reverts to the pre-2011 position but apparently acknowledges the relevance of the economic management issue in defining ideal demographic growth: "The State shall implement a population programme aiming at striking a balance between population growth rates and available resources; and shall maximize investments in human resources and improve their characteristics in the framework of achieving sustainable development."<sup>56</sup>

<sup>52</sup> "Maroc: le mariage ne protégera plus les violeurs", in *France24*, 23 January 2014, <http://www.france24.com/fr/20140123-maroc-violeurs-echapper-plus-prison-epousant-victime>.

<sup>53</sup> "L'homosexualité, ce danger qui se profile à l'horizon, par Bilal Talidi", in *Panora24*, 15 December 2013, <http://www.panora24.fusion-agency.com/?p=30939>.

<sup>54</sup> *Utruha al-mu'tamar al-watani al-sadis* (Theses of the 6th PJD National Congress), Rabat, 2009, p. 25. We selected the challenges relevant for our demonstration from the more general presentation of Haoues Seniguer. The translation from French to English is ours.

<sup>55</sup> Article 10 of the previous Constitution of 2012 voted under President Morsi actually stated: "The State shall ensure maternal and child health services free of charge [...] The State shall provide special care and protection to female breadwinners, divorced women and widows." See Youssef (2012).

<sup>56</sup> Egypt's Constitution, 2014, <http://beta.egypt.gov.eg/en/InfoAndDoc/Pages/FullConstitution.aspx>.

Also in continuity with previous Constitutional texts,<sup>57</sup> Article 10 of Egypt's Constitution passed in 2014 establishes that: "The family is the nucleus of society, and is founded on religion, morality, and patriotism. The State shall ensure its cohesion, stability and the establishment of its values." Article 11 reads: "The State shall ensure the achievement of equality between women and men in all civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution. [...] The State shall protect women against all forms of violence and ensure enabling women to strike a balance between family duties and work requirements." The new Constitution, although a secular government wrote it, displays conceptions about family and women that are no different from those pinpointed in Turkey, Morocco, Lebanon and Palestine. It is also neither breaks with the 2012 aborted Constitution voted under President Morsi, nor with the 1971 Constitution in force during Hosni Mubarak's regime. Especially, in the Egyptian (as well as Moroccan, Palestinian and Lebanese) legal system, the individual does not have a social existence.<sup>58</sup> By stating that the family is the nucleus of society, or the smallest social unit, the legal system merges the individual within the family unit. Therefore, the situation of the individual within the family unit is concealed to public action; domestic violence, for instance, is denied. Consequently, too, the performance of social activities by young women outside the realm of the family (not as daughters, sisters, wives or mothers) becomes suspect, if not illegitimate. Moreover, gender equality is "being achieved" under the State's commitment: not only is this equality not complete, but women's social empowerment is dependent on State support. This continuity between regimes in the representation of women and public space (by opposition to the private space of the family sphere) may be a reason, first, for the widespread hike in violence and sexual harassment suffered by young Egyptians since the collapse of Hosni Mubarak's regime in 2011.<sup>59</sup> Women were mostly targeted, but men also suffered (Aman 2015, Amin 2016). Second, it may be one of the reasons for the Egyptian authorities' passivity in seriously addressing and criminalizing the phenomenon, and punishing perpetrators. Since 25 January 2011, indeed, access to the public space, for women especially, has been equated with anti-regime protest by defenders of the regime, who were trying to annihilate the protesters' political credibility by proving their immorality. A senior Egyptian general explained to a journalist: these women were "not like your daughter or mine", for they "had camped out in tents with male protestors."<sup>60</sup> Later, as Islamist opponents came to power, women's bodies became a political battleground embodying the rejection of the laws protecting women passed in the 2000s, along with the rest of the heritage of Hosni Mubarak's regime. More generally, the country's political chaos was reflected in the impunity for disrespect towards women, whom attackers deemed responsible for the chaos by their very presence on the public space. The criminalization of harassment and violence against females in June 2014 (Meky 2014) eventually came about under the pressure of several public campaigns documenting abuses. However, under President Sisi, the political tensions opposing the military leadership and the ousted Muslim Brotherhood party are so intense that officials are "justifying human rights abuses as necessary to keep the country from descending into chaos" (Curry 2015). Crackdowns on homosexuals multiplied

<sup>57</sup> A comparison of key articles from Egypt's 1971 constitution, 2012 constitution, and 2013 draft constitution, is available in Brown and Dunne (2013).

<sup>58</sup> This mirrors in a way the concerns of Lebanese activists pushing for a revision of the recent law on domestic violence as described earlier. See Human Rights Watch 2014.

<sup>59</sup> Harassment was, however, a common feature in Egyptian young women's lives even before 2011.

<sup>60</sup> Quoted in Seikaly (2013).



(Debeuf and Abdelmeguid 2015). This highlights the political goals and stakes of the new regime's efforts at enforcing conservative norms of sexual behaviours, similar to these defended by other regimes based on Islamic referents.

#### 4. CONTRASTED POLICIES, DIVIDED POLITIES: ANALYSING POLICY REPRESENTATIONS OF YOUTH

Historical and socio-political contexts are very different in the six countries covered. Yet, demographic policies, legal texts and actors' statements on the ideal family and needed reforms converge in all six countries on a similar normative approach to marriage and the family, on the one hand, and to the social, political and economic empowerment of the individual, on the other hand. In addition, the deep socio-political rifts cutting through the six societies are highlighted in the violence of debates and opposition to the policy statements of new regimes or actors.

Representations of family pertain to representations of youth, which is the age category most concerned in marriage issues, for instance. Therefore, by decoding the representations of marriage and family (i.e., timing and intensity of marriage, fertility, divorce, patriarchy) and associated ills (females' empowerment, celibacy, perceived social and sexual deviance such as homosexuality and single motherhood), one can read the representations of involved actors regarding youth and the social contract. In order to make sense of the many issues raised by the discourses and policies pertaining to family in the six countries and explain their scope as regards youth, we articulate them around three main arrays of prescriptions pinpointed in policy discourses:

- production and reproduction of family units: channel sexuality towards family formation and maximize its functions to enhance the number of citizens;
- reproduction of the structures of domination/protection within family units: control sexuality and channel it towards reproduction of "hierarchies of gender and generations;"
- reproduction of social values through family dynamics: select sexual partners in order to protect Islamic/national identity.<sup>61</sup>

We focus here on the statements by current regimes, not those of their opponents. Their approach to the "bad" youth and their interpretation of obstacles encountered by young people in reaching adulthood define, in negative, the role of youth in an ideal society, as well as the rights and entitlements of youth as social actors.

##### 4.1 Number: Youth as Agents of Production and Reproduction of Family Units

In the six countries, celibacy is among the most crucial issues, in policy discourse as well as in some actions taken such as the collective marriages and other incentives to early marriages, or social benefits granted to families with children. The issue is assimilated into deprivation

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<sup>61</sup> We concentrate here on the Islamic discourse, even if Egyptian, Palestinian, Lebanese, and Turkish populations, to a lesser extent, comprise a sizeable share of Christian and other minorities. As regards the focus on the Islamo-national identity, and not on social classes, it is important to note that the Islamic representation of society is that of a nation of believers, the *Umma*. In this view, the social distinction is according to the extent of faith. Social classes, therefore, if they exist, are not an issue in the Islamic view.

of one's rights under Islam: the right of fulfilling a religious duty, since marriage is half of a person's religion.<sup>62</sup> Marriage indeed constitutes the right to personal fulfilment,<sup>63</sup> a need to avoid psychological and physical disorder and a duty in order to preserve the human species, thus so essential that "it was, therefore, in the interest of individual and society that sexual relationships be sanctioned and regulated, not condemned or ignored" (Abd Al Ati 1977:51). Moreover, marriage being the precondition for family and family being the core unit of society, celibacy disrupts the process of family formation and hence deprives individuals of social existence: unmarried young persons do not "count" in this representation. For all these reasons, celibacy has to be combated. Since the 2000s, public policy discourse in all six countries increasingly converges on the following: not only should young people marry early,<sup>64</sup> for the above-mentioned reasons, but remarriage of divorced and widowed with young brides should also be encouraged and polygamy used as a means for increasing the access of youth to legal marriage, and social and personal fulfilment.

Marriage being closely linked to procreation, celibacy and delayed marriages are also considered, in the view of Islamist activists, to hinder the process of biological reproduction. As seen in Section 1, fertility levels decreased as the age at marriage was rising. Not all countries reaffirm as strongly as Turkey the necessity to increase the size of the national community by multiplying marriages and births (cf. *infra* as stated by Erdoğan: "the strength of nations lies in its families and the strength of families lies in the number of their children"). In countries like Tunisia for instance, calling for reverting population dynamics raises immediate political opposition since it was structural in the process of post-Independence nation building. However, advocating for youth marriage means implicitly advocating for increased, even if controlled, fertility.

Examples provided in Section 3 emphasized the representation of so-called Western influence against marriage. It is said to devalue marriage through allowing, if not promoting, pre-marital sexual relations and cohabitation, which lead to prostitution, abortion and to procreating illegitimate children. Western societies are thus regarded as not preoccupied with reproducing themselves, either biologically or institutionally, which is seen by some as a "culture of death," opposed to the Islamic "culture of life."<sup>65</sup> The aim of the "pro-life" discourse is to "decolonize" reproductive patterns, by promoting personal fulfilment within the realm of the family, and reproduction of social norms by that of bodies.

In order to enhance population numbers, the family, however, has to be strengthened and stabilized. This is one of the reasons why all countries seek to lower divorce levels: by breaking up families, divorces disrupt the process of biological reproduction. Indeed, fertility out of wedlock is socially unacceptable everywhere, but most importantly, remarrying after divorce becomes increasingly difficult.<sup>66</sup> Divorced females remarry rarely, as was exemplified in the

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<sup>62</sup> "Hadith on Marriage: Whoever gets married has completed half of the religion", in *Daily Hadith Online*, <http://wp.me/p5WrrM-3xC>.

<sup>63</sup> Islam regards sex as natural and good, for both men and women.

<sup>64</sup> The marriage of little girls is not advocated for by members of the Islamist governments and their political organizations.

<sup>65</sup> See De Bel-Air (2008) on the marriage issue as seen by a Jordanian Islamic organization.

<sup>66</sup> As demonstrated by Fargues (2003), a rapid "turnover" of spouses used to sustain higher fertility levels by redistributing infecund partners. However, this implies cheap marriages and housing, considering that nuclear

case of Tunisia. As concerns men, obstacles to a rapid remarriage are mostly financial. We have seen in Section 1 that divorce levels have been decreasing over time in every country in the region, but popular and even policy makers' perception is the opposite. This may reflect the higher social stakes attributed to divorce. Among these, the expenditures incurred by the dowry, paid by the groom or by his family to the bride, as well as the payment of the delayed part of the *mahr* (*mua'khkhar*), poses a real burden on families.<sup>67</sup> As nuclear families are the norm, too, the growing social visibility of divorced women living alone, or raising their children alone, challenges the model of the traditional, gender-complementary "healthy" and demographically expanding family.

#### 4.2 Structure: Youth as an Agent of Reproduction of the Structures of Domination and Protection within the Family

Most of the debate on family also seeks to control youth's sexuality in order to reaffirm or restore the predominance of the patriarchal family, rooted in the perpetuation of age and gender "hierarchies" (Fargues 1995), i.e., the domination of males over females and of older people over youth. Therefore, youth celibacy, as well as divorce, are both a threat to patriarchal control of sexuality, and hence to social stability, for they may drive youth to uncontrolled extramarital relationships. Women's social, economic or political empowerment, as well as the prospect of gender equality, evidently challenge the traditional role of the male/father within society, and are therefore rejected. In a similar fashion, homosexuality threatens the patriarchal family because it disrupts the prescribed gender roles and especially, the norm of heterosexism grounding the patriarchal system, as well as the norm of the biological reproduction of family. Tolerance towards homosexuals would have huge stakes for the stability of the patriarchal system. As illustrated by Florence Bergeaud-Blackler and Victor Eck (2011) with the case of young Moroccan homosexuals, the "pact of discreet accommodation" (i.e., staying unnoticed to avoid police repression and public categorization/stigmatization as homosexuals) also served to defend the values grounding Moroccan society, a trade-off between claims for public recognition and social belonging. Young homosexuals met by the authors in Morocco indeed considered that: If [society] opens [i.e., accepts homosexuality], we will not have a Moroccan society anymore, we are not Europeans or American, we live in Africa in Morocco. We keep our origins. It is against our religion and society, there is a red line (Bergeaud-Blackler and Eck 2011).

In effect, behaviours considered deviant are usually labelled as imported from abroad, which serves, by contrast, to reaffirm the patriarchal roots of Arab/Muslim social systems.

However, beyond control and domination, patriarchy is also about solidarity and responsibility, between spouses and between generations. This may explain the paradoxical support for patriarchy expressed by some women, as noticed for instance in the opposition to the Lebanese Law on Protection of Women and Family Members from Domestic Violence in the name of

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families are the overwhelming norm today.

<sup>67</sup> Nowadays (in most cases except in the case of endogamous unions), besides paying for the wedding party, the groom and his family have to provide a fully furnished and equipped dwelling, gifts and gold jewellery (the *shabka*), as well as the dowry (*mahr*). The dowry is composed of two parts, the amount of each being stipulated in the marriage contract: the *muqaddam*, the first part of the dowry, is given to the bride by the groom at the signing of the contract, and the *mu'akhkhar* is promised in case of divorce.

protection of male dominance within the family (cf. *infra*), in their defence of the principle of gender-based unequal inheritance rights, or in their promoting the intermediation of *walis*. Indeed, the patriarchal laws traditionally state the obligation of obedience of the wife, yet also that of the husband's material support to the wife and children. Between generations, too, patriarchy is supposed to ensure transmission of capital. For example, as celibacy points to the father's or elders' neglect of their responsibilities towards their dependants, smooth and early marriage suggests that the "intergenerational" contract has functioned, that offspring have been granted financial, educational, and other necessary resources by their father to set up their own family unit, and keep it durable. By addressing supposedly exogenous social ills such as female empowerment, or militancy for LGBT rights to social existence, the policy statements construct, in negative, the representation of the good Islamic-national youth. These are elements of an unequal, vertical distribution of power, yet one which grants security, stability and top-down intergenerational transmission of economic, educational, as well as social capital to young people.

#### 4.3 Dynamics: Youth as an Agent of Reproduction of Social Values and Identity

Reproducing lives (number) and the patriarchal structures of domination/protection is not enough. The dynamics of family reproduction are constrained by the choice of spouse, in order to reproduce a biologically healthy family, as well as Islamo-national social "distinction." Celibacy, again, is a threat to the existence of the lineage for obvious reasons. It also points to the disruption of the transmission of Islamic values. For example, the consumerist models deemed responsible for greatly increasing the cost of marriage (*mahr*, as well as the material requirements of both spouses), and the models of individualism and women's empowerment, supposedly reveal a sense of honour now based on materialism and "having" (possessing). This challenges the sense of historical and territorial identity which lineage provides individuals through the control of females' sexuality and gender role distribution within different social tasks, spheres and spaces, i.e., a sense of honour based on "being." Marrying late, or not marrying, thus can also be seen as a disregard for producing or reproducing social values.

Limiting one's fertility also has a political outreach, as, through the various patterns of giving birth to a next generation, people disclose various representations and conceptions of their ideal collective future (Ginsburg and Rapp 1995). Limiting fertility, or refusing to have children, thus challenges the descent and the lineage, as well as, by extension, the patriarchal family and the Islamo-national values it conveys.

Therefore, the values of social openness, tolerance of diversity and supposed promiscuity allegedly propagated by "the West," aim at destroying the quality of the lineage, and Islamic values by extension. This is why single motherhood spurs great debate in Tunisia and Morocco where the existence of the phenomenon is acknowledged: children born out of wedlock have no patriarchal descent. The debate on adoption in Tunisia also falls within this discourse; this provision of the CPS is the only one (along with the restoring of polygyny) which the Ennahdha-led government specifically tried to amend: in Islam, the descent is biological and only biology conditions one's rights to inheritance.

Besides serving to rationalize the functioning of the family unit for a sound demographic expansion, the representation of gender roles as complementary plays a crucial role in

the process of reproduction of values, and especially, of Islamic “distinction.” This is why women’s employment is repeatedly presented as detrimental to the cohesion and balance of the family. Working women (married or not married) are accused of privileging the fulfilment of individual, selfish ambitions and mercantile interests. Alternatively, they are the victims of failing husbands, or of abusive economic circumstances forcing them into the labour market. Women’s employment thus supposedly challenges their functions of homemaker and mother responsible for the education of the children and transmission of social values. The crucial role of women in educating the children, passing on the social and moral values to them, and securing them psychologically is a constant in the family discourse in all the countries. It represents a modern Islamic conception of woman as a social agent,<sup>68</sup> performing functions as essential as those of the man yet of a different nature. This complementarity of gender roles is essential in the bringing up of numerous, healthy and well-educated children, and sustains the smooth functioning of society at large. Therefore, it maximizes the social functions of the family, which (i) ensures smooth and sustained biological reproduction, (ii) guarantees comprehensive support to its members, and also (iii) produces and protects social order and Islamic distinction. Besides all the policies aiming at encouraging working women to have children, or at conciliating employment and family duties, the several schemes of State assistance to divorced mothers of minor children (the Family Solidarity Fund in Morocco, for instance) confirm the priority put on the role of woman as mother, embodying the three functions of biological, patriarchal/protective and educational/moral reproduction.

To conclude, we hypothesize that the region’s current regimes, which claim their “Islamic referent” (i.e., which take Islam as an ideological value system), seek to streamline family behaviours in order to develop a globalized (i.e., not strictly national, and ideally stretching out to the *Umma* as a whole) Islamic (and not class) distinction. This responds to the supposed lack of such distinction in “Western” societies, and among the so-called “Westernized” youth in the region.

## 5. FAMILY POLICIES AS BIOPOLITICS: CONVERGING TOWARDS A NEW KIND OF “NEOLIBERAL NEOPATRIARCHAL” SOCIETY?

In Section 1 of this paper, we pointed to some major characteristics of family structures and their relevance as indicators of social fracture, particularly visible since the decade of the 2000s. We then tried to highlight in Sections 2, 3 and 4 how the political gains of Islamist political parties since that period promoted a discourse on youth and family (shared by a part of national populations as the evolution of demographic behaviours has pinpointed), which challenged the previously dominant developmentalist, globalized discourse on the individual and its social role. In this Section, we explore the “high politics” implications of these representations of the ideal family and youth’s role in its reproduction – how the family issue is politically instrumentalized by the new regimes and actors who have accessed power since the 2000s. We argue that these new representations of the family, ensuing designation of policy targets and actual policies are not “simply” an emanation of conservative nostalgia

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<sup>68</sup> This “Islam-national” promotion of women as social agents differs totally from other, class-based schemes of women’s “empowerment” aiming at “disciplining popular classes,” or “rationalizing families,” which can be witnessed in other parts of the world such as Latin America.

and reinvention of an idealized past. They are “biopolitics,” “regulat[ing] social life from its interior.”<sup>69</sup> As such, they sustain a socio-political project. We now attempt to highlight the main elements of the current regimes’ socio-political projects implicitly contained in representations of the family they convey, namely, the creation of a globalized Muslim neoliberal “neopatriarchalism.”

### 5.1 Family, Population and Politics

Foucault explained the role played by “biopolitics” in the channelling of individual’s sexuality towards constructing (and bordering) populations:

biopower has a three-tier structure. On the lower or micro-level it works by individualization, or more precisely by producing individuality as the focal point of all the different techniques for monitoring the body politic, which now fractures into a living multiplicity of individuals. In this sense, individuality is produced by those very disciplinary techniques that at the same time discover it as their proper object. But this process also makes another object visible on the higher or macro-level, namely population, which is how individuals appear when they are treated as statistical phenomena, in terms of collective health and collective forms of reproduction and life. And finally, there is a crucial link between the production of sex as individuating force and the production of sex in relation to the population, or to the collective entity: the family. The family is the site of exchange between individuality and collectivity, the relay through which all individuals have to pass in order to become members of the reproductive body politic (Wallenstein 2013:11-12).

Michel Foucault indeed showed how the emergence of modern States<sup>70</sup> marked the passage from societies of sovereignty, exerting power over a defined territory but indistinct mass of subjects, to “disciplinary societies” in which discipline is applied to singular bodies, but constitutes an economy of bodies and management of populations (Donzelot 1979).

Family and its structures, as well as the measures implemented in order to affect its size, structure and dynamics, are indeed intimately connected with politics. At the onset, family structures mirror those of politics, of modes of government; the power relationships within the family unit “(those between parents and children, between husband and wife) [...] define the relationship between the individual and authority” (Todd 1985:12). Family is “a fundamental expression of the universe political society was to be inspired by” (Commaille and Martin 1998:18). However, as shown by Foucault, the development of modern States shifts the basic relationship between family and politics: the former relation of adequacy between politics and family (the structure of power mirrors that of the patriarchal family) becomes a relation of mutual cooperation and evolution. Henceforth, the State does not anymore “search for the

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<sup>69</sup> We use the term “biopolitics” as “the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power” (Foucault 2009:1). We include in these the family structures and especially, the gender and age domination, often essentialized, situated in the realm of biology. Biopower is thus understood here as “a form of power that regulates social life from its interior,” targeting life as an “object of power” (Hardt and Negri 2000:23-24).

<sup>70</sup> According to Foucault, the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries in the West, following the emergence of the “*raison d’État*” and the progressive formation of a political “governmentality.”



source of its legitimacy in the family, but becomes concerned with the family's contribution to the conservation of the social order" (Commaille and Martin 1998:29). This marks the beginning of the process of "economy of bodies and management of populations," in which the first measures of "biopolitics" aim at amending family formation patterns and structures.

Following this theoretical approach, we now explore the "high politics" aims behind the family policies, and the crucial political importance attributed to the monitoring of youth sexuality for the building or sustaining of Muslim neoliberal "neopatriarchal" regimes.

## 5.2 Neo-Authoritarianism and the Reshuffling of Neopatriarchy: Youth as Subjects

The authoritarian State is a feature characterizing the quasi-totality of Arab States since the 1970s, after political instability had marked the post-independence period. Starting in the 1980s to the 2000s, policies of structural adjustment were originally seen as a pre-requisite for political reform,<sup>71</sup> yet they had in fact the opposite effect. Studies abound that document States' or regimes' control over the process of economic liberalization, which hampers the expected dismantling of rentier systems, monopolies of power and accumulation processes, as well as the processes of using international resources and rhetoric on reforms to justify increased political control.<sup>72</sup>

Before 2011 and the advent of the Arab uprisings, authoritarian States had sustained their domination over populations by instating an organic link between family and politics, best described by the term "neopatriarchy" coined by Hisham Sharabi (1988) or that of neopatrimonialism.<sup>73</sup> In such a system, the mutual interdependence between the patriarchal family and the polity requires the State to protect and strengthen the former. Therefore, the stability of the region's neopatrimonial clientelist regimes was dependent on the redistribution by the State of rentier-type resources (i.e., not deriving from a productive economic system, bound to upset the neopatrimonial social order) which allowed for negotiating citizens' political participation by limiting direct levies and, moreover, by promoting passive consumerism.<sup>74</sup>

However, the redistributive capabilities of the States, crucial to the stability of the regimes in such a context, have been threatened by the economic crises plaguing the region's economies at the turn of the 1980s that led to the implementation of economic reform programmes. Although clientelist networks still bloomed and deepened social inequalities, direct levies and taxation emerged, while progressive privatization of production, restructuring of public

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<sup>71</sup> The logic was that economic liberalization should lead to a political liberalization, under the assumption that liberal economic reforms, for example, limit the redistributive capacities of patrimonial States or promote the emergence of an entrepreneurial bourgeoisie able to convene democratic claims (Anderson 1992, Catusse 2008).

<sup>72</sup> On Morocco, see Catusse (2008:231-234). On Tunisia especially, see Hibou (2005) and Cassarino (2000).

<sup>73</sup> The patrimonial system reproduces patriarchal-like relationships at the level of the population as a whole: the patriarch/leader/patron dispenses resources, social control and security, in return for his children/subjects/clients' allegiance. "Neopatrimonialism differs from patrimonialism in that it variously combines and overlays the informal social structures of patrimonialism with the formal and legal structures of the state" (Brynen 1995:25).

<sup>74</sup> Summed up in the aphorism "no taxation without representation" (Beblawi 1990:89). Apart from tax exemption, resources are financial redistributions, goods and services. In the rentier system, it can be said that "the state has reduced formal politics to the issue of distribution, and participation to the realm of consumption" (Singerman 1995:245).



sectors and disengagement of the States from the provision of social infrastructures directly affected redistribution patterns. This combination of authoritarianism without compensation in terms of rentier resources made available to citizens (taxation without representation?), therefore, upsets the social contract. All the more so, as highlighted in Section 1 of this paper, since societies in the region were increasingly divided socially, as well as economically, over the course of the 2000s. Since the fall of Mubarak's and Ben Ali's regimes in 2011, after the 20 February movement in Morocco, the "Occupy Gezi" movement in May 2013 in Turkey, newly elected regimes have also fallen (the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Ennahdha Party in Tunisia). Societies are more polarized politically than ever and as we have seen, reforms fluctuate between modernization and conservatism. As the political contexts also become increasingly volatile, current regimes are increasingly drifting towards authoritarianism at the expense of consensus. The example of Turkey is a case in point.

In such a context, the current regimes have a limited range of resources to assert their power over populations. As proposed by Ferrié: "Sexual morality [*morale sexuelle*] appears as a resource of power [...] because it enacts a relation to others grounded in a hierarchical principle of dependence," which is a given. "The moral order thus permits to depoliticise power relationships, by shifting them into the non-conflictual space of the respect of proprieties [social norms] and of respect of the others" (Ferrié 1995:200-201).

All regimes in the region, as we have seen, make use of such strategies and therefore gather the support of some sectors of society that are actually directly targeted by the measures (for example, women shunning gender equality claims, or homosexuals advocating the "red lines" not to cross to protect social norms in Morocco, as we have seen earlier in this paper). In the case of Egypt, crackdowns by the current regime on places known to host homosexuals and shallow response to the violence towards females by public bodies may boil down to a political competition between General al-Sisi's government and Islamic political opponents, over Islamic and moral values taken as political resources.

Additionally, the current regimes in the region, although setting forth their Islamic grounding and referring to the *Umma* in public statements, actually inscribe their action within the scope of the national borders (Tourabi 2014). Thus, the promotion by the State of the patriarchal family and its system of domination anchored in kinship and blood relations, implicitly suggests a homothetic echoing of such a model of domination at the level of the State. The domination of the ruler over its subjects thus appears as similarly rooted in kinship ties, in the realm of the biological, of the innate, of the eternal and unquestionable. The revival (or re-appropriation) of the "neopatriarchal" rule by new regimes is thus a strategy of "naturalisation of its own arbitrariness" (Bourdieu 1977:164). The terms of the debate on civil marriage in Lebanon may be an illustration of this strategy of rooting politics in blood-like relations. The terms of the Sunni sheikhs' *fatwa* basically making an apostate of any performer of a civil marriage anchors the Lebanese sectarian-based political system in some "natural" order of things. The use of the biological metaphor (the "germ" attacking the natural body politic) adds to this. None of the current rulers have yet achieved being called "Father of the Nation" like Habib Bourguiba, or Atatürk like Mustafa Kemal. However, Zehra Yilmaz points to the use of family metaphors in President Erdoğan's speeches, which highlights the distinction he establishes between his supporters and his opponents (Yilmaz 2015:167). In any case, unabated promotion of the patriarchal order facilitates the grounding of the neopatriarchal rule in citizens' minds.

As for the material incentives underlying allegiance to the ruler, they no longer take the form of public employment and lack of taxation. However, clientelist networks and a web of grassroots Islamic organizations offer rewards to youngsters, especially those who support the rulers. Collective marriages that grant material assistance to young couples are an example. Moreover, perceptions of Islamic adherence among their peers and in their social environment may also be an incentive for some young people to support the patriarchal and neopatriarchal rules.

### 5.3 Neoliberal Policies and the Sustainable Family: Youth as a Commodity

Since the mid-1980s, every SEM country has implemented structural adjustment programmes (SAPs).<sup>75</sup> Socio-economic reforms were also conducted within the realm of the WTO accession process, as well as due to the free trade agreements (FTAs) signed during the 2000s by each of the six countries, including Palestine (European Free Trade Agreement). The globalization of the region's economies and the subsequent liberalization and deregulation policies is not put into question by current regimes. All adhere to the neoliberal economic *doxa*. Turkey and Morocco, for instance, have been described as economically "national-liberals" (Tourabi 2014).

This has great implications for youth and for the monitoring of family structures. As we have seen in Section 2, the promotion of numbers for the purpose of demographic competition with other States or ethno-national groups, especially through fertility levels, has been noticeable only in Palestine and in Turkey. Besides, high levels of youth unemployment in the Maghreb countries, for instance, deter open calls to increasing fertility. However, the enhancement of numbers is a biopolitic usually going hand in hand with "neoliberal governmentality:"

Neoliberal governmentality must be seen as both a continuation and intensification of earlier biopolitics - the health of the markets implies the health of the population - and, along with a new way of exercising power, it also produces a new type of subject, with an entrepreneurial relation to the self, extending throughout all the spheres of experience (Oksala 2013:30).

It has often been noted that due to the structure of the economy and labour market in the region, young educated people have higher unemployment levels<sup>76</sup> than uneducated youth, who are more frequently born to large families. In Morocco, for example, 21 percent of university graduates were without jobs in 2005 as opposed to five percent of the population holding no degree. In the 25-34 age group, 40 percent of university graduates were unemployed, as compared to 6 percent of Moroccans with no degree.<sup>77</sup> In Tunisia in 2010, 23 percent of graduates were unemployed, as compared to 13 percent for the whole population; the

<sup>75</sup> Structural adjustment programmes were negotiated with IMF and the World Bank in most SEM countries: Turkey (1980), Morocco (1983), Tunisia and Egypt (1986). In Lebanon, no structural adjustment programmes were enacted in spite of the country's large debt, due to political instability and lack of economic planning. Several successive agreements were also signed throughout the 1990s.

<sup>76</sup> It is true, nevertheless, that graduates' unemployment has a higher visibility and educated youth may be more likely to register as unemployed, than a young person not expecting anything from the State (I am grateful to Blandine Destremau for attracting my attention to this).

<sup>77</sup> Unemployment rates by age group and education degree, total population. See HCP (2007:92).

situation worsened to reach 32.6 percent unemployment among graduates in 2013.<sup>78</sup> In such a setup, differential fertilities (more children in low-income families) can be regarded as an asset by current regimes, seeking to develop low pay, low value-added economic activities, depending on a numerous manpower. Youth, here, appears as a potential commodity for the development of such activities, which characterize all economies of the region in the aftermath of the structural adjustment processes.

The empowerment of family as a functioning and autonomous unit also serves the neoliberal policies: it allows for the disengagement of the State from certain functions of redistribution and protection. In Turkey for example, Yilmaz points out that:

During the neo-liberalization period that gained impetus in Turkey after the AKP, the revitalization of a family and communion interrelation on the basis of a “charity” mission is inextricably intertwined with the loosening of the welfare-state approach. It goes without saying that revoking family policies in Turkey is an extension of the attempts to fill the gap created by the state. The resurfacing of family as the main pillar of society during the AKP’s rule has been construed as solving many of the social and legal responsibilities of the state within this family-based “cooperation”. Indeed, the primitive quality of the unemployment policy and social support tools necessitates strong familial cooperation in order to replace a robust welfare system, which is now missing (Yilmaz 2015:156).

Other official statements emphasize the importance of education of children by women within the family:

Since children receive earliest education in family, intra-family education bears utmost significance for the future of society. Mother’s education plays vital role in the development of child. It is unreasonable to expect a child with no strong family education to be successful in formal education.<sup>79</sup>

Moreover, “Once the education of children is set as the sole reason of mothers’ existence, the cost of many social problems are assigned to mothers as well” (Yilmaz 2015:161). Another issue, that of care of the elderly, may also emerge as a social problem in a near future, under the effect of the rise in life expectancy and falling birth rates, as in Tunisia. In 1994, Tunisians aged 60 and above made up 8 percent of the total population and 12 percent in 2014.<sup>80</sup> In such a context, a strong and cohesive family structure would be a great asset for States, which would be able to continue delegating to families, and to youth among them, the function of caring for the elderly.

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<sup>78</sup> INS, Statistics on employment, Table Unemployment rates of university graduates by sex (2006-2015) (%), <http://www.ins.tn/fr/themes/emploi#sub-374>.

<sup>79</sup> Nimet Baş, former Minister of State concerning women’s issues before the establishment of the Ministry of Family and Social Policy as well as the former Minister of National Education, quoted in Yilmaz (2015:159).

<sup>80</sup> INS, Population census 1994 and 2014, Tunis, <http://dataportal.ins.tn>.

#### 5.4 Muslim vs. Non-Muslim Family: Youth as the Guardian of Cultural Distinction

The political stakes of selecting sexual partners in order to build healthy families, hence reproducing Islamic values and national identity, also appears essential in the political project developed by new regimes. This project focuses on promoting social dynamics reproducing “closed” societies. “Western” societies, with their promotion of values of openness to others and tolerance of difference are indeed considered a repulsive model. In line with conservation of the “quality” of the lineage by selection of partners for family-building, as seen earlier, SEM countries usually have very selective patterns of naturalization of foreigners, for instance. These range from quasi-systematic rejection in most countries, to selective granting on historical and ethno-cultural grounds as in Turkey.

Rejecting the “heritage” of former colonial power allowed “making the national being coincide with the Qur’anic moral ideal” (Bergeaud-Blackler and Eck 2011), thus presenting the colonial moment as a break in time. This strategy classically served the building of national identities in post-colonial contexts. Similarly, cultural claims underlay the resistance to “central” powers in the context of dependent capitalism. Therefore, as the SEM countries are both former colonies (save Turkey) and economically dependent on global, mostly Western powers, the stakes of constructing an Islamo-national alternative model of society are high. What is at stake indeed is to win a competition, on the grounds of honour and cultural “distinction.” This drags politics into the socio-demographic field (the field of “being”), away from the fields of politics and economy (the fields of “having”) that are marred with dependence on external powers.

This confirms the “high politics” stakes of the battles raging in every country in the region, over family laws and over attempts at prescribing youth’s sexuality and reproduction patterns. Opposite representations of the family display opposite representations of the socio-political project. Neither on socio-demographic, nor on political grounds does a consensus seem easily conceived.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of the paper was to analyse the dominant trends of demographic evolution in SEM countries since the 1960s-1970s, as well as the evolution of demographic policies and the popular debates surrounding this evolution. We pointed out the extreme diversity of family formation patterns among young Arabs and Turks as of today in the mid-2010s, with Egypt, the demographic giant of the region, displaying scenarios apparently defying all lines of explanation of demographic behaviours recognized to date. Considering the concomitance of this diversity of models in each country, we have to recognize deep socio-demographic divisions splitting “youth” as a category in the South and East Mediterranean countries. Therefore, the “convergence of civilizations” depicted by Courbage and Todd (2011) at the end of the 2000s can be confirmed, but it is likely that this convergence concerns only a share of the youth of Arab countries, while others advocate for alternative socio-demographic models.

Beyond this socio-demographic diversity, or division splitting youth populations in the region, the violent debates opposing various sectors of national youth over family and social reforms also suggest diverging political paths among national youth. The family laws passed in the 1950s-1970s may have been decisive in the triggering of new socio-demographic dynamics, especially due to the indirect reforms sustaining their effects (in education especially). However, as the dynamics they spurred started diversifying in the late 1990s, the family laws have become a point of political contention: from then on, the struggle for, or against, reforming personal status laws in the region has reflected the “high politics” stakes of demography, which pertain to the role of coming generations (the youth) as agents in the reproduction of socio-political structures. The link between youth uprisings in the region in 2011 and the urge to overthrow the then “hierarchies of genders and generations” may be verified. However, the current political confusion characterizing the aftermath of the uprisings suggests that societies in the region are not divided by generations and gender, but by politics. An analysis of the distribution of Islamist party supporters by age and sex, for instance, would allow confirming or refuting this hypothesis of a link between demographic and political divisions.

We have noted in Section 5 of the paper that new, Islamic-referent based regimes are converging towards a model of “neoliberal neopatriarchal” family system, as could be read from their programme of reform of the family and human rights policies. Reforms of family law and channelling of dynamics aim at inscribing in bodies a socio-political reform project. However, can globalized neoliberalism be compatible with a patriarchal ruling system, and can the ethics of “being” be compatible with the imperative of “having”? There again, the societies in the Arab world display no unity. The question of their viability as functioning, coherent societies may be posed.

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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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