POWER2YOUTH

Multi-level Factors of Youth Exclusion and Inclusion in Brazil

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Abstract

This report contains a discussion of the main findings emerging from a study of the role of young people in the "Tropical Spring" mobilizations in Brazil. After a brief discussion of the general socio-economic and political context and issues affecting young people's labour market exclusion, we offer a comprehensive analysis of the main domestic factors – both policy (factors related to labour market and social inclusion) and organizational (factors to pertaining social and political engagement) – that affected youth grievances and activism and provided the backdrop of the 2013 mobilizations. In the final parts, the particular characteristics and events of the June-July 2013 protests are elaborated. The report concludes by delving into the transformative impact of the student mobilizations and their effects on the national context.

Keywords: Youth | Political movements | Brazil | Economic crisis

INTRODUCTION

This report is developed in the context of Work Package 5, "Global Youth", which is part of the project "Power2Youth". The aim of Work Package 5 is to add a comparative perspective to the project by looking into the experiences of socio-economic transformation in two European (Greece, Ireland) and one extra-European (Brazil) country, with a view to assessing their relevance to the challenges facing youth in the South Eastern Mediterranean (SEM) region.

The present report is the outcome of a study conducted on the case of Brazil. In June-July 2013 more than half a million protestors were taken to the streets of major cities in Brazil, forcefully engaging in a series of protests that became known worldwide as Brazil's Tropical Spring. Tropical Spring mobilizations were sparked by popular discontent with increases in the bus, subways, and train fares, but – as protests escalated – mobilizing grievances came to include a number of diverse and sometimes conflicting claims. These claims expressed – as Rodrigues and Brancoli (2013) describe – "anger due to corruption and excessive spending for the 2014 World Cup, discontent with the lack of public investment in education and health, demands for a reform in the judiciary and the political system and cries against inflation". The most visible protagonists of this moment were students and young people. They built a movement that was immediately and universally recognized as a political gesture and "rapidly broadened to include hundreds of thousands of (mainly) middle-class protesters, overtly with little in common" (Saad-Filho 2013b: 658). These groups were widely mobilized through the Internet and the social media, while similar images and symbols between Tropical and Arab Spring protestors became widespread. According to Rodrigues and Brancoli (2013), "The ubiquitous Guy Fawkes masks, from the comics 'V for Vendetta' are also present in the

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Brazilian capitals, making the demonstrators' faces more similar, whether in Cairo or Brasilia." Yet, the mobilizations in the streets of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo were very different from those in Tunis and Cairo, or from the mobilizations in crisis-hit Greece and Ireland. Despite producing similar images and symbols, the protests in Brazil had the key difference of taking place within "a democracy closer to the liberal-democratic model established in the post-Cold War world" (Rodrigues and Brancoli 2013) and amid a thriving economy with relatively low rates of (youth) unemployment.

The report is structured as follows. Section 1 provides a general overview of the socio-economic and political context within which the June-July 2013 protests occurred. Section 2 offers a comprehensive presentation of the general situation of young people before and after the 2013 mobilizations, focusing also on how, despite the country's strong economic performance, young people in 2013 still faced significant labour market difficulties and a growing risk of exclusion. This is followed by section 3, which highlights the main domestic factors – both policy (factors related to labour market and social inclusion) and organizational (factors pertaining to social and political engagement) – that affected youth engagement and inclusion and provided the backdrop for youth participation in the 2013 protests. Next, in section 4, the particular characteristics and events of the 2013 mobilizations are elaborated. Finally, the report concludes by exploring the transformative impact of the 2013 mobilizations and their effects on the national context. Data for this research were collected through a) a review of the academic literature, including the study of national policy and historical documents, articles, reports and papers published in national and international academic journals, and b) interviews with key informants.

1. COUNTRY CONTEXT

Before the 2013 mobilizations Brazil was marked by strong economic growth. According to Economy Watch (2010), "Brazil was one of the fastest-growing major economies in the world from 2000 to 2012. During this period, it experienced average annual GDP growth of over five percent. In 2012, the Brazilian economy surpassed the United Kingdom's, making Brazil the world's sixth largest economy that year". Amid economic growth the Brazilian middle class was significantly enlarged by 37 million people, numbering over 100 million and forming one of the largest in the emerging economies (Sampaio 2015: 104). Yet, despite economic and social advances (translated into increased social mobility) a large section of the "new" (emerging) middle class still had to deal with vulnerability, while – as it was estimated – it suffered "a constant 10% risk of falling back into poverty within a five-year interval" (Sampaio 2015: 107). What is more, Brazil's economic growth started to decelerate in 2013 and the country entered an ongoing recession in 2014, making socio-economic realities even uglier for the "vulnerable" sections of society (interview with a Brazilian university professor).

Against this background, looking into the analysis of factors that may have triggered and/or intensified the 2013 mass mobilizations, scholars and commentators (Ruediger et al. 2014, Sampaio 2015) have put forward four main explanations, namely: (i) frustrated expectations about ongoing and future socio-economic improvements of the country; (ii) a representation and trust crisis towards the Brazilian political system; (iii) widespread social dissatisfaction with the quality and level of basic public services and, finally; (iv) increased use of Internet

and social media.

The first "frustrated expectation" line of explanation draws on the pace of growth of the Brazilian economy and the expectations for better living standards and enthusiasm for consumer goods and services associated with it. More specifically, as mentioned above, after an economic cycle of intense growth Brazil came to deal with an economic deceleration from 2013 on, while relative prices of food and public services (such as public transportation fares) rose significantly (by about 10 percent in 2012 and 8.4 percent in 2013), greatly affecting middle- and lower-income groups of the population (Sampaio 2015: 104). This situation greatly affected public perceptions and attitudes. According to a Pew Global Attitudes survey conducted in Spring 2013, 70 percent of those participating in the survey said that the issues of rising prices and limited work opportunities are considerable obstacles (Horowitz 2013). Also, based on a Latinobarómetro survey, from 2011 to 2013, there was a steep decline from 52 percent to 33 percent in Brazilians' perception of progress (cited in Ruediger et al. 2014: 5). Based on the "frustrated expectation" argument,

> the growth story in Brazil, therefore, has been marked by the contrast between an immense rise in demands and a more modest growth in supply of services and infrastructure. This correlation can be translated as an imbalance between expectations and the real capacity to acquire the desired goods and services. (Sampaio 2015: 107)

In this context, the deterioration of economic conditions and a desire for a better life that did not materialize is said to have spurred grievances and demands, which in turn pushed many of the protestors to the streets to give voice to these issues (Ruediger et al. 2014: 5-6, Sampaio 2015: 107-8).

The second "representation crisis" explanation points to a continuously rising political discontent with representative institutions that have failed to meet citizens' expectations as a cause of the 2013 mobilizations. Data published by the Latinobarómetro over the period 2001-2011, show very low percentages of trust in political institutions. In particular, only 6 percent of the survey respondents said that they strongly trust the National Congress, and 3 percent said that they strongly trust political parties. Also, over the period 2005-2011, only 6 percent said that they strongly trust public administration (Ruediger et al. 2014: 6-7). Concurrently, when looking at the period 2005-2011, 74 percent of the survey respondents said that they agree or strongly agree with the statement that democracy is the best political system despite its problems. In other words, Brazilians at the time of the 2013 protests seemed "to trust democracy as the best political model, but distrust its institutions" (Ruediger et al. 2014: 6-7).

A third explanation of the factors behind the 2013 mobilizations is rising popular dissatisfaction regarding the efficiency and costs of provision of public services (e.g. health care, transportation, education etc.), which is said to be a major grievance of the frustrated middle class protestors. Based on Latinobarómetro public attitudes data provided in Ruediger et al. (2014: 7), in 2013, 35 percent of Brazilians reported that health care services were the most important problem in the country. What is more, in 2012, according to Americas Barometer data, Brazil was the country where citizens gave the third worst evaluation of

public services. Interestingly, based on a survey conducted by Datafolha during the first wave of the 2013 mobilizations, public transportation services were given by the respondents the lowest evaluation since 1987. As Sampaio (2014: 104-5) writes:

> In a context of rising costs for middle-class living, the marches of a small protest group in the south of Brazil asking for free public transportation suddenly gained size and visibility [...] A common request was hospitals and schools 'along FIFA standards', in reference to the R$ 8 billion investment then underway to build football stadiums. The seemingly prosaic issue of a R$ 0.20 (approximately 9 US cents) increase in bus fares was the trigger for unrest following long-accumulated anger of a sector of the population that went from being a privileged fringe at the start of this century to the majority of the population now.

In addition to the above, a fourth explanation or line of argumentation has been put forward, having to do with the role of the Internet and social media as a channel for information diffusion and mass social mobilization. As Roman (2013: 3) notes:

> As of July 2013, Brazil had more than 102 million Internet users and 76 million Facebook users out of a total population of about 200 million. Given their newfound strength, portals such as Facebook or Twitter are undoubtedly central to social mobilization, particularly in the context of dwindling union membership and the decay of other mass organizations that has been attributed to the rise of neoliberalism. Nonetheless, a crucial distinction must be drawn between the causes and resources of social mobilization. Social media may be an incredibly potent resource, but it cannot be considered the sole trigger of protest.

Crucial to our understanding of events in Brazil is the observation that none of the above explanations alone suffices to decipher why 2013 mass protests occurred and widely intensified. Rather, it seems more plausible to argue that a combination of the above reasons may seem to account for a set of grievances operating in an evolving "political opportunity structure" (McAdam 1982), which may be said to have both triggered and intensified the 2013 uprisings. As Sampaio (2015: 112) perceptively writes:

> It is clear that grievances alone are not sufficient to explain the surge in protests during 2013, since many of the structural faults being highlighted have existed and been the subject of media attention for years if not decades. It is the relative aspect of these grievances which offers a more accurate analysis of the mobilisation of the protest movement. The socio-economic change underlying the main grievances (the rapid expansion of the middle class) also contributed to a simultaneous plunge in mobilisation costs, through increased tools for connectivity.

This means that deep-rooted socio-economic vulnerabilities and political institutions failing to accommodate middle-class expectations for a better life after ten years of high economic growth and demands – related especially to the efficiency in the provision of public goods – intensified large-scale grievances which, combined with a significant increase in connectivity to the Internet, gave rise to one of the largest and most violent waves of mass mobilization in Brazil's recent history.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Over 2000-2012 Brazil combined strong economic growth, increased social mobility and falling unemployment rates. Despite this, young people in 2013 still faced significant labour market difficulties. As shown below, they were vulnerable to persistent unemployment, precarious working conditions, strong gender and racial inequalities and vulnerable to falling into a NEET situation (neither in employment, nor in education or training). More particularly, looking at the period preceding the 2013 mobilizations we observe that, in 2012, Brazilian youth represented 24.4 percent of the working-age population; yet, almost half (46.3 percent) of the unemployed population in the same year were young (OECD 2014: 29). Many of these young unemployed were first-time jobseekers who had been unemployed for more than 60 months. They were thus extremely vulnerable to labour market exclusion and marginalization and had to come to grips with an increasing risk of being "scarred" for the rest of their career path and development (OECD 2014: 33).

In terms of gender differentials, between 1993 and 2012 the large increase in young female unemployment for women (aged 18-24), and particularly for younger women (aged 16-17), is quite striking, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 | Changes in unemployment rates by gender and age, Brazil, 1993-2012. Deviation (in percentage points) from the 1993 unemployment rate
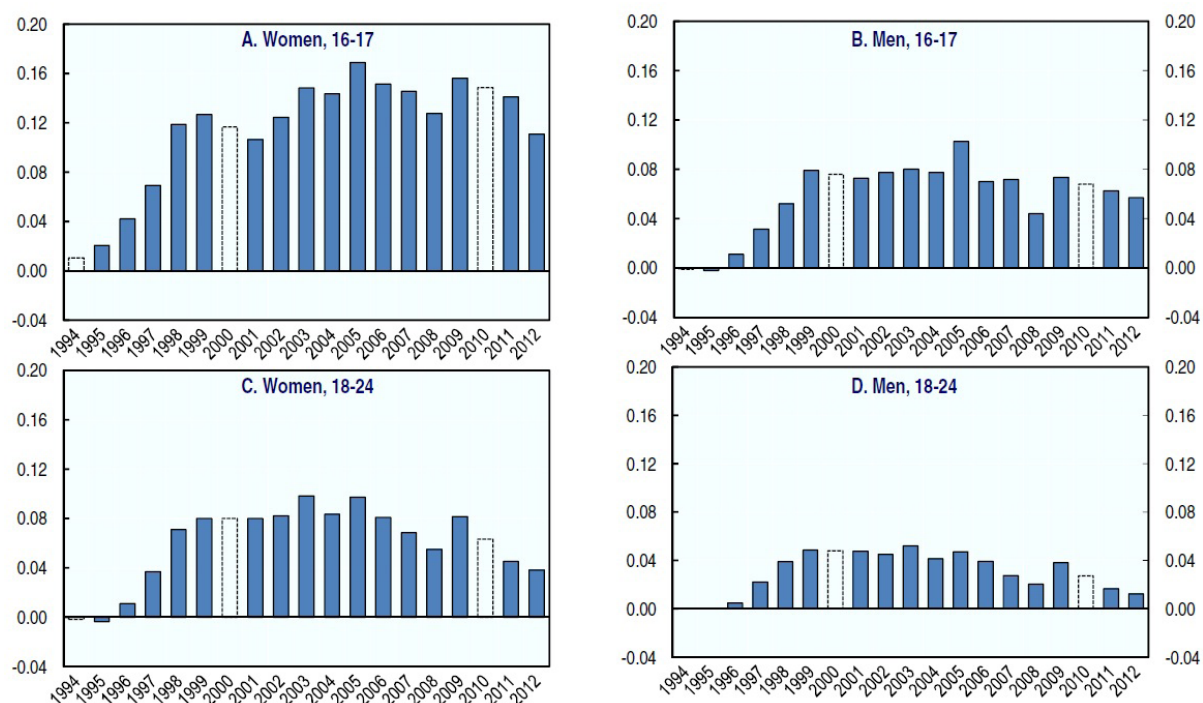
Source: OECD (2014: 31).

Furthermore, between 1993 and 2012, strong disadvantages in educational and labour market outcomes for youth were reported along geographical and racial lines. For instance, as noted by OECD (2014: 33), "the likelihood of a young, Black woman living in the Northeast of Brazil being unemployed is 28.6%, and the probability that she is NEET is 31.7%. This compares with

an unemployment rate for White males living in the South of 7.6% and a NEET rate of 9.1%''.

In terms of job quality and the incidence of labour market precarity, as reported in the OECD Action Plan for Youth:

> The quality of jobs held by Brazilian youth is poor on average compared with those held by youth in the OECD. Informal employment, despite significant declines in recent years, is still high (affecting nearly one in two youths). Turnover is equally high, with eight transitions into and out of formal employment each year for every five youth employed, and is a significant factor in explaining high unemployment rates. Although temporary agency work and (in particular) fixed-term contracts are highly regulated in Brazil, and therefore relatively uncommon, youth are more likely to be employed on such contracts. (OECD 2014: 13)

Besides labour market precarity, OECD data shows that – between 2001 and 2011 – a significant number of Brazilian young people (one in five) were neither in employment, nor in education or training. This is, as OECD (2014: 32) remarks, the ''7th highest among 35 countries with available data, and over 5 percentage points higher than the OECD average'' (Figure 2). Concurrently, women were most likely to be NEETs, which may be attributed to lack of affordable childcare, barriers to employment for women such as discrimination in the labour market, lack of full-day schooling and other (OECD 2014: 36).

Figure 2 | NEET rates, Brazil and OECD countries, 2001-11. Percentage of the population aged 15-24
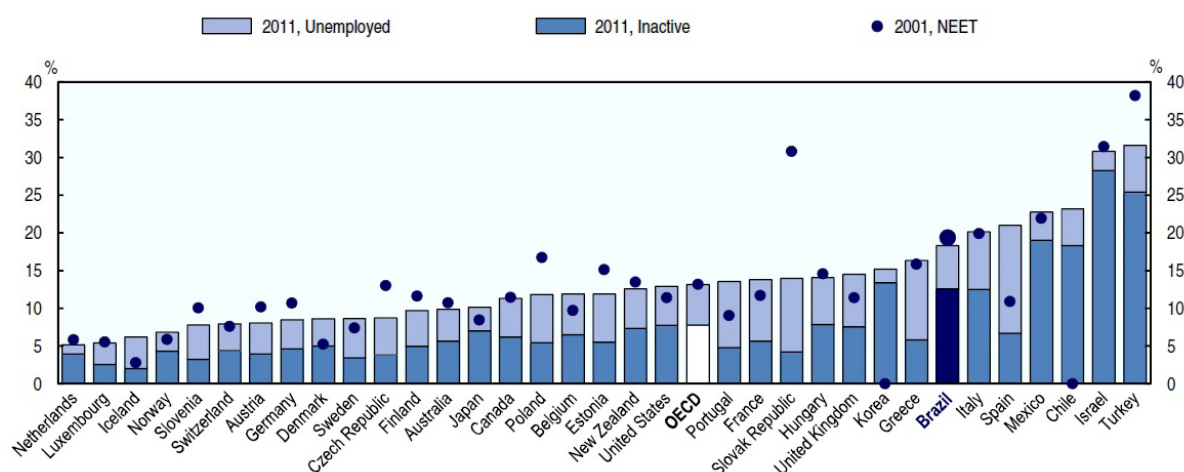
Note: Cumulative bars (unemployed plus inactive) for 2011 represent the 2011 NEET rates.
Source: OECD (2014: 32).

Added to the above, according to the World Bank, despite economic growth, poor and vulnerable young people faced increasing risk of social exclusion. As noted:

> On average, young people have higher educational attainment than their predecessors did, but increased schooling has not translated into better jobs, higher salaries, or greater participation in society. [...] After investing in education, most poor youth see

that their opportunities are not much different from – or perhaps even worse than – those of their parents. (Gacitúa Marió 2008: 103)

This situation had serious implications for young people's status in society resulting in "a lack of social recognition of the roles and rights of young people, reinforced by the predominance of stereotypes and negative images of youth in the media" (Gacitúa Marió 2008: 103).

By and large, the context in which the 2013 mobilizations took place was one of increasing intergenerational injustice, social exclusion and labour market precarity. Finding themselves in such conditions, young Brazilians saw the 2013 mobilizations as a unique window of opportunity to seek change for themselves and for their country. As one of the 2013 protest organizers said to *The Guardian* at that time: "Brazil woke up. The youth are going to the street, the workers as well, to construct a new fight. We are changing the history of this country. We are going to construct a new politics where people have a voice and go to the street to demand this" (Watts 2013).

3. FACTORS OF YOUTH EXCLUSION IN A CONTEXT OF CRISIS

3.1 Policy Factors

Over recent years Brazil has implemented a series of labour market, social integration, and educational/training programmes to help young people move from school to the world of work. In particular, there have been 16 federal youth programmes such as the "Pronatec" programme (which provides young people with technical training) and the "*ProJovem Trabalhador*" programme (which prepares young people for the labour market). According to the OECD (2014: 160), in 2011, the "*ProJovem Trabalhador*" programme benefited about 240,000 young beneficiaries. The programme targets unemployed young people (aged 18 to 29) from disadvantaged poor families. Young beneficiaries are eligible to a stipend of BRL 100 per month over a 6-month period, and they are required to undertake a comprehensive training programme which consists of 100 hours of social training (on issues such as entrepreneurship, ICT, citizenship, rights at work, occupational health and safety at work etc.) and 250 hours of professional training.

At the same time, education policy has received much attention. In 2010, Brazil ranked third among OECD countries, with 18.1 percent of public expenditure spent on education and training programmes, providing incentives for disadvantaged youth to attend school, hire qualified teachers, etc. (OECD 2014: 14). In the field of education, a noteworthy programme is "*Bolsa Família*", which has been emphatically pointed out in policy circles worldwide due to its success in reducing poverty, inequality and generating positive education outcomes. According to OECD (2014: 16, 87),

> *Bolsa Família*, a cash transfer conditioned on children's enrolment in schools, has played an important role in improving enrolment rates. Nearly 100% of children aged 6 to 14 are now in school and an additional benefit is now provided to incentivise the enrolment of 16- and 17-year-olds.

In 2012, 13.7 million families participated and benefited from the "*Bolsa Família*" programme at a total cost of 0.46 percent of GDP (OECD 2014: 87).

First-job programmes such as 1-year or 2-year apprenticeships and traineeships targeted at young people between 14 and 24 have also been widely implemented. These programmes aim at providing young people with experience of working in a medium or large-sized business through a combination of workplace learning and formal training (Silva 2014). However, there are low take-up of these apprenticeship programmes due to the fact that employers receive little financial support for their implementation, and this constitute a major barrier to youth employment (OECD 2014: 11). Moreover, although the National Youth Policy ("*Política Nacional de Juventude*") and the National Agenda on Decent Work for Youth ("*Agenda Nacional de Trabalho Decente para a Juventude*") adopted in 2005 and 2011 respectively contributed to adding consistency in policy design and implementation, many of the labour market (e.g. active market policies targeted at youth) and educational/training programmes still suffer from ineffective coordination between the relevant agencies and Ministries, while public awareness of them is low (OECD 2014: 12, 14).

As part of other policy deficiencies, the unemployment insurance system (UI) has been reported as inadequate. Based on OECD evaluations, the Brazilian UI suffers from certain deficiencies affecting primarily young people. As a result, very few young people in practice benefit from the UI. As OECD (2014: 154) observes, drawing on 2012 national household survey (PNAD) data:

> 56% of 25–64 year-olds working in the private sector (including informal) would be eligible to claim unemployment benefit, compared with 42% of 15–24 year-olds (if dismissed unfairly and assuming that they have not already claimed unemployment benefit in the previous 16 months).

Also, based on 2012 data drawn from the Trade Union Department of Statistics and Socioeconomic studies (DIEESE), OECD (2014: 154) estimated that "in 2010, 27% of unemployment benefit recipients were under the age of 25. Considering that just over 46% of the unemployed are young, youth are considerably less likely to be eligible for unemployment benefits".

Overall, despite progress, much remains to be done in the area of implementing policies to help young people get a foothold in the labour market. As the policy evaluations conducted by OECD (2014) stress, Brazilian policy-makers should enhance policy coordination and monitoring, prioritize investing in well-targeted educational and labour market programmes, strengthening work incentives in major programmes (such as the "*Bolsa Família*") and allocating resources

> more equally [...], both geographically as well as across education levels, and more efficiently [...]. The quality of education remains a major cause for concern, the curriculum lacks relevance for many students (partly due to a very low share of vocational education), and grade repetition is high. As a result, many students lose interest and drop out of school. On the demand side, there are indications that many youth lack the skills required by employers – confirming that educational attainment

overall remains low. [...] Finally, there are insufficient incentives in place to encourage firms and young workers to invest in more durable working relations, contributing to high turnover. (OECD 2014: 11)

Quite importantly, the issue of combating labour market informality and precarity by helping young people identifying, gaining and retaining quality jobs should be high on the policy agenda (OECD 2014: 21).

3.2 Organizational Factors

To understand what shaped social and political engagement of young people at the time of 2013 protests, one needs to delve into the contours of civil society activism in Brazil. The story of civil society activism in Brazil comes together with democratic nation-building and participatory democracy. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, numerous urban social movements, the Landless Workers Movement ("*Movimento dos trabalhadores sem terra*"), and a combative trade union movement emerged alongside the first initiatives to establish participatory mechanisms at municipal level. The mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, signalled the "third wave of democratization", which was marked by controversy over the relations of civil society and state actors within the context of several participatory governance initiatives, such as participatory budgeting and various policy councils (interview with a Brazilian university professor). On the one hand, these participatory structures and initiatives were seen as important instruments for deepening the quality of democracy in Brazil; on the other hand, serious concerns were raised about the role of civil society organizations in accessing state resources and in destabilizing traditional notions of democratic representation (Wampler 2008). For instance, Pereira's (2007) work on participatory initiatives shows that civil society actors with strong relations to state actors and the governing party had easier and better access to policy information and they were, thereby, in a better position to shape and influence policy outcomes. In a same vein, the findings of a study conducted by Gurza Lavalle et al. (2005: 958) on the role of civil society organizations in three types of participatory institutions (i.e. participatory budget, sectoral policy councils, and any participatory fora) in São Paulo reveals that: "Ties to the Worker's Party or to the government via contracts to deliver services, along with being coordinators or associations, are the best predictors of participation in all three types of participatory spaces." Further on, a citizen survey research conducted by Houtzager et al. (2007: 12) in São Paulo and Mexico City challenges the widely held assumption that direct citizen participation enhances democratic legitimacy. As they note: "What we find is that individual citizens do not, as a result of their associational participation, develop relations with government that come closer to the ideal under the democratic rule of law than citizens who have no associational participation." A substantial number of the civil society organizations surveyed were found lacking formal membership, which made the relations between representatives and represented citizens or constituencies ambiguous, raising concerns about the democratic legitimacy of participatory councils.

As the relations of civil society and state actors presented a blurred picture, the onset of the new millennium show the emergence of a new generation of civil society activists. As Abers (2013) writes:

> over the course of the 2000s, new kinds of social movements discreetly began to appear on the scene, mostly attracting younger generations. Many of these were

of the "new social movement" variety: such as LGBT, feminist, and middle-class environmental organizations; others (such as the Free Bus Ticket Movement and the anti-World Cup collectives) seemed more akin to the anti-globalization movements appearing around the globe. One interesting thing about these movements was that after an interregnum of almost two decades during which many activists worked closely with governments, these "new" movements were resuscitating older discourses of political autonomy and anti-institutionalization. Like some of the social movements in the U.S. and Europe of the 1960s, they distanced themselves from parties, avoided collaborating with governments and often refused to create formal organizations at all.

This development seems to go hand in hand with increasing detachment of young people from formal politics in the late 2000s and early 2010s. "Politics is more than just voting", said one of the 300 young Brazilians aged between 18 and 32, who was interviewed as part of a survey entitled "The Brazilian Dream of Politics" (Box1824 2014: 47). The survey, conducted by Box1824 in two rounds, sought to capture young Brazilians' views about the 2013 protests and their effects, as well as their attitudes towards political engagement. As Stuenkel (2014) notes with reference to the scope of the survey:

> The analysis not only celebrates the protests as a reaffirmation and step to strengthen democratic civil society culture in Brazil, a country that became democratic three decades ago. It also points out that they made visible a group of politically active youth that quietly works – often on the local level – to transform the country. Disagreeing with those who saw the protests at a sign of a democratic malaise, the authors believe that the protests also had an empowering effect on many young Brazilians who had shown little interest in politics and social engagement before. The central message of the analysis is that the young generation in Brazil is far more politically active than meets the eye.

Put it differently, as one young interviewee emphasized: "June destroyed the conservative belief that young people are depoliticised. I think that is its greatest legacy. A consensus emerged, that young people want to change the way politics is conducted today" (Box1824 2014: 52).

Based on the survey's conclusions, a significant effect of the 2013 protests was the shift the mobilizations brought to young people's attitudes towards social change. The June-July 2013 protests contributed to enhancing young people's sense of responsibility for inducing wider societal change. As emphasized in the description of the survey findings:

> The June 2013 protests increased young people's political involvement and helped to make them feel more responsible for change in Brazil. When the first *Brazilian Dream* was conducted in 2011, young people felt less responsible for change than they did in 2014. In both studies, the same question was asked, and the responses show a significant difference in young people's perception of their role as protagonists in social change. In 2011, just 29% of those between 18 and 24 agreed that they were responsible for change, while in the 2014 research this figure had shot up to 45%. (Box1824 2014: 82, see also Figure 3)

Figure 3 | Who is responsible for social change? (%)
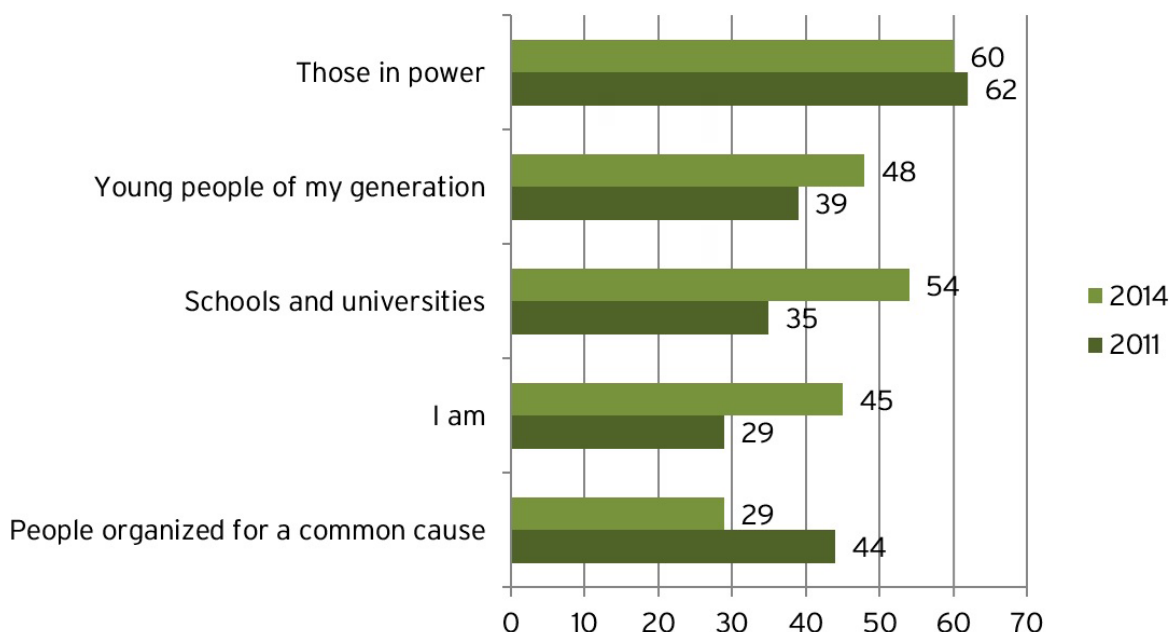
Note: Figures refer to young people aged 18-24.
Source: Box1824 (2014: 82).

In addition to the above, the survey findings reveal that young Brazilians are not the same as regards their attitudes towards politics and political engagement. The survey, thus, classifies young interviewees into four categories based on three criteria for analysing attitudes i.e. "interest" (interest in political issues, the desire to participate and engage), "mobilization" (the ability to influence and engage other people), and "action" (political action for transformation: intensity, frequency and impact of concrete actions) (see figure 4). What stands out in this classification is a category of the so-called "Hackers of Politics", described as a group of young citizens, whose "activity concerns transformation of the political process. They are active both on- and offline, defending political, cultural and artistic causes. [...] They are the ones who create, transform and develop alternatives for political participation" (Box1824 2014: 111, 120). As one interviewee (classified as political hacker) stated: "When we talk about democracy, we need to open the code more. We need to understand what politics in Brazil is really about" (Box1824 2014: 120). Many of these political hackers – as the survey highlights – are located in the periphery and the favelas of Brazil's cities, living under disadvantaged sociocultural conditions, which have led them to resort to action. Characteristically, one interviewee said:

> Being from poorer backgrounds, we saw a way to change things. It's a simple question of being at home, opening the front door and looking at what's going on outside. Imagine if you were in Ethiopia, how are you going to stand back and do nothing in that situation? (Box1824 2014: 136)

Figure 4 | Four attitudes towards politics among young people

|		Interest	Mobilisation	Action	
Distant	**39%**	—	—	—	Dedicated to their own personal concerns
Adrift	**17%**	√	—	—	Open to politics, with a positive vision, but passive
Critical	**28%**	√	√	—	Informed, with a critical position, but inactive
Agents and Hackers of Politics	**8+8%**	√	√	√	High level of engagement and daily involvement

Source: Box1824 (2014: 86).

Moreover, the survey's findings are striking when it comes to the level of political hackers' belief in the traditional political system: 77 percent do not feel represented by Brazilian politicians and 76 percent do not intend to join a political party, or have never even considered it (Box1824 2014: 217, 215). As stressed in the conclusions of the survey:

> Hackers of Politics recognise the importance of parties, but they don't consider them platforms for their political action. These young people are practical, and they want to participate directly in decision-making on the issues they care about. They feel that the current parties are closed off to them, incompatible with their form of activity. (Box1824 2014: 216)

While distanced from formal politics, 79 percent of political hackers – many of whom joined the 2013 protests – believe that people should participate directly in the political decisions that affect their day-today lives. What mobilizes them and keeps them engaged with their causes (which include, inter alia, enhancing education opportunities and social inclusion, or protecting the environment, or fighting police repression) are a sense of duty as a citizen (75 percent), because they think that they can substantially contribute to changing reality (67 percent), and because they think that their actions can eventually leave a better world behind (66 percent) (see Figure 5).

Figure 5 | What keeps hackers of politics engaged with causes? (%)
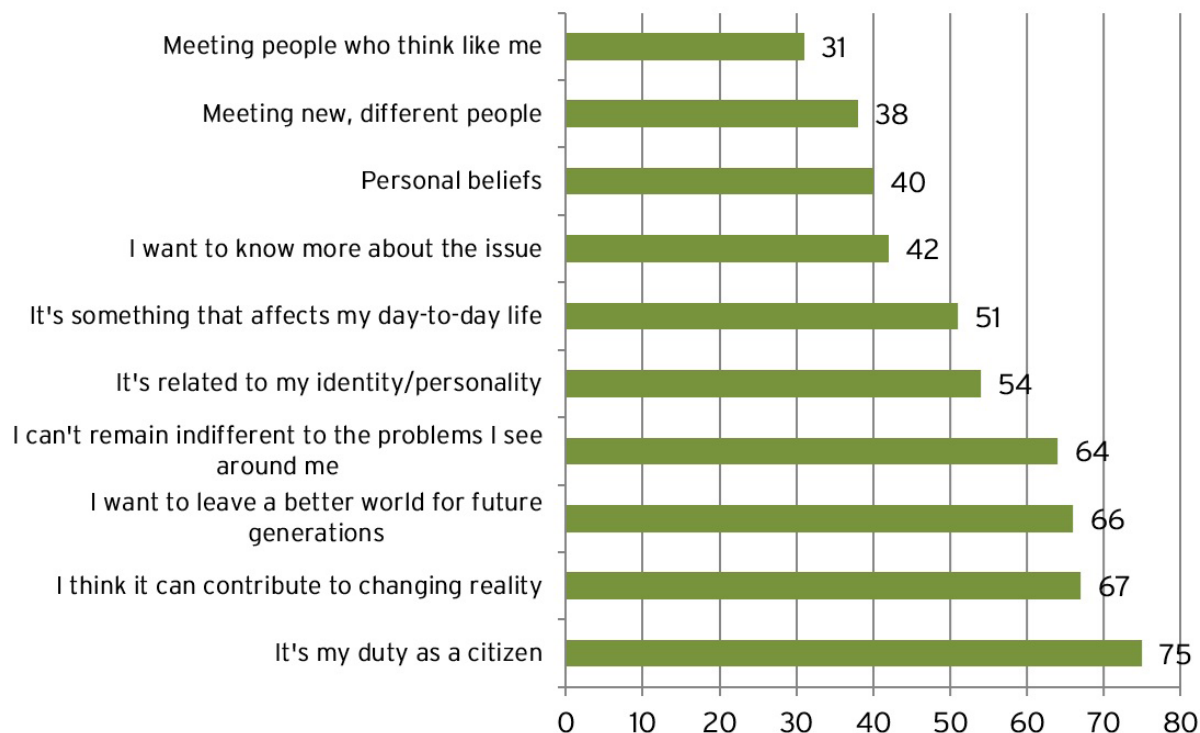
Source: Box1824 (2014: 204).

All in all, the survey's findings corroborate commonly held assumptions about an angry and frustrated generation of young Brazilians with traditional modes of political representation, responsiveness, and accountability. "And yet", as Stuenkel (2014) remarks, "the study's overall message is positive: a good part of Brazil's young generation is engaged, highly innovative and optimistic – and the 2013 could thus be seen as an expression of both discontent and hope".

4. YOUTH MOBILIZATION AT CRITICAL TIMES

The Tropical Spring mobilizations begun on 6 June 2013 when 2,000 people demonstrated in São Paulo calling for the revocation of an increase from R$3 to R$3.20 in public transport fares. The protestors were led by the Free Fare Movement ("*Movimento Passe Livre*"), an autonomist non-party direct action group, which emerged from the student-initiated "movement of the turnstiles" that organized protests in Florianopolis and Salvador over the previous decade, demanding free access to public transportation (Alonso and Mische 2017: 150). The 6 June demonstration was confronted with fierce police repression, which greatly impacted mobilization levels. By 20 June, over 1 million people had been taken to the streets of over 100 cities across Brazil. As with the 2011 Indignants' and the 2010/2011 students' uprisings in Greece and in Ireland respectively, the Brazilian protestors resorted to the occupation of symbolic spaces like an impressive bridge in a fancy area in São Paulo. In an attempt to repress the crowds, the police reacted with more aggressiveness which led to the

escalation of the mobilizations and the participation of multiple, diverse groups of protestors. As a result of police violence and repression, Alonso and Mische (2017: 149) stress,

> the diversity of social groups engaged in protest multiplied. Several consecutive demonstrations planned on Facebook materialised in the streets, along with several micro-movements, many of them relatively new, such as MAL (Autonomous Libertarian movement), MAU (Unified Autonomous Movement), and Acampa/Ocupa (Camp/Occupy), along with the new independent media (e.g., Ninja Media, Black Media, Várzea Radio, Brasil de Fato), and some established social movements, such as the Black, LGBT, and housing movements.

While initially criticizing the protestors for vandalism and for disrupting public order, the media – grasping an opportunity to attack the federal government - came to embrace the mobilizations. "The protesters were now portrayed as expressing the energy of youth and popular rejection of the country's dysfunctional political system" (Saad-Filho 2013b: 658).

Protestors were also marked by heterogeneity in terms of their social background. While the bulk of protestors were initially young left-wing activists and students, as mobilizations escalated, people from middle-class – "overtly with little in common" (Saad-Filho 2013b: 658) – came massively to the streets. In São Paulo, according to Alonso and Mische (2017: 149-150):

> protesters included the professional middle class, the new working middle class, and an expanded sector of higher education students along with some participants from more affluent sectors and the lower social strata from the urban peripheries. Hence, the demonstrations were not class-based; rather, they included older social strata along with newer ones, produced by demographic changes and redistributive social policies.

As the diversity of protestors increased, protestors' demands became more diversified (interview with a Brazilian university professor). Although the bus fare increase was a clear target and the starting point for protestors' agenda, a growing public discontent with the policies of the political elites (and particularly with the Workers' Party government) became far more evident. As Rêgo (2014: 109-110) observes:

> Despite Brazil's international recognition in lifting some 40 million out of poverty and into the new C-class with access to a middle class consumer market, the government's policies have been the subject of intense political debate and public protests since 2012. [...] Initially organized to protest increases in bus, train, and metro ticket prices nationwide, the [2013] demonstrations grew to include other issues such as police brutality against demonstrators, high cost of living, political corruption, and the inadequate provision of basic services (health and education).

Just like the Greek Indignants' protests, the Brazilian demonstrations expressed a fierce rejection of mainstream political parties, existing policies, and institutional politics. At the same time, as Alonso and Mische (2017: 156) argue, there was an original anti-partisan sentiment which was expressed with slogans such as "The people, united, don't need parties" and "We don't have a party. We are Brazil". This anti-partisan orientation may be attributed

to Brazil's long history of ambivalence toward partisanship, given its history of corporatism and corruption (Alonso and Mische 2017: 156).

Other points of protestors' discontent had to do with the organization of mega sport events, such as the 2013 FIFA Confederations Cup, the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Summer Olympics, which were marked by mismanagement of funds and financial scandals (The Economist 2013). These cases of corruption, lack of transparency and financial accountability resulted in intensifying a feeling of powerlessness among many (and particularly young) Brazilians vis-à-vis the ruling economic and political elites. Besides these grievances, protestors raised various other demands, which made protestors' agenda even more fragmented; as a result, "the movement lost any semblance of having a unifying platform" (Saad-Filho 2013b: 660). As described by Saad-Filho (2013b: 659), these demands were related to issues such as:

> gay rights and the legalization of drugs (mainly for, but most churches are against); compulsory voting (mostly against); abortion and religious issues (all over the place); inflation (against); public spending, privatizations and the state monopolies (unclear); PEC 37, a proposed Constitutional amendment, later rejected, limiting the right of the police to lead criminal investigations, at the expense of the office of public prosecutions (against); President Dilma Rousseff and the PT (divided, with a strong constituency against and, sometimes, asking for Dilma's impeachment); the return of military rule (a pipe-dream of the far right).

As protestors' demands varied, mobilizing slogans varied too. Examples of slogans that were used include (for more details see Alonso and Mische 2017: 154-5): "Come to the streets", "The giant has awakened", "Wake up, Brazil", "Without violence", "Without vandalism", "Enough of war: for another police", "If the fare does not go down São Paulo will stop", "Schools and hospitals at FIFA standards," "Shove the 20 cents down the SUS (Health System)", "For the liberty to proclaim one's own beliefs," "Against the gay cure", "More love, less priest," "Passive people, active corruption", "Either the robbery stops or we stop Brazil", "Enough taxes without return" and "More Brazil, less taxes". In each city where demonstrations occurred, protestors used different slogans and mobilized different kinds of grievances, which sometimes were overtly contradictory and conflicting. For instance, grievances related to calls for lower taxes and a reduction in excessive government spending were not aligned with claims for improving social policies and services (transportation, healthcare, education) and expanding public spending (as part of a demand for a stronger and better state, i.e., one that lives up to "FIFA standards") (Alonso and Mische 2015: 154). Also, some activists were protesting against inequality, globalization, and especially capitalism benefiting the old, corrupt economic and political elites, while others called for neoliberalism (interview with a Brazilian university professor). Despite the mobilization of contradictory grievances, what united protestors was a general feeling of anger combined with frustration with incompetent and corrupt politicians who had turned their back on the Brazilian people (interview with a Brazilian university professor).

Finally, it is important to note that protestors' discontent was expressed and widely diffused through the social media (e.g. Facebook pages such as *Brasil Contra Corrupção* and *AnonymousBrasil*), which functioned as powerful tools for the organization and the expression of demands vis-à-vis the Roussef regime (Alonso and Mische 2017: 156). Collective memory of

past mobilizations was involved in the June-July protests too. Protestors inherited from the re-democratization protests in the 1980s the use of national symbols and public demonstrations, and from the *Fora Collor* protests (that led to the impeachment of President Fernando Collor in the 1990s) the emphasis on anti-corruption demands (Alonso and Mische 2017: 148). In the words of Alonso and Mische (2017: 145): "the June protests did not constitute a single social movement, but rather the opening wave of a larger cycle of protest, consisting of many different actors, issues, processes and outcomes that changed quickly over time, unfolding in divergent ways". Contrary to past protests, though, several groups of Tropical Spring protestors relied on flexible, horizontal, non-hierarchical relationships and in this sense, they differed from Brazil's previous waves of mobilizations – "especially the hierarchical structures of traditional parties, unions and social movement organisations" (Alonso and Mische 2017: 152). Thus, as Saad-Filho (2013b: 659) remarks:

> many demonstrations had no clear leaders, and there were no speeches. Frequently, groups of loosely connected people organized themselves 'spontan[e]ously' on Facebook and Twitter, met somewhere, and then marched in unclear directions, depending on decisions made by unknown persons more or less on the spot.

CONCLUSION

In June-July 2013, Brazilians were massively taken to the streets as did the Greek Indignants in 2011 and the Irish students in 2010/2011. Yet, Brazil's Tropical Spring mobilizations occurred under different conditions and circumstances. Contrary to crisis-driven socio-economic background of Greece and Ireland, Brazil - by the early 2010s - had experienced substantial economic growth and middle-class expansion. The "new middle class", Rodrigues and Brancoli (2013) explain, had "gained original consumption patterns and a generation of young people born after the 1990s" had been increasingly "establishing new relations with politics and government representatives". Yet, as mass expectations about better futures were rising, young people were becoming more and more angry about the poor quality of existing jobs, lack of political accountability and, most of all, the growing levels of social inequality and their exclusion from decision making that affected the labour market and society as a whole. This explains why the demonstrations that began protesting against inefficiency in the provision of public goods intensified large-scale grievances which, as with the Arab Spring uprisings, combined with a significant increase in the use of the social media, spread quickly and gave rise to one of the largest waves of social mobilization Brazil has ever witnessed in its recent history. As Roman (2013: 2) characteristically stresses: "And so, as the protests escalated virtually everyone declared surprise, from politicians to political analysts and to the protestors themselves".

As with the mobilizations of the Greek Indignants, a striking element of the Brazilian mobilizations was their ability to accommodate protestors from diverse class and age backgrounds as well as a heterogeneity of grievances. In the words of Krohling Peruzzo (2013: 8):

> Overall, there was a mix of class segments and political-ideological ideas: left-wing, liberal, conservative, groups with anarchist connotation, people who want to change

> Brazil, people who only appeared and participated, but without knowing exactly why […] Another aspect of such diversity is the strong presence of youth, without recognizing that there was people of all generations. Such youth helped to recruit and attended protests throughout Brazilian cities. They manifested their indignation and communicated in different ways, from cellphone to the Internet (millions of views and likes on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube), of symbols used (Guy Fawkes' mask from the movie "V for Vendetta") to hand-written posters in hand.

In this respect, the young Brazilian, Greek, and Irish activists may be seen to share ideas, tactics and (online) aggregation modes and to face increasing risks of vulnerability and precarity (as in Greece and Ireland, young Brazilians experienced precarity too as they were excluded from good quality jobs despite past progress in youth employment levels and in access to education and training programmes); but they have been operating in different "political opportunity structures" (McAdam 1982). What they share in common is that, in all three country cases, protest mobilizations occurred at a point when a lifetime of old power structures – political, social and ideological – had started to dissolve and the younger generation was seeking new ways to express themselves and influence politics. As seen in earlier sections, most 2013 young protestors in Brazil still believed in politics. But they have been resorting to alternative modes of political participation (choosing protests vis-à-vis voting) out of discontent with the political status quo and in an effort to feed political action with meanings that are more connected to their day-to-day concerns, needs, and experiences.

The most immediate impact of the 2013 Tropical Spring mobilizations has been the pressure they put on ruling politicians (interview with a Brazilian university professor). One week after the June protestors had taken in the streets, the mayors of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro accepted popular demands to reverse the fare increase; at the same time, President Dilma Rousseff – in an effort to appease protestors – announced in a televised nationwide address a package of political reforms to benefit public transport and education. She also expressed her willingness to meet with the leaders of the protests, stressing that she needed "their contribution, their energy and their ability" (BBC 2013). Ruediger et al. (2014: 2) note:

> This episode, on the one hand, shows the resumption of social mobilization as a channel of pressure over governments – which Brazil had not seen for over two decades – and, on the other, revealed the society's capacity to pressure governments, that were forced to review decisions in order to appease protests.

Yet, despite the magnitude of Tropical Spring mobilizations, as in Ireland and Greece, the June-July 2013 protests were not sustained long enough to bring about radical or, to put it differently, all-embracing change. Even if the 2013 protests have had a substantial impact on the attitudes of young people towards politics and social change, "the Brazilian political system" – as Maia Guimarães da Silva stresses (2016: 3) – "did not properly process the new information brought to it by the mass demonstrations in 2013; none of the big political parties was really open to dialogue with the demonstrators or to incorporate their claims in their political programs". Moreover, as it has been commented:

> The protest movements in Brazil express deep frustrations and even despair, because it has become impossible to channel discontent through the traditional forms of

social representation, which are either tightly controlled by the elite or have been disempowered by the neoliberal reforms. Yet, dissatisfaction without organization tends to be fruitless, and spontaneous mass movements with a mixed class base and fuelled by unfocused anger can be destabilizing without being constructive. (Saad-Filho 2013a)

Admittedly, the 2013 demonstrations were a sign that "the golden age of Brazilian development was coming to an end and social dissatisfaction was rising" (Maia Guimarães da Silva 2016: 3). Nevertheless, the work of protestors in Brazil did not end in July 2013. Many demonstrations followed over the next two years, with a new peak in March 2015, and with protestors expressing deep frustrations across several layers of society. With major grievances unmet, the story of the Tropical Spring might still be evolving.

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Interviews

Interviews conducted with three Brazilian university professors, July 2016

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.