Researching Arab Mediterranean Youth: Towards a New Social Contract

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SAHWA PROJECTS

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PRESENTATION

As the Arab Spring unfolds into its fourth year, research on the whys and wherefores of this process have mostly focused on dynamics of transition. Although Arab youth was at the forefront of the popular protests that initiated such a process and have remained as the most dynamic social agent, little albeit increasing attention has been paid to young people in the Arab Mediterranean countries, their views and prospects. As a result, despite the growing interest for the region, a glaring lack of knowledge about Arab youth (ways of life, socio-economic conditions, values, perceptions, etc.), and as a consequence about Arab societies, has marked the views of external actors and policy-makers so far.

In this context, the SAHWA Project brings together fifteen partners from Europe and Arab countries to research youth prospects and perspectives in a context of multiple social, economic and political transitions in five Arab Mediterranean countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon). The thematic axes around which the project revolves are education, employment and social inclusion, and political mobilization and participation, with a focus on youth, from an interdisciplinary perspective.

SAHWA is an interdisciplinary collaborative project that brings together socio-anthropological, economic and political, sociological and cultural approaches. SAHWA methodological approach will be articulated on three “moments”:

1. Empirical Research:
   - A Multi-country Youth Survey carried out amongst 10,000 young people in Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia to take the pulse of Arab youth in these countries. The questionnaire will cover all the research questions of the project and will constitute a significant comparative dataset for the region.
   - A Fieldwork in Local Context research to explore the youth conditions and values in different socio-economic contexts within each country and across countries. Based on social ethnographic techniques, this fieldwork will serve as a basis for a set of youth life stories, a cartography of change, a documentary on “Being 20 in Arab Mediterranean countries” and a Shababpedia.

2. Thematic Research Focuses
   - Youth Opportunities: Education, Employment and Social Inclusion
   - Youth Empowerment: Social and Political Mobilization and Participation
   - Youth Cultures: Values, Representations and Social Conditions

3. Cross-cutting Perspectives
   - Gender Equity
   - Migration and International Mobility
   - Comparative Transition Experiences
   - Public Policies and International Cooperation

OUTCOMES AND DISSEMINATION

• YOUTH SURVEY
  Carried out amongst 10,000 young people in five Arab Mediterranean countries to produce a unique comparative dataset on youth issues for the region

• SCIENTIFIC PAPERS
  Covering all the Research Themes to be published in peer-reviewed journals and publications

• CARTOGRAPHY OF CHANGE
  Both qualitative and quantitative to visualize trends and dynamics in the region

• LIFE STORIES AND DOCUMENTARY
  Reflecting narratives of young people to figure out self-representations, perceptions and cultural trends in the region

• HANDBOOKS FOR PRACTITIONERS
  To disseminate research outcomes to policy-makers at national and EU levels

• SHABABPEDIA
  An “on-line netnography” to explore concepts and perceptions related to youth issues

• SCENARIOS
  On youth prospects and general social conditions to anticipate the future of the region and inform policy-making

• POLICY BRIEFS
  To disseminate policy projects to practitioners and stakeholders

• SAHWA COMMUNITY
  A network of active stakeholders working on Arab Mediterranean youth

• DISSEMINATION EVENTS
  In Brussels, Marseille and Cairo to reach out to policy-makers and practitioners

PROJECT

Building on the existing academic and policy-oriented research on Arab and global youth, SAHWA aims at addressing a variety of issues related to the youth in Arab Mediterranean countries with four broad objectives:

Conceptualizing transition in Arab Mediterranean countries with a focus on youth, from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Mapping political, socio-economic and cultural change in the Arab Mediterranean world in a context of multiple transitions, focusing on:
- Perspectives from different countries and stakeholders
- Prospects for youth and trends to anticipate future change
- Identification of opportunities for youth, considered as a transformative agent.

Comparing to similar transition processes in other historic contexts as possible models to inform the management of political and economic transformations in the Arab Mediterranean.

Informing policy-makers with a range of tools and original frameworks of analysis to achieve a better understanding of the role of youth and contribute to a better design of national public policies and EU cooperation to support change in the region.