Policy Paper

MUSICIANS, ARTISTS AND PLAYERS:
Leisure education as a source for job opportunities in Arab Mediterranean countries

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CONTENTS

Abstract

The aim of this Policy Paper is to draw policy recommendations from the analyses of the SAHWA Project's ethnographic and survey data sets focused on young people's cultural practices and leisure education. The interest in youth cultural practices reflects two main, distinct approaches: the first conceives of youth as a potential danger to social order, the second looks at young people as social agents who are potentially involved in processes of social and cultural innovation as producers and distributors (Furlong, Woodman and Wyn; 2011). Our starting point is the conception of young people as active agents who contribute to the production, reproduction and innovation of cultural trends in the society in which they live. Therefore, it shows specific interest in the practices of cultural consumption and production enacted by young people as sources of job opportunities for the youth in Arab Mediterranean countries.

The paper is organised into four sections. First, we focus on the role of young people as relevant cultural agents in the creation, production, distribution and consumption of cultural products. Second, we discuss the main youth leisure activity trends in Arab Mediterranean countries, as expressed by young people in the ethnographic fieldwork and the survey. Third, we analyse youth policies related to non-formal education in order to draw some conclusions and make recommendations, especially in terms of EU policies, which is the main objective of the final section.

1. Introduction

The juvenile construction of culture, meaning the ways in which young people participate in the processes of cultural creation and circulation, focusses on the influence of the youth world upon society as a whole and leads us to recognise youth cultural practices as an expression of the creative – not just imitative – capacity of young people (Laaksonen et al., 2010; Camozzi et al., 2015). Juvenile agency in the construction of culture is very tightly connected with educational policies at all levels –from primary and secondary school to higher education, non-formal learning and vocational training. In our research, a gap between formal education and the labour market was found, especially with regard to the skills learned in school or universities and the demands of employers.

More than a quarter of young people surveyed in Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt and Lebanon think that the education systems fail to prepare them for the labour market (SAHWA Youth Survey, 2016).[1] Thus, the implementation of policies on leisure education or non-formal learning can represent an opportunity to cover the areas education misses and create labour niches for young people in the region. Moreover, at the same time, the implementation of policies taking into consideration the active participation of young people in the creation of leisure education spaces can enable Arab young people to develop an understanding of leisure, of self in relation to leisure, and the relationship between leisure, their own lifestyle and society. Although influenced by the dynamics of mass markets and unable to steadily determine the objects of their desire, young people deal with consumption in an active way as they creatively resignify the objects they consume. In this way, young people utilise objects of consumption in the way they prefer: for the purposes of identity building, to define cultural belongings, or to distinguish themselves from the values and the world of adults. Moreover, the consumption and the objects of consumption can be used to advance forms of resistance to adult-centrism. It follows that young people do not only consume cultural products, they also create culture and distribute it, and they are capable of teaching their knowledge to other youth and social groups.

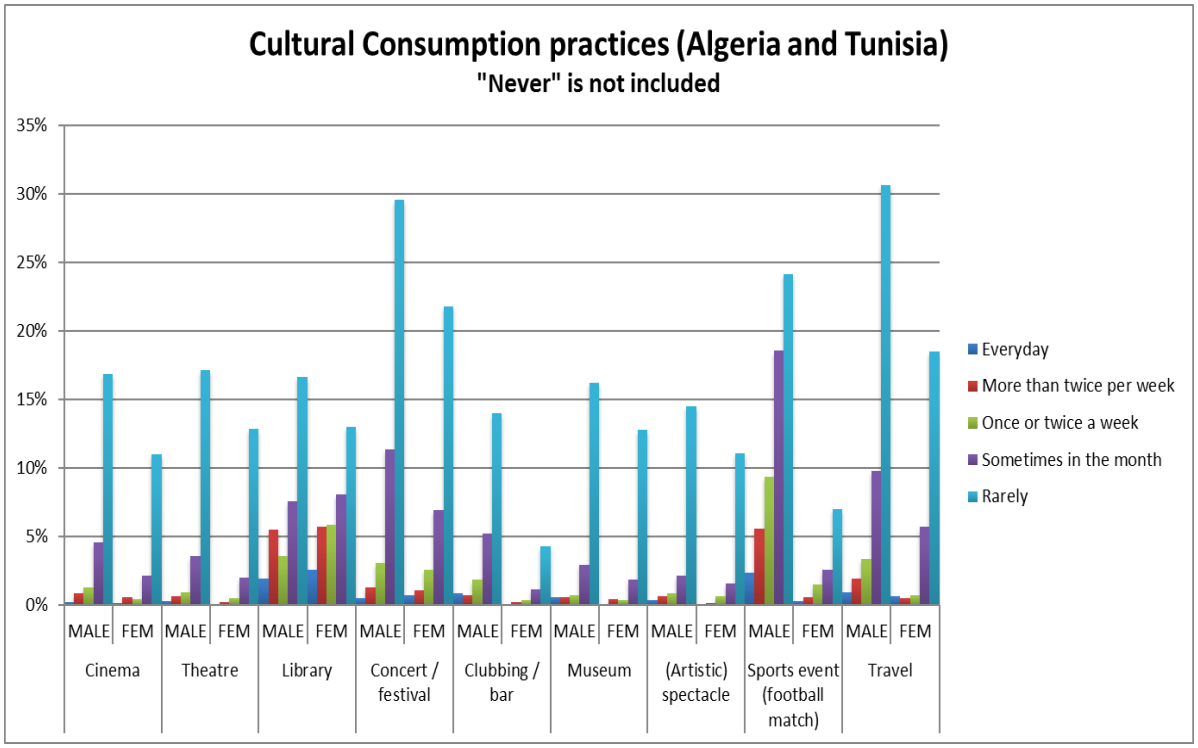
2. A short remark on methodology

The SAHWA Project established the age cohorts within which to conduct the fieldwork (both the survey and the ethnographic study) as the population aged between 15 and 29 years old. Nevertheless, we cannot forget that youth as a life stage is a social construction that depends on cultural specificities, kinship orientations, social conditions and economic constraints. Following the idea of life trajectories as movement and social reproduction processes (Heinz and Krüger, 2001; Pais, 2000), we can describe two main "transitional moments" in Arab Mediterranean countries. On the one hand, we can distinguish the transition to work or study at the end of secondary education; and, on the other, the transition from higher education to the labour market. According to the results of the SAHWA Youth Survey and Ethnographic Fieldwork data set, after finishing or leaving high school, a period begins in which young people are trying to achieve a degree of economic autonomy to manage their life. In their own words, as Ayoub – a young Moroccan

interviewed within the framework of SAHWA - underlines, "It is a time to achieve responsibility" (SAHWA Video Recorded Life Stories: Ayoub, Morocco).[2] In consequence, the targets of the recommendations of this policy paper are, principally, individuals who have left or completed secondary education. The lack of vocational training and the gap between the labour market and skills learned in school suggests that leisure education may be a good strategy for solving these main problems and offering new sources of jobs to university students and new graduates.

3. Beyond cultural marginalisation: young people as culture producers, consumers and innovators

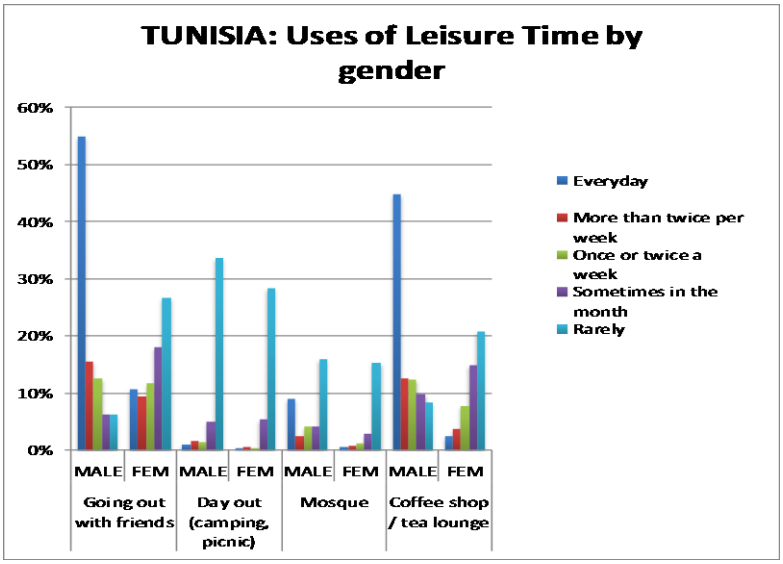
The delay in accessing social adulthood suffered by young Arabs consigns them to a liminal space (Singerman, 2009; Sukarieh, 2012; Ghannam, 2013). Thus, young people in Arab Mediterranean countries are placed on the "margins" of society. The notion of "marginality" refers to a state of poverty, deprivation and subordination, but it can be extended to include the economically well off when they are marginalised from the political sphere, the domains of lifestyle and cultural practices and the cultural consumption industries. As Saad remarks, we may consider two kinds of marginalisation process beyond the economic: cultural marginality and social marginality (Saad, 2012: 98). Culturally speaking, the access and the possibilities to create new forms of cultural devices for young people in Arab Mediterranean countries is obstructed by economic, mobility, infrastructure and governance issues. The next graph shows the access to cultural consumption practices according to gender in Algeria and Tunisia:

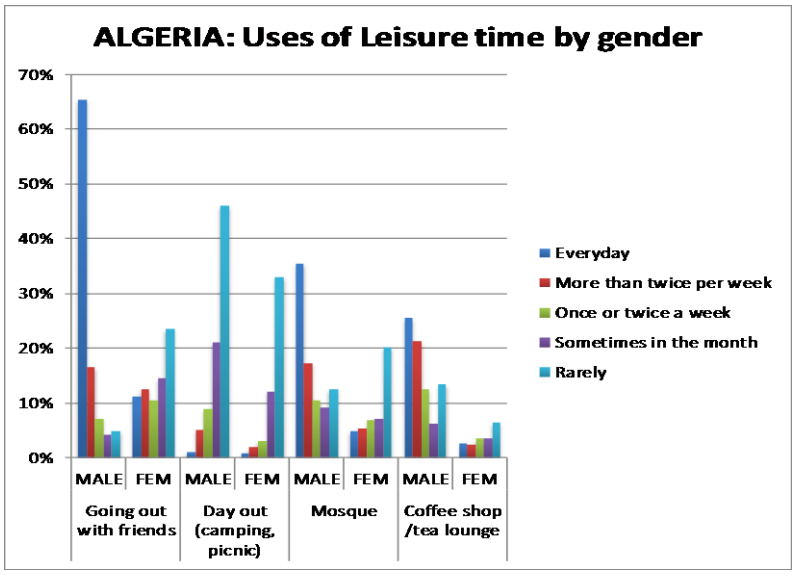


Graph 1. Eduard Ballesté. UdL. Source: SAHWA Youth Survey 2015/2016 (2016)

Nevertheless, the marginalised position of young people in relation to culture does not impede the engagement and participation of young people in informal cultural activities and practices, vastly rooted in local environments. Depending on their different capital backgrounds – for which may be read economic, parental, educational, political or cultural capital – youth groups find innovative and creative ways and spaces to produce and distribute innovative cultural goods such as street art, theatre pieces, cinema, music, etc. The abandonment of high school without completing studies helps to create social groups of young people of around 20 years old without the necessary formal skills and capabilities to find a job according the necessities of the market. Nevertheless, the knowledge learned in the streets, managing in several ways to earn money, creating social networks to obtain advantage, learning electronic tools to film, play, paint or sing, may be understood as potential abilities for the development of cultural networks and services locally imbedded. These cultural products as assets transmit values, ideas and knowledge; as social communication tools they contribute to shaping the cultural identity of youth groups. In this regard, young people are "navigating" between the marginal and the mainstream by using, at same time, global tendencies with local significations such as rap music.[3] According to the

SAHWA Youth Survey, the most frequent sociability practices among the youth in Algeria and Tunisia is going out with friends and spending time in cafes:





Graphs 2 and 3. Eduard Ballesté. UdL. Source: SAHWA Youth Survey 2015/2016 (2016)

In this sense of companionship there is great potential for future youth organisations where young people may assume their role as cultural innovators and providers, just as they do in the coffee shops, *souqs* (traditional markets) and the informal cultural associations they are involved in. The commitment of the young people attached to these groups shows that young people in Arab Mediterranean countries are prepared to get more involved in society. Although the governments in the region do not recognise informal youth groups, they can

facilitate an opportunity to develop alternative cultural facilities, cultural micro-industries and non-formal education services.

In one of the SAHWA Focus Group discussions in Egypt, most participants expressed that the civic engagement and social work of young people in very localised spaces in neighbourhoods facilitates the youth taking an active role in the community, helping each other in different ways. The objective of this kind of associations is to provide skills development courses to improve their living standards, help and consultancy services to open small businesses, special vocational training and different recreational activities. In Morocco, a good example is the Touria and Abdelaziz Tazy cultural centre in Casablanca, which provides young people with the opportunity to produce cultural products such as comics, graffiti, theatre workshops and rehearsal spaces for bands and other activities planned by young people. Nevertheless, this cultural centre offers a metaphor of the situation of youth clubs and associations in North Africa as socially and geographically marginalised: placed in a peripheral area of Casablanca, isolated from the social and cultural life of the city, surrounded by industrial ships and recently encircled by police to impede the performance of rapper Mouad L7a9ed.[4] However, the youth cultural centres in the region are not abundant in lower and middle class neighbourhoods. For instance, during the ethnographic fieldwork, the Lebanese team mapped the cultural associations located in the *Ain El Remmaneh* area of Beirut and the result was only one youth association and three sports clubs and cultural centres for a neighbourhood of about 10,000 inhabitants. Alongside the interviews and focus group discussions, several young respondents emphasized on the difficulties of improving the creative capabilities, skills and competences learned in informal activities. Due to the high rates of high school drop-out and the demands of youth graduates and students of social work for practical training to gain work experience, more youth cultural centres in the hearts of the neighbourhoods could help answer both needs. These centres can be an extension of the street and not an extension of the school.

Young people's opportunities to participate in cultural creations and sports, to imagine rich, high-quality free time is known to have an impact on the number of young people who turn to illegal drugs or alcohol, or who may even become offenders. On his matter, the state and the local and regional authorities will be able to do nothing without the action of the associations and the young people themselves (Rarrbo, 2009).

4. Youth policies and leisure education in Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt and Lebanon

The five countries in which research has been conducted either have developed youth policies or are in the process of formulating them. As consequence of unrest in the region, policymakers are identifying opportunities to harness the capabilities and knowledge young people develop in their cultural practices, leisure time and social work. Unfortunately, in general terms, the youth cultural policies in the region continue to adopt a top-down orientation and present low rates of participation and engagement of young people in the national programmes and associations. According to the SAHWA Youth Survey, in Algeria around 75% of respondents said that they do not engage with or participate in cultural associations, charitable organisations, neighbourhood associations, youth associations or women's associations. The Lebanese results offer a similar perspective, while in the case of Tunisia the figures rose to 90%. Beyond other reasons, the lack of confidence in the governments' management along with the ignorance about youth programmes, both national and international, could be mentioned as highly problematic for the success of youth policies in general, and non-formal education and cultural services, in particular.[5]

In Morocco, non-formal education and youth work is dedicated to leisure, which also includes formal activities such as technology and computer courses and language and literacy courses. According to Floris in 2009, "there are currently 440 such associations which host many clubs dealing with music, cinema, literature and sport" (Floris, 2009:7) and the situation is not much better nowadays. The youth policy in Tunisia, like non-formal education, is not completely recognised by state and society. In the administration, myriad youth policy strategies are found. These policies are devoted to the education, health and housing sectors, and the work of the informal sector. On the other hand, the effort to improve cultural and sports infrastructures during the last years of the Ben Ali presidency offered an opportunity to form associative work networks and NGOs. In this sense, the creation in 2002 of the National Youth Observatory has been very helpful in changing the governance from a "problem"-oriented perspective of youth to a more inclusive and positive view of youth cultures. But, consistent with the top-down perspective, a lack of interest in the informal sector seems to change these initiatives into an extension of school (Floris,

2009). In Algeria, "most observers would answer that there is no youth policy in Algeria" as Rarrbo recognises (Rarrbo, 2009: 29). As a result, in Algeria there are no programmes with a comprehensive and "positive" perspective on young people. The high number of urban riots in some of the Algerian cities started by young people justifies the view of the youth as a "danger" generally adopted by the state. Youth policies are governed by a general strategy that tries to involve unemployment, vocational training, drug prevention, non-formal education and sports but without coordinating the efforts. Another important issue, as mentioned above, is the low level of engagement and participation of youths in associations, clubs and organisations due to the top-down orientation of the youth policies.

In Egypt, several authors remark on how youth policies and non-formal education focus on the young urban middle class (Sika, 2016) and civic education. In the last years of Mubarak, there was an upsurge in the number of youth leadership developmental programmes managed by the National Youth Council and NGOs scaling up the non-formal education programmes. Moreover, the growth of media tools used by young people to communicate with young people, whether through magazines or, more recently, in electronic formats are testimonies to this revival of youth civic engagement, especially among the middle and upper classes. All the same, despite the leadership of young people during the 2011 uprising, the number of youth organisations is small. Youth organisations face limited funding, poorly qualified staff, and difficulty in attracting unpaid volunteers, as expressed in one of SAHWA's focus groups. This situation has been consolidated during the different successive governments since 25th January revolution, without taking advantage of the informal youth groups concerned with cultural and environmental activities. Finally, in Lebanon**,** it is difficult to find strategies or youth policies beyond those related with education and the labour market. The lack of cultural clubs and non-formal education places Lebanese youth in a marginalised position in terms of access to culture and non-formal education (Rarrbo, 2009).

5. Final recommendations

From our perspective, Arab youth is a resource in society. In consequence, the focus of a youth cultural policy should ensure the active participation of all young people in the cultural sphere and explore the ways to provide them with the means to realise their full

potential as citizens. Thus, the role of government is to provide "packages of opportunity" for young people, propelling a performative agency and placing young people at the centre of the planning, decision-making and management of the youth associations. This implies a change of approach as, the governance of youth cultural policies in the region is subjugated to a perspective dominated by youth "bounded agency" by social requirements (Evans, 2002), with the objective that youth cultural practices fit according with social requirements. Public policies for youth cultural practices in the region are geared towards institutionalising their own structures. So much so that the growth of the cultural structures experienced in recent years in the region, with the increase in public budgets and serious problems answering young people's demands, makes the maintenance of this system affordable. The model in which youth cultural policies and leisure education provision is managed by public bodies has, except in very specific cases, proven to be insufficient, undynamic and reproducing the management deficits of public administrations that ultimately generate significant maintenance problems. There is room and need for different approaches. An alternative to the current system would consist in providing incentives for the creation of cultural centres and youth and neighbourhood associations that could act as leisure educational spaces. These spaces can have two main aims. First, to gain access to cultural practices, learning and teaching from their own experiences, applying a performative agency perspective. Secondly, they can help offer job opportunities and trainings for undergraduate and graduate students. To do so, the public administrations of the region but also the EU should take into account the need to:

1. Change in the policy orientation from institutional top-down governance to a bottom-up strategy and then seeing which agents (social workers, young people, etc.) as a mean to ensure better conditions for the provision of cultural and non-formal education services;
2. Understanding leisure learning as a comprehensive issue, with young people's involvement in youth organisations as workers, volunteers or leaders in a youth club. This provides a young person with valuable life skills that cannot be taught through the formal education system;
3. Achieving the active participation of young people in the creation of these spaces of sociability, cultural creation and non-formal learning is crucial. Those centres can be

self-managed by young people and this would ultimately open new spaces for youth participation and would indirectly strengthen youth public policies.

EU policies can work to facilitate synergies between governments, social work professionals, private cultural companies and young people. The objective is that young people from Arab countries, individually or organised into groups, become the main beneficiaries, both as users and creators of the leisure education spaces, and as professionals responsible for intervening in the world of young people. When these exchanges are numerous, fertile or positive, the result is to strengthen areas of youth participation and strengthen youth public policies. When these exchanges are scarce, sterile or negative, young people go from being the subject to the object, becoming invisible or disappearing symbolically and physically from centre stage.

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Endnotes

1. At this moment, we can only use the quantitative data collected in Algeria, Tunisia and Lebanon with the implementation of SAHWA Youth Survey. Thus, we can consider this data as regional tendencies that, it is predicted, will be confirmed in the case of Morocco, Lebanon and Egypt.
2. Ayoub is a lower class young male in Casablanca interviewed within the SAHWA framework as part of SAHWA Life Stories. His interview is available at the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-tDOQxahtIQ.
3. "*Enaviqi*" is the word that *hittiste* groups uses in Algeria to define their activity to earn little money. Note the polysemy of the term: *"when you 'enaviqi' by selling something, such as a bird or a mobile phone you can afford to go home and assert your presence, but when there is no 'Tchipa' (money earned through the completion of any service) and although you're out, taking coffee and you know this site my brother Zaki, you're here and it's always the same routine", explains an urban, lower class Algerian Youth* (DZ_FE_1, 2015:7).
4. See: Telquel.ma, 20th June 2015: "Une fondation culturelle encerclée par la police pour empêcher le concert de L7a9ed" (http://telquel.ma/2015/06/20/censure-frappe-encore-l7a9ed-luzine_1452841)
5. The high rates of accusations of nepotism in the SAHWA Youth Survey may help understand the low levels of engagement and participation of young people in national and international programmes.

الصحوة
Sahwa

Researching
Arab Mediterranean Youth:
Towards a New Social Contract

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The SAHWA Project ("Researching Arab Mediterranean Youth: Towards a New Social Contract") is a FP-7 interdisciplinary cooperative research project led by the Barcelona Center for International Affairs (CIDOB) and funded by the European Commission. It brings together fifteen partners from Europe and Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries to research youth prospects and perspectives in a context of multiple social, economic and political transitions in five Arab countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon). The project expands over 2014-2016 and has a total budget of €3.1 million. The thematic axis around which the project will revolve are education, employment and social inclusion, political mobilisation and participation, culture and values, international migration and mobility, gender, comparative experiences in other transition contexts and public policies and international cooperation.