Political Participation of the Arab Middle Class – Motivation and Access

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Acknowledgement

Field of research

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Disclaimer and context

The research project has been prepared under the United Nations Sabbatical Programme and in cooperation with Columbia University in New York. The author is currently United Nations staff member and therefore the project specifically links to current organizational priorities of the United Nations:

(a) The proposal contributed by deepening and extending the work of UNESCWA's Economic Development and Globalisation Division on the Middle Class in the Arab Region, in which I have been strongly involved (http://www.escwa.un.org/information/pressescwaprint.asp?id_code=562).

(b) Rising inequality in all regions together with an emerging though insecure middle classes affect stability and political processes, thus requiring a shift in policies to address inequality and insecurity as highlighted by the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (http://www.post2015hlp.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/UN-Report.pdf).

(c) With the changing "geography of poverty", countries and international organizations at the General Assembly called on the UN to adopt a new multidimensional poverty measure (MPI2015+) to track progress toward the new goals adopted after 2015 and to adopt a new multidimensional framework for poverty reduction worldwide, as part of a new post-2015 development strategy. The middle classes with its diverse characteristics and vulnerabilities are a major stakeholder (http://www.ophi.org.uk/multidimensional-poverty-measurement-in-the-post-2015-development-context)

Introduction

Globally the size of the Middle Class is expected to increase from 1.8 billion in 2009 to 4.9 billion in 2030. In the Arab region (Middle East/North Africa) 234 million people will be considered part of the Middle Class by 2030 compared to 105 million in 2009 (Sawhill, Winship, & Grannis, 2012; Yueh, 2013). But who are the members of Middle Class in the Arab region? What was their role in the Arab Awakening? What are their professional, educational, social and economic profiles? To start addressing these guiding questions, the paper will use existing economic definitions for "middle class" as its unit of analysis. In lack of a formally agreed definition for the Middle Class strata, the "one third rule"(i.e. a third of the income left for discretionary spending after covering the basic needs for food and shelter based on its prerequisite, a so-called "steady job" (Banerjee & Duflo, 2007; Parker, 2009)) – will serve as starting point to develop insights into the nature of areas of concern onto which the middle class can have political influence: health care, education, public transport and so on.[1] For example, the middle class could affect public policy through their voting behavior or through exercising a certain position on taxation or fiscal policy (El-Mikawy, 2013). As a qualitative definition and with reference to the aspirations and ambitions of Brazilians, Eduardo Gianetti da Fonseca describes the middle class as composed of "people who are not resigned to a life of poverty, who are prepared to make sacrifices to create a better life for themselves but who have not started with life's material problems solved because they have material assets to make their lives easy" (Parker, 2009, p. 1).

Assuming that "prosperous societies often have large and stable middle classes" (Solimano, 2006, p. 8), the aspiration and ambition component draws attention to the middle class's role as a potential agent for development and social transformation that is not grounded in an inherited status. How so is the question, given that a diverse middle class across the globe appears to be awakening (e.g. "rising expectations of the expanding middle class in developing countries contrast with the stagnating living standards of a shrinking middle class in OECD countries" (Pezzini, 2012)). In the context of the Arab Region this question takes on an even more complex dimension: A study on inequality concluded that "there is a tendency to believe that the Arab middle class experienced an 'authoritarian bargain', where developmental achievements were traded for political freedom in this part of the world" (Ali, 2009). The emergence of bureaucratic and exclusive governance[2] conflicts with democratic participation (Callahan, 2007), thus both direct and indirect citizen (e.g. representative democracy) participation has become limited over time and caused frustration towards the professional political elites, especially among a younger generation that wants both: economic development and political participation.

Underlying the events of the Arab Spring has been the demand for change from prevalent social contracts and relationships between the administration and the public. A desire to move away from modalities[3] of "Administrator as Ruler vs. People as Subject" (coercive approach with authoritarian dynamic that is government controlled) and "Administrator as Expert vs. People as Client" (perceived competence-based approach with a controlling dynamic that requires peoples' compliance) brought people to the streets. Testing the waters of democracy, people took personal risks to demand more "interactive" relationships between the government and its people (e.g. administrators being accountable to and entrusted with actual implementation of peoples' votes; the administration being a public service engaged with the people being citizens). Unfortunately, there is a gap between expectations and realities emerging three years after the start of the Arab Spring movement and - as previous research confirms - "if we expect administrators to be facilitators, partners, and collaborators who encourage dialogue, build teams, foster partnerships and utilize participatory decision making strategies then we need to provide the appropriate training to equip these public administrators with the skills they need to do their jobs effectively" (Callahan, 2007). Changes in public administration leading to changes in patterns for political participation are a lengthy process of training and education of all stakeholders, even more so in traditional, hierarchical, or authoritarian societies, in countries without pre-existing social, civic and institutional frameworks to support political participation of citizens and/or in countries with elevated levels of distrust and fear dominating the

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[1] The use of such rule of thumb affords certain flexibility, since income levels vary at the national, regional and international level.
[2] See Annex 1 for an overview on political systems in the Arab region
[3] For more details on the discussion of the roles of citizens and administrators, how they are intertwined and how they reflect various public administration reform movements as well as differences in public opinion on the role of government, please refer to: (Callahan, 2007)

relationship between authorities and the people. With changing social contracts and the government-public relationship in the Arab region, the Middle Class's aspiration and ambition would translate into material and non-material investments geared towards increasing policy influence and civil society engagement. In turn, the augmentation of opportunities/capabilities and freedoms of the Middle Classes could cause a trickle-down effect for development that not only benefits the middle class themselves but could also the poor and vulnerable (i.e. an expansion on "poverty-sensitive development"). As the events of the Arab Spring illustrate, the middle class can play a role in establishing, triggering, sustaining or consolidating social and political transformations (i.e. establishing democracies) though it is not an automatism and they cannot achieve social transformation on their own (Parker, 2009). In addition and as the protest demographic showed, the middle class in the Arab region is no homogenous group of people with similar profiles. Instead the profiles of the members of the middle class distribute along numerous dimensions, for example the urban-rural divide, the modern-traditional professions, origin-immigrant and so on.

The rationale of the research paper is to delineate the concept of middle class as a certain group of citizens (or better as a population strata)[4] with political relevance and to identify its role for equitable development in the context of the Arab world today, which requires adjustment of existing theoretical frameworks. Political comparative analysis helps with paraphrasing the main research questions to identify the middle class and their political role (Deutsch, Burrell, & Kann, 1957 (reprint 1967)):

1. Do members of the middle class possess a *compatibility of major values relevant to political decision-making* that would enable collective decision-making on a broad scope of functional policy areas? If so, to what extent?
2. Do members of the middle class have the *will[5], ability and capacity to participate in political entities, institutions or governments in general* to shape a national response to needs, messages, policies and actions without resort to violence (e.g. link to governance and institutional quality)? If so, to what extent?
3. Do answers to the above indicate a collective bargaining position of the middle class? And how does that possibly reflect *mutual predictability/reliability of behaviour* resulting from the middle class being considered the "median (voter)" which - paired with a level of trust in institutions – would create stability/permanency within a state and an economy?

The above questions address the important interrelationship of the political participation realm with the economic development role of "middle class": For example, participation in political processes allows influence on the definition and implementation of a formula for sharing/allocating revenues or effective decision-making (i.e. voting mechanisms), while the ability and willingness to contribute to or drive necessary compromises and concessions arising from the social contract already in place or emerging for the benefit of all population layers that (i.e. reducing the politico-socio-economic divide shaping the relationship of the "middle class" to the "lower class" and "upper class")[6]. Having the capability and the willingness to politically participate is not sufficient when necessary institutions are lacking, as Nancy Birdsall (President of the Center for Global Development) emphasises:

"A middle class must be supported by a system in which poor people get more out of the government than they pay in taxes; otherwise, people in the vulnerable category [i.e. lower middle class] will derive no benefit at all from the government and, as in the case of Bouazizi[7], may even feel threatened by the government, causing political disruption and a system of growth that is politically unsustainable. In the future, developmental economics should seek to address the provision of public goods to create a solid middle class and accountable governments." [8]

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[4] Given that citizenship could be also a criteria for identifying membership in the so-called middle class

[5] For example in India, where the professional classes were "considered indifferent to politics and less inclined to vote than the poor", but a change of their attitude was observed after the Mumbai attacks in late 2008 (Parker, 2009, p. 2).

[6] Please note: The use of the expressions "lower" and "upper class" is by no means a value judgment. However, the sociological idea of different social classes reflects a distinction and exclusion. For example, classic political economy (i.e. David Ricardo) differentiates classes based on source of income. On the one hand considering both capital and labour, also Karl Marx, Max Weber, Thorstein Veblen and Joseph Schumpeter build theories based on class differentiation and relationships between classes (e.g. conflicts). On the other hand, modern interpretations of class (i.e. by Pierre Bourdieu) focus on expanding the understanding of capital to include economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital.

[7] Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation in Tunisia in December 2010 sparked the Arab Spring

[8] Source: http://international.williams.edu/articles/international-studies-colloquium-the-importance-of-the-middle-class-in-developing-countries/

Outline & Methodology

The objective of the research project is threefold, to: (1) identify the current role of the middle class in the Arab Region and their influence on the events of the Arab; (2) identify their ability and capacity to be an agent for stability and sustainable development; as well as (3) assess the kind of policy shift needed to enable political participation of the middle class for broad-based benefit. As result, the research paper would close a region specific research gap concerning an important group of stakeholders and it would inform the development of inclusive and sustainable policy options. Furthermore, results could help UN entities to design programmes to support member countries in their efforts to address the needs of the middle class better.

Draft outline:

Chapter 1:   Literature review and introduction - to set the stage for the discussion of a political economy perspective on the Middle Class and provide the reader with an introduction and background on the topic as well as identifying the research gap (see research questions)

Chapter 2:   Building a theoretical framework of analysis - Guided by the research questions, identification of behavioural drivers, expectations, aspirations and incentives characteristic of the middle class (e.g. values) as well as analysis of the current role of the Arab middle class in governance (e.g. functional rights/responsibilities, institutional rights/responsibilities) linked to asset accumulation and asset allocation of the Middle Class, which could explain preferences for influencing policy and political decision-making.

Chapter 3:   Empirical data collection (qualitative and/or quantitative), analysis and interpretation

Chapter 4:   Analysis of current UN programming targeting the middle class in the Arab Region.

Chapter 5:   Recommendations & Summary

Expected outcome and usefulness/value to the department/office/mission and the Organization

"Economic well-being is linked with support for democracy.
[P]eople tend to hold different opinions about democracy and social issues once they reach a certain level of wealth.
Compared with poorer people in emerging countries, members of the middle class assign more importance to democratic institutions and individual liberties, consider religion less central to their lives, hold more liberal social values, and express more concern about the environment."
(Pew Research, Global Attitudes Project)[9]

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[9] Source: http://www.pewglobal.org/2009/02/12/the-global-middle-class/

Chapter 1: Introduction

Political participation - somewhat measured by the World Governance Indicator on "Voice and accountability" - refers to the mechanism and conduits of citizens to became change agents in economic, societal and political system. It refers to the level of formal and information involvement in decision-making and policy-making towards positive development outcomes. Political participation for development as well as economic and social transformation is not necessarily grounded in an inherited status and extends benefits of improved economic and social policies to - ideally - all strata of the population, especially the vulnerable and marginalised populations. Despite the transformative events Arab Spring how to effectively channel and enhance the overall development agent functionality of the citizens remains the question particularly in Arab societies, where there is a perceived "tendency to believe that the Arab middle class experienced an 'authoritarian bargain', where developmental achievements were traded for political freedom in this part of the world" (Ali, 2009). In a sense, the Arab people, especially the middle class traded voice and participation for economic favours that were rather short-lived and limited in benefit to their kin. Such bureaucratic and exclusive governance conflicts with democratic participation[10], thus both direct and indirect citizen participation (e.g. representative democracy) has become more and more limited over time and caused frustration towards the professional political elites, especially among a younger generation that wants both: economic development and political participation. Secondly, the Arab society is dominated by identity-based participation in political processes rather linked to religious beliefs and ethnicity than a national identity, if it exists.[11] The Polity IV scores for institutionalised democracy across the relevant three country groupings (table 1) speak volumes. Given the limited data availability, the surprisingly high scores for Lebanon and Comoros stand out. Arguably underlying the events of the Arab Spring has been the demand for change from prevalent social contracts and relationships between the administration and the public.

Table 1: Polity IV scores across the Arab Region

Country	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Algeria	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	3
Bahrain	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kuwait	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Morocco	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oman	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Qatar	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Saudi Arabia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Comoros	5	5	5	1	1	2	4	4	6	6	9	9	9	9
Djibouti	0	0	0	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Iraq	0	0	0	0	0	0	0							
Libya	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mauritania	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
North Sudan														
Sudan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Syria	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Egypt	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1
Jordan	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Lebanon										6	6	6	6	6
Tunisia	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Egypt	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1
Jordan	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2

The score captures the regime authority spectrum on a 21-point scale ranging from -10 (hereditary monarchy) to +10 (consolidated democracy), countries with missing data are included for information purposes
Source: dataset from http://www.nsd.uib.no/macrodataguide/set.html?id=32&sub=1

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[10] (Callahan, 2007), also see Annex (table 1) for an overview on political systems in the Arab region

[11] For a comprehensive discussion see (Collier, 2010)

A desire to move away from traditional modalities[12] of "Administrator as Ruler vs. People as Subject" (coercive approach with an authoritarian dynamic that is government controlled) and "Administrator as Expert vs. People as Client" (perceived competence-based approach with a controlling dynamic that requires peoples' compliance) brought people to the streets. Testing the waters of democracy, people took personal risks to demand a more "interactive" (i.e. participatory) relationships between the government and its people (e.g. administrators becoming accountable to and entrusted with the actual implementation of peoples' votes; the administration being a public service engaged with the people being citizens). Unfortunately, there is a gap between expectations and realities emerging three years after the start of the Arab Spring movement and - as previous research confirms - "if we expect administrators to be facilitators, partners, and collaborators who encourage dialogue, build teams, foster partnerships and utilize participatory decision making strategies then we need to provide the appropriate training to equip these public administrators with the skills they need to do their jobs effectively" (Callahan, 2007). Changes in public administration leading to changes in patterns for political participation are a lengthy process of (mutual) training and education of all stakeholders. That is relevant even more so in traditional, hierarchical, or authoritarian societies, in countries without pre-existing social, civic and institutional frameworks to support political participation of citizens and/or in countries with elevated levels of distrust and fear dominating the relationship between authorities and the people.

With changing social contracts and the government-public relationship in the Arab region, the peoples' aspiration and ambition could translate into material and non-material investments geared towards increasing policy influence and civil society engagement. In turn, the augmentation of opportunities/capabilities and freedoms of, for example the Middle Classes hopefully cause a trickle-down effect for development that not only benefits the middle class themselves but could also benefit the poor and vulnerable (i.e. an expansion on "poverty-sensitive development"). As the events of the Arab Spring illustrate, the middle class might play a significant role in establishing, triggering, sustaining or consolidating social and political transformations (i.e. establishing democracies) though it is not an automatism and they cannot achieve social transformation on their own (Parker, 2009). In addition and as the "protest demographic" showed, the middle class in the Arab region is no homogenous group of people with similar profiles. Instead the profiles of the members of the middle class distribute along numerous dimensions, for example the urban-rural divide, the modern-traditional professions, gender, origin-immigrant and so on.

While the Arab Spring "blurred the lines between formal and informal political spheres" (Khatib, 2013), the post-revolutionary Arab region undergoes a transition process that does not necessarily lead to democratic consolidation. In result the political influence of the citizens resulting from both deliberate and non-deliberate activity may also transition either into becoming democratic or remain elite-based. Political participation in whatever shape or form or in whichever realm depend on the existence of functioning political institutions that enable/provide a direct and observable relationship with the process of policy decision-making applicable nation-wide, the channels of access to decision-makers as well as the forming of interests and identities underlying the access.

Khatib (2013) identified four main challenges to formal political participation: Firstly, "endurance of formal political institutions that benefit from sustaining the old political status quo". Second challenge is the overlap of the political environment with the social and economic, which makes "it difficult for emerging political entities and newly formed government institutions to carve an independent path" (see below in the case of Egypt). Thirdly, political participation and its direction are influenced by people's wish for stability and security, but unfortunately transitions to democracy are unstable. Fourth challenge, the lack of capacity of certain groups (e.g. women, minorities) in terms of having an effective role in shaping public policy, means that formal political participation is negatively affected.

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[12] For more details on the discussion of the roles of citizens and administrators, how they are intertwined and how they reflect various public administration reform movements as well as differences in public opinion on the role of government, please refer to: (Callahan, 2007)

Chapter 2: Current forms of political participation in the Arab region

Historical and contemporary events in the Arab region have influence on civil and political rights, thus leading to an Arab "freedom and democracy deficit" as pointed out in the first Arab Human Development Report in 2002 (A. Sabbagh, 2005). As such deficit is not limited to the political sphere, the guiding questions address the important interrelationship of the political participation realm with the economic development role of all parts of the population: For example, participation in political processes could allow influence on the definition and implementation of a formula for sharing/allocating revenues or on effective decision-making, while the ability and willingness to contribute or drive necessary compromises and concessions arises from the social contract in place or emerging in order to benefit all population layers that (i.e. reducing the perceived politico-socio-economic divide that shapes the relationship between the "middle class" other classes)[13].

In democracies the socioeconomic status (SES model) works well to explain political activity as a function of education, income and occupation.[14] Consequently, one could assume that with better income, better education and relevant occupations, a broader population would engage in political activity. However, the prevalent 'authoritarian bargain' prevented it. In turn and once that authoritarian bargain is not honoured any longer by the ruling elites, i.e. once there are no economic gains traded against popular political participation, then the threat of losing income, access to education for oneself or future generations and jobs may turn the middle class into political actors. The events of the Arab Spring bringing together protesters from all walks of life, education levels and occupations indicate such change.

A focus on socioeconomic status is not sufficient to explain political participation, apart from general political interest – a "standard measure of psychological engagement in politics", the resource-based extension of the SES model considers time, money and "civic skills" (e.g. language ability, communication, presentation and organisation skills) to explain the mechanisms that link social status to political activity (Brady et al., 1995). Brady et al. (1995) summarizes:

> "Resources can be measured more reliably than is possible with the motivations (e.g., efficacy or political interest) that often are used to explain activity. Furthermore, they are causally prior to political activity, deriving from home and school, choices about jobs and family, and involvements in nonpolitical organizations and churches. The civic skills that facilitate participation are not only acquired in childhood but cultivated throughout the life cycle in the major secondary institutions of adult life. In this way, the institutions of civil society operate, as Tocqueville noted, as the school of democracy."

So how does that model apply to the Arab region, if - for example in Egypt (see box 1) - the relationship between politics and economics are a result of "informal" and non-democratic means of political participation? Compared to the example of Egypt in which a networking approach evolved out of necessity and as an alternative to - though not displacement of - formal state power, modes of political participation in democratic societies are more "official" and formal. They include, for example: 1) electoral engagement: voting, campaigning and/or donations to political campaigns; 2) civic engagement: protesting and/or lobbying, 3) faith-based engagement and 4) other types of engagement: grassroots movements and/or (social) media. Independent though of the degree of formality, the individual in Arab countries also needs resources to engage. However, the socioeconomic status may be secondary to other factors (e.g. family connections, the time devoted to care for 'business relationships') and the degrees to which these forms of political participation are possible or allowed differ in Arab countries (e.g. freedom of expression).

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[13] Please note: The use of the expressions "lower" and "upper class" is by no means a value judgment. However, the sociological idea of different social classes reflects a distinction and exclusion. For example, classic political economy (i.e. David Ricardo) differentiates classes based on source of income. On the one hand considering both capital and labour, also Karl Marx, Max Weber, Thorstein Veblen and Joseph Schumpeter build theories based on class differentiation and relationships between classes (e.g. conflicts). On the other hand, modern interpretations of class (i.e. by Pierre Bourdieu) focus on expanding the understanding of capital to include economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital.

[14] See (Brady, Verba, & Schlozman, 1995) endnote 4 on p. 290 provides a literature overview on the SES-participation relationship.

"The successive regimes of Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak have relied upon organized labour, elections, professional groups, political parties, and the bureaucracy more as instruments of control and co-operation than of participation. Through the use of formal legal, political, and military power, the ruling elites present their dominant positions as both natural and necessary, and thus exclude from participation the subordinated classes. Western modernization theorists help perpetuate these biases because their definitions of political participation in the Middle East deny the political resources and experiences of non-elites. … [Need] to examine politics from the perspective of the popular classes, the sha'b […] by examining the political institutions that these people created to pursue their various interests. **To the bureaucratized and largely authoritarian Egyptian society, the sha'b responded by evolving networks designed to facilitate access or provide alternatives to the formal resources of the state, without displacing the formal power of the Egyptian state.** The sha'b rely on the ties of family or neighbourhood to plant a sympathetic word with, or ask a financial favour from normally unreceptive bureaucrats; they mitigate the effects of unemployment by holding supplementary jobs in a vigorous informal economy; they establish savings associations to provide credit to individuals who would not otherwise qualify in the rigid, formal banking system. The overall image which emerges […] is one of **a dynamic and struggling people**, unlike the popular image of a subdued and fatalistic popular underclass in Muslim society. The family is an Islamic microcosm acting as the repository of social -- and Muslim -- values in Egyptian society: informal saving associations respond to economic needs and at the same time preserve the Islamic rejection of usurious practices; the private voluntary health and social organizations fill needs unmet by the state system, and at the same fulfill the religious requirement of Islamic alms. […] **Men and women in Sha'bi communities who actively cultivate their networks can gain access to power politicians, subsidized commodities, savings, and credit organizations, and local bureaucrats who may facilitate another range of services."**

Source: ((Safty, 1995), emphasis added)

Thus the resource-based extension to the SES model may provide a set of arguments or incentives driving the Middle Class' political participation behaviour, while it may not be the case for others: On the one hand, while the resource "money" may be available to representatives of the Middle Class in the Arab region, all the population's "civic skills" may be underdeveloped due to 1) less opportunity[15] acquiring the skills in early in life through education and conducive social environments and/or 2) non-democratic political systems actively discouraging civic skills. On the other hand, members of the middle class having a higher level of education[16] and holding a steady job may result in their resource "time" being limited and not leaving enough room for allocating time to political activity. That does not mean immediately that having time translates into political activism.

In addition, there appears to be a generational effect[17] (see box 2) and a gender aspect at play: the children in the Arab world are better educated than decades ago, but the youth unemployment rate (25 per cent for men and 48 per cent for women)[18] is comparatively high and leaves time to be allocated to political activity. Furthermore, frustration with exclusive political institutions grows with increased education and lack of (employment) opportunities. While the skills learned in school and university may not correspond to the needs of the Arab labour market, they may be a set of skills that corresponds to "civic skills", which in turn increase the propensity to engage in political activity.[19]

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[15] Notwithstanding a general measurement issue, civic skills can also be acquired in religious environments (e.g. church/Sunday school, mosques/ madrassa), which tend to be more independent from social stratification or education level (Brady et al., 1995)

[16] [ADD info on mean schooling years] According to the latest Arab MDG report: 1) the primary net enrolment rates have increased from 85 per cent in 1999 to 92 per cent in 2011; 2) the literacy rates of youth aged 15-24 years old have increased from 70 per cent in the 1990s to 89 per cent in 2010. (United Nations & League of Arab States, 2013)

[17] The demographics of the Arab countries shows a distinct "youth bulge" (Bajoria & Assaad, 2011)

[18] (International Labour Organisation (ILO), 2012)

[19] (United Nations & League of Arab States, 2013): "Another issue is the relevance of skills acquired for the labour market, as even a high level of education does not guarantee a job. Employers complain that youth are not well prepared and
do not develop the needed skills. In Tunisia, the education system produces highly educated youth, with more than 57 per cent of new entrants to the labour market in 2010 holding a university degree. In an economy dominated by low-skill industries, however, few could find the jobs that university graduates expect."

The ADG's members are Internet users ages 15 to 35 who are digitally active; own a laptop, computer, or smartphone; access the Internet multiple times each day; and have at least one account on a social network. **They are educated and independent; they are decidedly religious yet also free-spirited. They are politically aware, if not politically active.** They are aligned with general Islamic principles and country/family traditions and culture, but they are **constantly questioning tradition and its effect on their lives**. Family still represents their most important social unit, and friends are a source of counsel for many decisions. Through the digital world, **women—particularly in some cultures of the MENA region—now have a platform to express themselves, share their ideas, and interact with men in virtual space**. In previous generations, interaction with men and the outside world was limited.

This generation has grown up during a time of political turmoil in the region. They have witnessed or heard about the 1991 Gulf War, have watched the attacks of 9/11 and military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, and have been exposed to the more visible forms of religious extremism. They have participated in one form oranother in the Arab Spring. They are very much affected by Western culture and are wary of its effect on themselves, their children, and future generations.

Source: ((JWT, 2013; K. Sabbagh, Mourad, Kabbara, Shehadi, & Samman, 2013) emphasis added)

The overview on the existing political systems in the Arab region (see Annex, table 3) highlights the range from absolute as well as constitutional monarchies over presidential republics and republics to confessional systems and federations of states. Notwithstanding the events of the Arab Spring and while non-democratic[20] in most cases, each political system affords different channels, means and degrees of political participation as well as system-specific barriers to political participation. Based on an analysis of parliamentary systems in the region (see Annex 1), a spurious argument could be made in theory that the opportunity for political participation is reflected in parliamentary representation (additional consideration would be needed to identify the size of local, sub-national and national administrations and their channels of interaction with national level parliaments): For example, Jordan has one Member of Parliament (both upper and lower house combined) per 28,332 people, while Egypt has one Member of Parliament per 298,970 people[21]. However, a meaningful analysis needs not only distinguish between how many seats are directly elected and how many are by appointment through a central authority (e.g. President), but also needs to analyse the mechanisms on how local level political entities influence policy-making (such as the family and neighbourhood networks in Egypt) and how individual motivation for election evolves.

Overall, research on political participation in the Arab region is limited and the findings on citizens' motivation – at least prior to the Arab Spring – to participate in elections showed that voting - given weak institutions in the Arab World – means only expressing an expectation to gain access to state resources via "wasta" or benefits conferred by the elected political candidates instead of actual identification with policy issues (Blaydes, 2008; Gandhi & Lust-Okar, 2009; Tessler, Jamal, & Miguel, 2008). So what happens when the expectations are not met or when the economic space of the citizens shrinks: Does it lead to greater demand for political participation? The regular assumption that economic crises increase the likelihood of political instability and institutional reform due to popular discontent and increased political participation and pressure from the opposition has been challenged in countries such as Morocco and Jordan in times prior to the Arab Spring (Lust-Oskar, 2009). The latest Arab MDG report concurs that political space (e.g. political parties, trade unions, media, civil society) in the Arab countries remains controlled, constraint and restrictive, thus leading to social and political tensions or even full blown conflict (Danjibo, 2013). And in line with the argument for a "authoritarian bargain" in the region, Lust-Okar (2009) explains the different protest dynamic or different participation as a function of the prevalent political environment in the two countries (see table 2):

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[20] Even though regular elections are being held.
[21] Germany with a similar population size to Egypt has one parliamentarian per 122,773 people.

Table 2: Morocco and Jordan – Different political opposition in response to economic crises		
	Morocco	**Jordan**
Similarities	Monarchies, with central control of the distribution of resources and determination of the political rules	
	Economic crisis starting in 1975 in result of depletion of natural resources (e.g. phosphate)	Economic crisis starting in 1983 in result of subsidizing the Iraq war against Iran
	Economic reforms to address the crisis lead to mass discontent	
Differences	Stronger civil society, though less willing to press demands in times of crisis	Weaker civil society
Determinant Political Environment	Divided, as a result of oppressing political organisations (e.g. closure of parliament between 1974 to 1984) and creating an insider/outsider dynamic	Undivided, as a result of reestablishing a role for political parties following coup attempts in the 1970s
Source: (Lust-Oskar, 2009)		

"In divided environments loyalists who previously mobilized popular movements may become unwilling to challenge incumbents when crises continue, even if their demands have not been met. Because loyalists have organizational structures and lower costs of mobilizing an independent protest, they are often able to exploit the early stages of crises to demand reforms. However, as crises continue, radicals gain strength and become more likely to join in demonstrations, even if they are unwilling to mobilize independently. Thus, to avoid the possibility that radicals exploit unrest to demand radical reforms, moderates choose not to mobilize. The very same elites who previously exploited economic discontent to demand political change now remain silent, while radicals who might take to the streets if the moderates mobilized are unwilling to do so alone."

Bringing together the analysis of the personal environment (status, resources, etc.) and the analysis of the political/institutional environment allows the formulation of another determining driver for political participation: The personal environment (i.e. perceived or acknowledged identity of belonging to a certain group) as a influencing variable determining political participation behaviour is situated within and shaped by the overall political/institutional environment of the individual. Both realms have specific characteristics acting either as barriers or enablers towards political participation. Callahan (2007) summarises the "nature of contemporary life, administrative processes that are in place, and the techniques utilized for participation" as barriers to "authentic participation", which require "education and re-education for citizens and administrators, as well as the redesign of administrative processes and structures in an effort to change the way citizens and administrators communicate and interact". Additional barriers to political participation include iliteracy, lack of time and cost, lack of information, lack of access to information, gender, lack of recognition of constituency, lacking recognition of constituency feedback[22] and so on. To overcome individual barriers of specific population groups for effective political participation a number of approaches involving civil society have proven effective (see box 3 and the example of establishing Youth Councils in Yemen).

In addition to the impact of the different political environments and the different personal resources, citizens in one country form no homogenous group of people with similar individual profiles and means. Instead the profiles of, for example, the members of the middle class scatter along numerous dimensions, for example the urban-rural divide, the modern-traditional professions, origin-immigrant and other factors. Value surveys are a useful way to elicit such differences, as they "were designed to measure all major areas of human concern, from religion to politics to economic and social life" (Inglehart, 2006).

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[22] Recognition of constituency feedback: Example Uganda (http://ureport.ug/pollresults/) - U-reporters join and answer an SMS poll or question on issues dealing with health, child protection, school, safe water, and more. Poll results are published in newspapers, reflected on radio, and placed directly into the hands of members of parliament. All text messages are free, a vital element in removing the barriers to participation.

"Description: NDI [National Democratic Institute] has established two 46-member cross-tribal youth councils in Yemen. The councils advocate for youth with municipal and tribal leaders, learn and teach conflict prevention and problem-solving skills, and mediate among youth in their communities. NDI supports the councils with training on conflict mitigation, advocacy and fundraising, and on developing achievable projects and plans. Prior to establishing the councils, the organization spent nearly two months meeting with tribal sheikhs, governors, representatives of ministries and local councilors to secure their support for engaging youth. The Marib Youth Council for Development and Social Peace in Juba, for example, has trained and established 14 student mediation teams, which conduct peer-to-peer conflict mediation in their schools. Indicators of success include a decrease in the presence of weapons in schools, the implementation of an awareness-raising programme for young women, and the agreement of 10 imams to preach on peace and conflict prevention during Friday prayers. Council members have used their newly acquired conflict mitigation techniques to resolve tribal disputes. Local governance institutions and stakeholders support the council, giving it office space and inviting representatives to serve as honorary members of the local council. Youth have used peaceful advocacy and protest tools learned during the NDI training to successfully convey their demands to the government. This breaks with the previous tradition of employing sabotage and violence to pressure government.

Innovation: Works with youth in tribal settings; combines training with results-oriented practice and participation; enables youth to participate in community decision-making; youth have successfully influenced community leaders and processes.

Inclusion: Parity between men and women; current chair of elected council board in Juba is a woman; targets conflict-affected, marginalized communities."
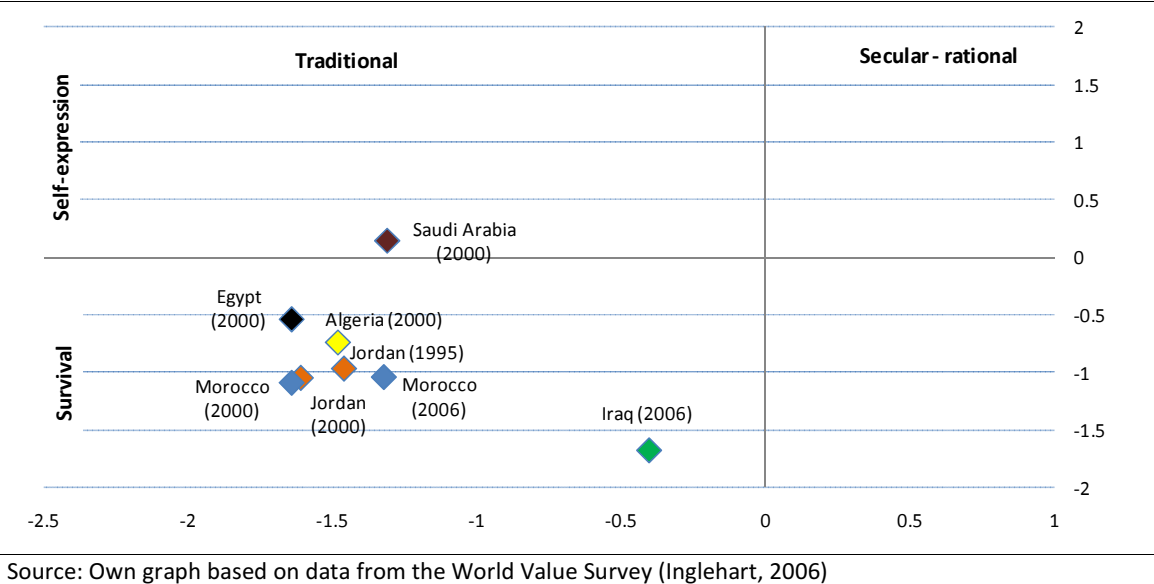
Source: (UNDP, 2013)

The resulting matrix (see figure 1) covers the two dimensions[23] – "traditional vs. secular-rational" and "survival vs. self-expression" – that "explain more than 70 percent of the cross-cultural variance on scores of more specific values" (Inglehart, 2006): Unsurprisingly, the few Arab countries covered by the survey have all a traditional value structure meaning that religion is very important. Interestingly, in the case of Jordan, the value system has become more traditional between two surveys (1995 and 2000), while the comparison of values in Morocco in 2000 and 2006 shows a shift towards a less traditional outlook (For example, Morocco's parliament passed family law reforms in 2004). Even though anecdotal, in view of these observations the outcomes are remarkable given a similar trajectory of events and governmental responses (both constitutional monarchies) during the Arab Spring[24]: On the one hand, in Morocco, a "broadened monarchy" entered a rather cooperative relationship with the Islamist Party of Justice and Development (PJD) who is the main opposition group. On the other, in Jordan's monarchy-Islamist relations appear rather combative, as the Islamic Action Front (IAF) - the main opposition party – stands against upcoming elections perceiving the concessions of the monarchy as insufficient (Cramer, 2012). Furthermore, and while underlying structural problems are unresolved, the different degrees of constitutional reforms in both countries mean different measures of political, economic and social changes/freedoms for the population as well as overall national stability.

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[23] "*Secular-rational values dimension* reflects the contrast between societies in which religion is very important and those in which it is not. A wide range of other orientations are closely linked with this dimension. Societies near the traditional pole emphasize the importance of parent-child ties and deference to authority, along with absolute standards and traditional family values, and reject divorce, abortion, euthanasia, and suicide. These societies have high levels of national pride, and a nationalistic outlook. Societies with secular-rational values have the opposite preferences on all of these topics. The second major dimension of cross-cultural variation is linked with the transition from industrial society to post-industrial societies, which brings a *polarization between Survival and Self-expression values.* The unprecedented wealth that has accumulated in advanced societies during the past generation means that an unprecedented share of the population has grown up taking survival for granted. Thus, priorities have shifted from an emphasis on economic and physical security above all, toward increasing emphasis on subjective well-being, self-expression and the quality of life" (Inglehart, 2006) (Inglehart, 2006).

[24] For a detailed discussion on similarities and divergence between Jordan and Morocco see (Cramer, 2012). For a detailed and interactive timeline on the events of the Arab Spring (covering 26 December 2010 to 17 December 2011) refer to
http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/interactive/2011/mar/22/middle-east-protest-interactive-timeline

Source: Own graph based on data from the World Value Survey (Inglehart, 2006)

The dimension "survival vs. self-expression" links values to the transition from industrial to post-industrial societies, in which the population is less concerned about basis survival (e.g. food, shelter) due to sufficient wealth accumulation. With discretionary income, the emphasis shifts from concerns about physical, economic and food security towards considerations of quality of life, individual well-being and self-expression. In a sense the transition could be consistent with the satisfaction of higher level needs (i.e. self-actualisation) captured by Maslow's pyramid of needs. With the exception of Saudi Arabia, which due to oil revenues raised GDP per capita from 9,400 USD in the year 2000 to 20,540 USD in the year 2011 and, thus transitioned from survival to self-expression mode, the Arab countries surveyed are firmly placed at different levels within the survival scale.

Notwithstanding the different position of Saudi Arabia in the survey, the events of the "Arab Spring" across the whole region warrant an interpretation of "survival vs. Self-expression" beyond purely economical issues towards participation. For example, Jordan's GDP per capita increased from 1,604 USD in 1995 to 1,764 in 2000 and 4,666 USD in 2011, whereas Egypt's GDP per capita declined from 1,475 USD in 2000 to 1,208 USD in 2005 and recovered to 2,780 USD in 2011. Notwithstanding a large sub-regional variance, the average GDP per capita[25] in the Arab World increased from 2,596 USD in the year 2000 to 6,794 USD in 2011 (Al-Khouri & Khalik, 2013).

The Gini coefficients in the region (see annex 1, figure 4) range from 33.8 in Jordan (in 2010, down from 38.9 in 2003) and 30.8 in Egypt (in 2008) to 40.9 in Morocco (in 2007) and 41.1 in Qatar (in 2007) (The World Bank, 2013). Unfortunately, the increase in GDP per capita has not necessarily improved the distribution of income and the realities in Arab countries (e.g. symptoms of conspicuous consumption, increasing slum dwellings) (UNDP, 2011). Furthermore, the inverse relationship between income levels and voice /accountability (figure 2) highlights strongly the persistence of the "authoritarian bargain" in the region. The changes in per capita income over time, the different income distribution, as well as the different income levels and sources of income between Arab countries suggest that the endowments and the definition of who economically belongs to a relatively powerful but voiceless middle class differ from country to country: Based on income, a person can be part of the middle class in Egypt, but would not be considered part of the middle class, but rather as living in poverty in Saudi Arabia.

Bringing together the two main explanatory dimensions of the value survey, reveals additional value-based tensions affecting national development and political participation behaviour: For example, on the one hand

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[25] See Annex (table 3) for the GDP per capita (in current USD) per Arab country

the Jordanian monarch has to rely on an urban business elite for economic growth that stems largely from Palestinian origins, while on the other hand, it also has to rely on traditional/tribal elites for security (e.g. Bedouins tribes of the East Bank that supply armed forces) (Cramer, 2012). Both sides have different options, incentives and mechanisms for political participation and for supporting policy-making.

For a study on electoral participation conducted in six Arab countries (Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, and Yemen), Tessler, Jamal and Miguel (2008) used public opinion surveys (i.e. Arab Barometer data) to investigate individuals' choices and context-specific factors accounting for electoral participation given that elections in the Arab region are mostly designed to confirm or give a token legitimisation to the authoritarian rulers. The study highlights the preferred means of political participation being electoral participation: 65 per cent of the sample population choose to only "vote" (and/or not to "protest" and/or "rally"), while 24 per cent did not vote but chose to "protest" instead (Tessler et al., 2008). In addition and relevant for the interpretation of the behaviour since the Arab Spring, the protesting population appears less involved in multiple forms of political participation and with a different logic of participation overall. The question remains what constitutes or triggers such different logic: short-term incentive, degree of grievances, degree of ability to organise a critical mass or other factors.

It has to be said that neither the ability for electoral participation in the Arab States nor rising income levels necessarily affect voice and accountability ("a perception to which a country's citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and free media", see figure 2)[26]: All Arab States have had some form of elections (see Annex table 4) during the last decade; however the results rarely increased trust in government institutions nor did newly emerging parties after the Arab Spring succeed in forming sustainable programmes, identities and constituencies require for an inclusive political landscape also with an effective opposition. To examine the participation of specific population groups in elections are more detailed analysis on the demographic of voters in Arab States would be necessary. With the changes in terms of place (informal to formal) and of means of political participation (evolution of institutions) as result of the Arab uprisings avenues to engage in political activity re-opened.

**Figure 2: Rising income levels but declining voice and accountability**
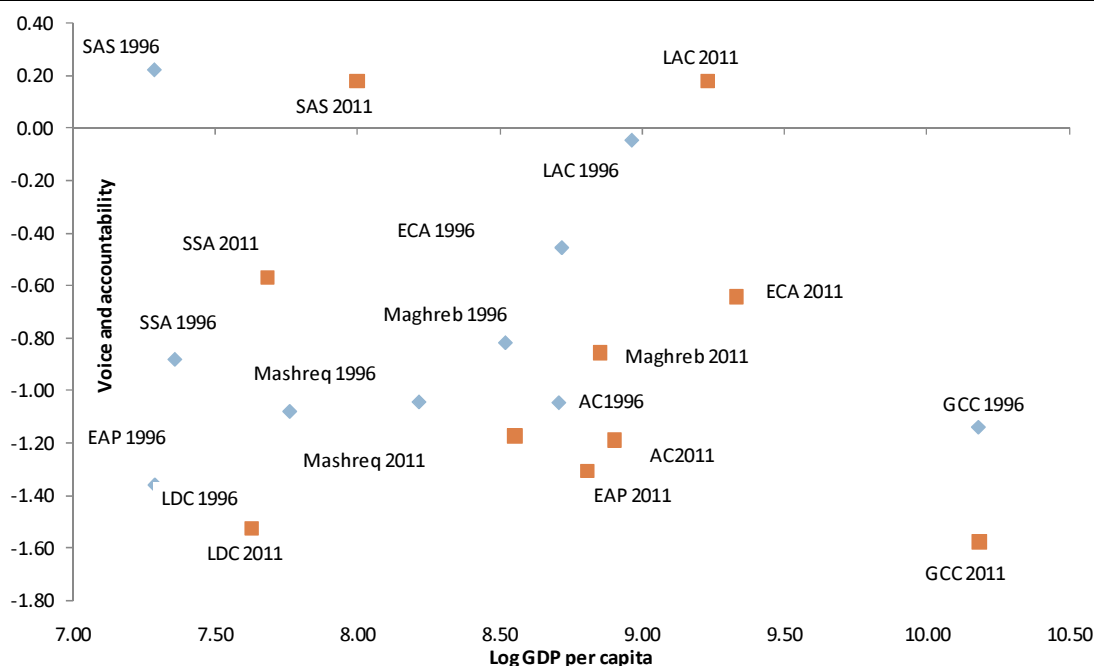
Source: (United Nations & League of Arab States, 2013)

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[26] According to the description of the measure "voice and accountability"(Al-Khouri & Khalik, 2013)

Though to participate effectively, Khatib (2013) zooms in on five crucial factors of the political infrastructure, which also offer different entry points for contribution and participation: 1) Organisation: i.e. the presence of political groups that enable organisation of people into institutions; 2) leadership: political institutions require a clear leadership structure to become effective interlocutors; 3) coherent and concrete political programme and objectives[27]: necessary to effectively communicate with stakeholders and to garner support; 4) long-term oriented agenda and strategy: as the linchpin for a political programme and to sustain growth as well as evolution of a political groups; and 5) ability to build viable coalitions: as a basis for driving policy agendas based on a national identity and for a "healthy dynamic" to translate change in voters' opinion into the political landscape.

The discussion showed the drivers and challenges for political participation of members of the Middle Class in the Arab region and to conclude, the author proposes a framework of analysis (see figure 3) to guide future policy research. The proposed framework is a tool to combine individual and institutional variables for the empirical analysis of the Middle Class's political participation. It does support the development of an aggregate regional view on political participation of the Arab Middle Class, while it would enable also a comparison between the circumstances of the Middle Class prior to 2010 with the changes post-2010 at the country-level. With the analysis for the pre- and post-scenarios per Arab country a picture of the determinants for change in the region emerge and show the major influencing variables that motivate political participation of the Middle Class.

Figure 3: Contextual model of factors driving political participation of the Middle Class
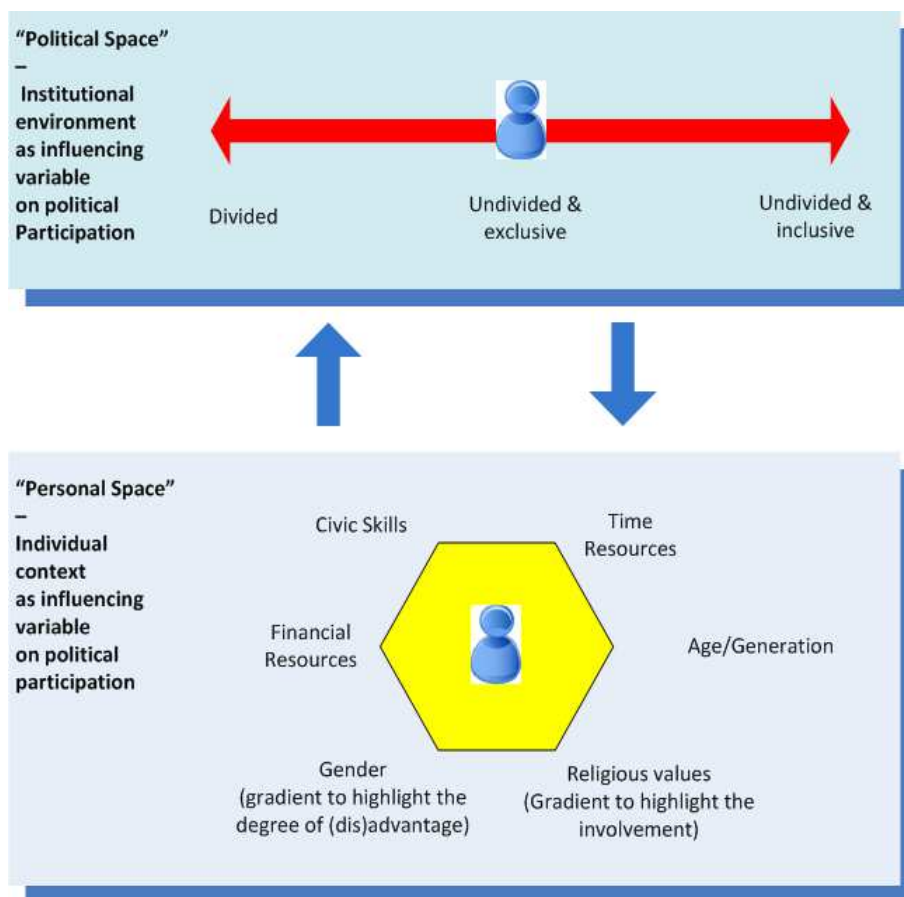
Source: Own figure

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[27] For concrete recommendations for emerging political parties in the Arab region please refer to (Muasher, 2013) and box 4 in the annex.

Chapter 3: Results of a focus group on political participation of artists in the Levant

The previous chapters established that political participation, either formally through political parties or informally through other engagement, is central to democratic processes. Whether the 'political space' is divided or undivided matters significantly as an enabler for political participation as well as serving to represent, discuss, decide and implement (e.g. codify in laws) aggregate public interests. At the outset though and besides an encouraging environment of inclusive 'political space', individuals decide upon their level of political participation out of want and need. By means of an exploratory research approach and to identify to motives and the possibility for political participation, the present paper identified a sub-set of middle class members for a focus group discussion: artists and entrepreneurs affiliated to the cultural sector with a decidedly middle class background that is symptomatic for the Arab region, because the arts often link to members of ruling families that govern or artists have a relatively affluent family background to pursue a career in the arts. For example, the Arab region is represented in ArtReview's 2014 ranking of most powerful figures in the contemporary artworld by Sheikha Al-Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani (Qatar, Head of the Qatar Museums Authority (QMA) and sister of the Emir, 13/100), Sheikha Hoor Al-Qasimi (UAE, President of the Sharjah Art Foundation, 48/100) and Akram Zaatari (Lebanon, Founder of the Arab Image Foundation, 94/100) (ArtReview, 2015). However, limited diversity and elitism becomes also more apparent in Western countries despite long-time established art support and art funding (The Warwick Commission, 2015).

Methodology

The small research budget and the sensitivity of the topic in the Arab region determined the chosen research design. The chosen format of a focus group helps within a small moderated group of people "to explore new research areas, to explore a topic that is difficult to observe (not easy to gain access), to explore a topic that does not lend itself to observational techniques (e.g. attitudes and decision-making), to explore sensitive topics, […] to collect a concentrated set of observations in a short time span [and] to ascertain perspectives and experiences from people on a topic, particularly when these are people who might otherwise be marginalized" (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2008). The focus group design – which takes the form of a panel in the context of this papers – based on a structured approach have gained traction as a meaningful methodology in development research. The results of the present explorative study are qualitative and while not statistically representative they are certainly indicative of behavioural trends among the participants, thus providing guidance on future research directions.

Political participation is a sensitive topic reflecting personal opinions and, - if non-conformist - can in non-democracies or authoritarian political systems carry severe consequences. Thus, to collect relevant qualitative data to establish personal motivation to participate politically and with funding from the Heinrich-Boell Foundation in Beirut, I organised an event "The Noise of Beirut" on Tuesday, 25 November 2014, from 8 pm to 11 pm at Dawawine[28] in Beirut (see table 2 and image 1). Despite the stormy weather conditions the event had a hundred people strong audience and was a great success in terms of starting a dialogue on how important political participation is, what frustration it incurs and what influence alternative means of activism through culture and the arts possibly have. The chosen format replicated the setting of a "collective conversation" (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2008) in which the participants – chosen based on their ability to provide valuable insights on the topics - were at ease to engage without concerns for judgment (Barbour & Kitzinger, 2008; Kidd & Parshall, 2010; Liamputtong, 2011).

The event started with the screening of the documentary "The Noise of Cairo"[29]. Being made in 2012, the documentary conveys the strong sense of hope and enthusiasm of the people interviewed and on behalf of the Egyptian people towards positive political change (ie. actual freedom of speech, giving hope to the youth and so on). Now two sobering years later the enthusiasm seems dampened in Egypt. In Lebanon the Syria crisis affects the cultural entrepreneurs, as it is becoming difficult to attract artists to come to Lebanon to perform and as it difficult to work in an environment without an infrastructure that systematically supports

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[28] For a recording of the event, please watch the video: https://vimeo.com/128835514
[29] To view a trailer, please refer to: http://www.noiseofcairo.com/downloads.html

the arts beyond the mainstream. In result the panelists highlighted that they pursue alternative approaches to realise their projects (e.g. innovative fundraising tools – crowd-sourcing, changing approaches to engaging the audience).

Civic skills and opportunity

The panel discussion linked directly to the questions raised in the documentary and after an introductory round on the biographies of the panelists (see Annex 2), the discussion quickly delved into important questions and issues for artists and creative minds in Lebanon. I opened the discussion with a quote from Shirin Neshat at the World Economic Forum: "I tend to consider artists as a conduit, art and culture as a bridge between people and the people of power. I consider art as a form of communication, art as a way to have emotional and intellectual impact on people without having any specific political or ideological agenda. [She asks the people in power, such as governments to] take care of your artists, your intellectuals, and accept that art is no crime, that it is every artist's responsibility to make art that is meaningful, that questions tyranny, that questions injustice. It is the artist's task to advocate change, peace and unity" (Neshat, 2014)**.** The panelists - taking the statement into consideration and in view of what the Egyptian artists in the film said about "having a voice", explained how their work (music, theatre, architecture) adds a critical voice to addressing "burning political and social questions" in Lebanon. They explained that the political situation influences the content and the themes they address with their lyrics and plays as well as how they perceive the sense of responsibility of artists to draw attention to social issues. With respect to how working in Lebanon as artists compares to working abroad (i.e. visa requirements to perform outside Lebanon, ease of organising and financing events), the panelists emphasised that Lebanon still has some way to go to make arts and culture more accessible to the general public(i.e. take outside of elitist environments and to reach also non-traditional audiences).

Within the respective context of this paper, the panelists addressed a set of questions (see the full discussion guide in Annex 3) and highlighted how their work gives them the means and resources for political participation either formally or informally. As a main result of the discussion, it emerged that artists use the most valuable resource – their creative skills – to express opinions that are geared towards shaping a public opinion: For the musicians of MashrouLeila that may mean raising awareness to gay rights with their lyrics, for the Zoukak Theatre company that means creating plays that specifically address issues like domestic violence and performing them in contexts beyond the usual theatre environment; and for architects it translates in consideration for social responsive, economical yet environmentally sustainable architecture. All panelists recognized the lacking political support and infrastructure (e.g. Arts Council, funding, effective ministries), which requires novel ways to create and disseminate their work thus their 'political voice' (e.g. crowd funding).

Table 3: Basic information on the focus group event "The Noise of Beirut"	
Panel members	Maya Zbib, Zoukak Theatre Company (http://www.zoukak.org/)
	Tania Saleh, Singer & Songwriter (http://www.taniasaleh.com/)
	Mohamed Al Mufti, Architecture Professor (ALBA) and painter (http://www.ateliermufti.net/indexa.htm)
	Karim Ghattas, Founder of LibanJazz (http://www.libanworld.com/libanjazz/)
	Firas Abou Fakher, Member of the Band MashrouLeila (*www.mashrouleila.com*)
Audience	App. 100 people from different socio-economic backgrounds and nationalities (a detailed list of participants with names and contacts can be made available by the Heinrich-Boell-Foundation in Beirut)
Agenda/Setting	8 to 9 pm - 60 min Documentary screening of "The Noise of Cairo"
	9 to 10 pm - 60 min moderated panel discussion
	10 to 11 pm – Reception and parallel a second screening of the documentary
	(Due to the unexpectedly large audience, the second screening was organized on the spot, but unfortunately that meant the discussion had to finish on time.)

There was general consensus that regional political, social and economic changes and challenges brought about by the Arab Spring influences the work of artists and entrepreneurs in the creative sector changed in Lebanon. Prior to the revolution, artists were trained to avoid censorship and to "make art that is intelligent enough to transcend censorship". With the revolution in Egypt, artistic expression is perceived as having moved out of the studios, using a "new language" (ie. freedom to be more confrontational) and having become more engaging with the public to encourage political participation. The same observation was made in Lebanon that there is a need as well as a genuine approach to release culture and art from an elitist reputation to a true medium of civic society conversation and towards active encouragement of the respective audience for civil society and political engagement. That is in line with a self-perception (as highlighted in the documentary film) that, for example, "Art = freedom, freedom = equals responsibility, 2B an artist = 2B responsible" (see Annex) and the claim of Ezzat Izzail who considers his performances "as practicing my role as a citizen, not just an artist"[30].

With regards to opportunities for engagement, in the documentary the choreographer Karima Mansour raised the issue of independent vs. "state-run" art/artists and the panel explored whether this is a concern in the Lebanese context. As this is not a major concern as such in the Lebanese context, it cannot be ruled out in the wider Levantine context. The structural limitations (ie. the lack of political institutions that foster the arts and culture) prove somewhat advantageous in sense of there are no reporting requirements as there is no funding. In terms of cultural infrastructure, it appears that from the discussion that the means involved in the creative process from conception of an idea to its implementation have changed. For example, today they encompass innovative fundraising tools such as crowd-sourcing as well as changing approaches to engaging the audience such as co-writing lyrics. The latter appears to be a more direct way to engage the political views of the audience, the former is telling in terms of origins of funding (institutional or individual, public or private)and, if any, what are their objectives for arts funding.

Financial and time resources

There are a number of 'private' initiatives, for example EUNIC Lebanon[31] funded by the European Union that supports young visual artists and the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC)[32] funded "by contributions from foundations and individuals in and outside of the Arab region" (e.g. Ford Foundation, HIVOS, HSBC and Aramex). Ghassan Salame, former Minister of Culture in Lebanon and member of the board of AFAC, asserted that cultural production has not thrived on state spending and further summarized:

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[30] Please refer to the documentary "The Noise of Cairo"
[31] See: http://www.eunic-online.eu/?q=content/call-visual-arts-fund-eunic-lebanon
[32] See: http://www.arabculturefund.org/donors/index.php

"If you look elsewhere in this region, you see that the relationship of governments to culture is at least ambiguous and probably counterproductive most of the time. Because governments are generally defined in terms of nepotism and partisanship, you are never sure that when governments pay for culture that real talent is going to be identified and helped. I think the role of anybody in some kind of position of power is to raise funds, not to ask the government for them. […] I think that the one area where everything should remain in government hands is in antiquities, […] because this is part of state sovereignty and so cannot be privatized. Cultural production should look elsewhere." (Quilty, 2011)

Comparing the perspective of a former policy maker with the views of the ones working in the cultural sector shows the different expectations vis-à-vis institutional arrangement and leads to the discussion of availability of (financial) resources. For the members of the focus group, availability of financial resources appeared to be a secondary issue and while the different panelists pursued a variety of strategies with respect to generating and managing financial resources (ie. including crowd funding to produce a music album, funding provided through cultural institutions such as Goethe-Institute or Alliance Francaise), they succeeded in gaining financial support for the implementation of their projects. However, that does not necessarily extend towards ensuring a reliable and regular income unless an additional employment relationship (e.g. at a university) is entered. The discussion explained that the panelists recognize their high-level of personal commitment and passion as well as their sacrifice to raise awareness for political and social issues. In terms of time resources, the majority of discussants were dedicated full-time to their profession as musicians, theatre actors and events' organizers.

Age and generation

The focus group did not explicitly address different motivations or incentives for political participation based on age or belong to a generation. The panel itself was composed of speakers from different age groups/generations and with different demographics for their audiences, for example students at university, concert goers within and beyond the region from different age brackets as is the case for MashrouLeila (i.e. regional and international tours), a broad demographic for the concerts organised by LibanJazz (i.e. Beirut-based) and for the plays by Zoukak. In this context it is important to note, that there are some concerns about the theoretical impact of being member of certain generation. Amira Yahyaoui, a Tunisian human rights activities and founder of "Al Bawsala", an NGO[33], asserts that the "youth are not the future" of the Arab region (Yahyaoui, 2015), since the trust between civil society organisations and people has diminished though not broken down in the same way as it has done between governments and the people (Lozovsky, 2015). According Yahyaoui, the popular revolutions in the region have not translated into popular political participation of the youth: In the case of Tunisia, a continuation of the minority participation (i.e. only the activist fighting for freedom of expression are the ones continue to actually now use it) is due to a lack of making constructive – formal and informal – political participation broad-based and accessible (Lozovsky, 2015). Similar to the Yahyaoui's argument that security prevents radicalisation of young people (Yahyaoui, 2015), the participants confirmed that the existence of a safe and - over a long period – secure environment enables political participation.

Religion and gender

In the interest of being inclusive and non-discriminatory, the focus group did not touch upon different political participation behaviour due to belonging to a certain religious group. Other research has pointed out that sectarianism and religion play a substantial role for political engagement (Cammett, 2014; Jones-Correa, 2001; Scheufele, Nisbet, & Brossard, 2003). In terms of gender, the composition of the focus group aimed at being somewhat representative but did not further explore different motivations or incentives to engage politically based on gender.

To sum up, the hour-long round of discussion was rich and could have easily continued to explore the topic deeper. The general feedback received was very positive and future collaboration with the Heinrich-Boell Foundation is envisaged.

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[33] The NGO (http://www.albawsala.com/en/equipe) works to protect freedom of expression and other human rights in Tunisia by monitoring the constitutional assembly and helped to lead Tunisia to adopt a new constitution that upheld democratic ideals, individual rights, and government transparency (Bio of Amira Yahyaoui on https://oslofreedomforum.com/speakers/amira-yahyaoui)

The present study explored the behavior of the Arab Middle Class towards political participation. In the first part of the paper, a contextual model as a guide for qualitative analysis was developed. The model identified two spaces in which a person acts and which serve as influencing variable for political participation: The "personal space" is the individual context referring to civic skills and abilities, financial and time resources as well as gender, religion and age generation as mitigating factors. The "political space" references the institutional environment as divided or undivided and, thus, enabling or hindering opportunities for political participation. The validity and viability of said theoretical framework developed has been explored by means of a focus group discussion composed of a sub-section of Middle Class representatives active in the cultural sector. However, the focus group discussion remained limited to an exploration of the motivations resulting from the dimensions subsumed under "personal space".

Three big questions guided the author in her research:
1. Do members of the middle class possess a *compatibility of major values relevant to political decision-making* that would enable collective decision-making on a broad scope of functional policy areas? If so, to what extent?
2. Do members of the middle class have the *will, ability and capacity to participate in political entities, institutions or governments in general* to shape a national response to needs, messages, policies and actions without resort to violence?
3. Do answers to the above indicate a collective bargaining position of the middle class? And how does that possibly reflect *mutual predictability/reliability of behaviour* resulting from the middle class being considered the "median (voter)" which - paired with a level of trust in institutions – would create stability/permanency within a state and an economy?

The results of the present explorative study allow for the following cautious answers to the first two questions, while a response to the third question goes beyond the scope of this paper's research:
1. The values of members of the middle class relevant to political decision-making do not necessarily have to be compatible. They may actually be very different. However, they together with underlying motivations and incentives for an individual's political participation behaviour fall within the 'political space' as well as the 'personal space'. In this context, further research is needed on for example the role of religion in the Arab region (and not only in terms of radicalisation, but in terms of being constructive enabler).
2. It seems that members of the middle class have the will, ability (financial and time resources) and capacity (civic skills) to participate in political entities, institutions or governments in general, but they do not necessarily choose to use their opportunities. In the context of this paper and based on the sub-set of focus group participants choose to politically engage though through more informal than formal channels. Additional research should use other participant characteristics to compose a focus group (e.g. doctors, lawyers) in order to allow a comparison of behaviour between different groups within the middle class.

Overall recommendations for future research can be divided into two categories, methodological and substantive: Firstly, additional qualitative and quantitative research into political participation behavior of the Arab Middle class through surveys, in-depth personal interviews and other tools can improve on the preliminary results above and deepen the knowledge on the degree of influence of each identified dimensions in the contextual model. Furthermore, the contextual model itself warrants additional research to be tested and to establish its reliability. Secondly, in addition to the above, future substantive research opportunities arise on the subject of how and to what degree does the political space interact with the personal space and vice versa.

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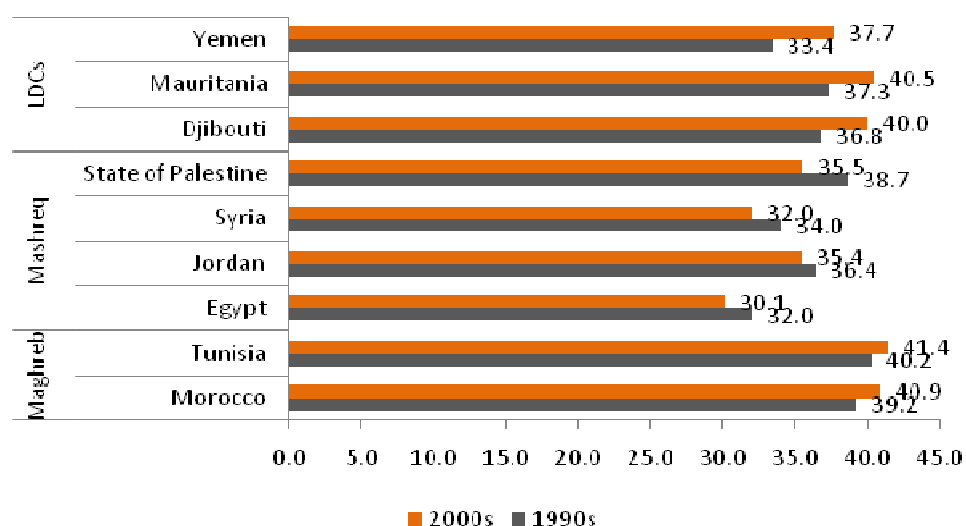Yueh, L. (2013). The rise of the global middle class, from http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-22956470

Political systems in the Arab region
(can be updated based on latest developments: http://carnegieendowment.org/2008/03/06/arab-political-systems-baseline-information-and-reforms/3715)

Country	Predominant religion	Form of Government	Parliament	Natural resources
Algeria				
Bahrain	Shia muslim	Constitutional Monarchy (independence from UK since 1971)	• Bi-cameral parliament: Consultative Council (40 members appointed by the king) and the Council of Representatives (40 members popularly elected through universal suffrage)	Yes (oil: 70 % of government revenue)
Egypt	Sunni muslim	Presidential republic (tbc) (independence from UK in 1922 and the Egyptian Republic was declared in June of 1953)	• People's Assembly: 454 deputies of which ten are appointed by the president and the remainder being elected. • Shura Council (upper house with 264 elected members.	yes
Iraq	Shia muslim	parliamentary democracy (Federal parliamentary representative democratic republic)	• Presidential council: President and Vice President • Council of Representatives (elected through representation) • Prime Minister seat is appointed by the Presidential Council	yes
Jordan	Sunni muslim	Constitutional Monarchy (Hashemite Kingdom, (independence from UK since 1946)	• multi-party system and the King's veto can be overruled by two-thirds vote of both houses of parliament. • Parliament: National Assembly with two parts; a Senate (55 monarch-appointed members) and the Chamber of Deputies (110 elected members). • A specified number of seats are reserved for minorities.	
Kuwait	Sunni muslim	Constitutional Emirate –hereditary position of Emir (independence from UK since 1961)	• National Assembly	Yes (oil: xxx % of government revenue)
Lebanon	Diversity of religious groups	Confessionalism (power sharing arrangement which proportionally distributes representation according to ethnic population.	• Parliament: Single body National Assembly consisting of 128 members elected by popular vote. • Political parties in the traditional sense do not exist as political blocs are typically formed along personal, ethnic, family or regional lines	no
Morocco	Sunni muslim	Constitutional Monarchy (independence from France in 1956)	• Bi-cameral with the prime minister position appointed by the king: Chamber of Counselors (Upper House, 270 members which are elected indirectly) and Chamber of Representatives (Lower House, with 325 elected seats)	yes
Oman		Hereditary monarchy (Sultanate)	• No legal political parties, thus no functioning legislative institutions • two part parliament (Council of Oman) consisting : Consultative Assembly and a Council of State	

Country	Predominant religion	Form of Government	Parliament	Natural resources
Qatar	Sunni muslim	Emirate/Absolute Monarchy (formal independence from UK in 1971)	• Consultative Assembly (35 appointed members) • Slow transition to a constitutional monarchy o include more popularly elected members on the Advisory Council, • presently, political parties are forbidden	yes
Saudi Arabia	Sunni muslim	Monarchy	• No parliament and no political parties	yes
Sudan	Sunni muslim	Republic (independence from the United Kingdom in 1956): power sharing arrangement exists between the Government of National Unity, the National Congress Party (party of Bashir), and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement.	• Parliament: Two houses - Council of States (50 members elected through state legislatures) and a National Assembly (450 appointed seats)	yes
Syria	Sunni	Single party republic under a military regime	• Uni-cameral People's Council (250 members) • President Bashar al-Asad was elected in an un-opposed referendum	
Tunisia	Sunni muslim	Presidential republic (tbc) (independence from France in 1956)	• Bi-cameral legislature: Chamber of Deputies (189) and Chamber of Advisors (126)	Yes (minor oil production)
United Arab Emirates	(75% immigrants)	Federation of seven states (Emirates) similar to monarchy	• Power is distributed between the central government and the individual emirates • The positions of president and vice president are elected by the rulers of each emirate. There is no suffrage and political parties are forbidden • Parliament: 1) The Federal Supreme Councils serves as the parliament establishing general policies and consists of the rulers of the seven emirates. • The rulers of Abu Dhabi and Dubai have veto power. 2) Federal National Council with 20 appointed members and 20 elected members acting as an advisory council.	yes
Yemen		Republic (independence of North Yemen from Ottoman Empire in 1918 and South Yemen from UK in 1967)	• Presidential elections by popular vote with General People's Congress as dominant power • Bi-cameral Parliament: Shura Council (111 seats) appointed by the president and a popularly-elected House of Representatives (301 seats)	

Source: (Carnegie Endowment, 2008; Milinski, 2009)
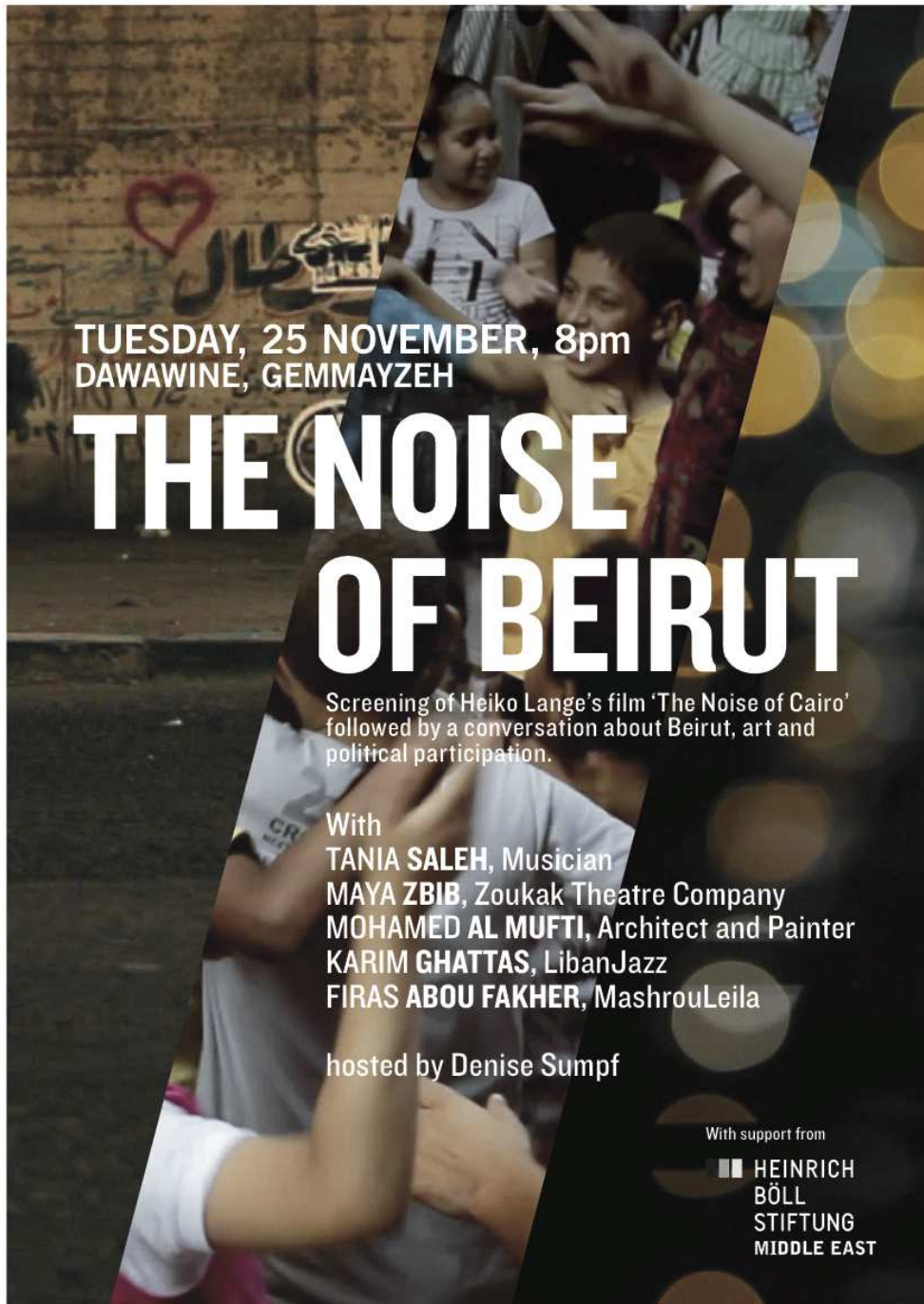
Figure 4: Gini index of inequality across Arab countries

Country	2000s	1990s
Yemen	37.7	33.4
Mauritania	40.5	37.3
Djibouti	40.0	36.8
State of Palestine	35.5	38.7
Syria	32.0	34.0
Jordan	35.4	36.4
Egypt	30.1	32.0
Tunisia	41.4	40.2
Morocco	40.9	39.2

Source: ESCWA estimates based on The World Bank 2012

Box 4: Recommendations for emerging political parties

- Develop clear, detailed programs that go beyond stating what the party is against and define what it is for, addressing society's real economic and social needs.
- Design programs through extensive consultations with constituents rather than relying on the advice of small groups of experts.
- Abandon dated, ideological platforms and find new ways to package solutions to the challenges of creating jobs, ensuring economic mobility, establishing equality before the law, fighting corruption, and guaranteeing fairer and wider political representation.
- Promote educational policies that encourage pluralism, tolerance, respect for different points of view, and critical thinking.
- Develop real connections with the people, learning from Islamist parties that have built constituencies over decades by providing health, education, and other services.
- Define new and creative strategies to collect small but regular donations from a broad base of citizens.
- Convince members of the business community to more actively fund emerging political parties by demonstrating that a strong, independent, and stable party system is in their interests.
- Reduce the unsustainable emphasis on individual party leaders and personalities.
- Encourage the consolidation of secular political parties by focusing on "big-tent" politics.

Source: (Muasher, 2013)

TUESDAY, 25 NOVEMBER, 8pm
DAWAWINE, GEMMAYZEH

THE NOISE
OF BEIRUT

Screening of Heiko Lange's film 'The Noise of Cairo' followed by a conversation about Beirut, art and political participation.

With
TANIA **SALEH**, Musician
MAYA **ZBIB**, Zoukak Theatre Company
MOHAMED **AL MUFTI**, Architect and Painter
KARIM **GHATTAS**, LibanJazz
FIRAS **ABOU FAKHER**, MashrouLeila

hosted by Denise Sumpf

With support from

HEINRICH
BÖLL
STIFTUNG
MIDDLE EAST

Details on the content of the documentary: Screening of "Noise of Cairo"

A DOCUMENTARY ABOUT CAIRO, ART AND REVOLUTION
A FILM BY HEIKO LANGE
2012 / 56 MIN. / HD 1080p25 / COLOR / http://www.noiseofcairo.com
IN ENGLISH, ARABIC & FRENCH WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES

THE NOISE OF CAIRO is a cinematic adventure, following the interplay between art and the revolution in Egypt. Protest of any kind was punished violently in pre-revolutionary Egypt and artistic expression was considered nothing but a threat to the status quo. But since the fall of the Mubarak dictatorship, the art scene in Cairo is flourishing once again.

How did the revolution of 2011 change Egyptian artists and their work? Twelve influencers from Cairo's cultural scene lead us on a journey to understand the unique role artists played during the revolution in Cairo. This documentary bears witness to Cairo's vibrant artistic underbelly, as it raises its voice once again. The artists of Cairo, who refused to quiet down, come together to be heard. These individuals create THE NOISE OF CAIRO.

PARTICIPANTS (in order of appearance)
SHAIMAA SHAALAN, Musician / SHERWET SHAFIE, Safar Khan Gallery Cairo / WILLIAM WELLS, Town House Gallery Cairo / KEIZER, Graffiti-Artist / KARIMA MANSOUR, Choreographer & Dancer / EZZAT ISMAIL, Dancer / KHALED HAFEZ, Artist / HANY RASHED, Artist / ALI ABDEL MOHSEN, Curator of the „Maspero" Exhibition at Darb 1718 / RAMY ESSAM, Musician / SONDOS SHABAYEK, Tahrir Monologues / KHALED AL KHAMISSI, Writer

Background details for the Panel Discussion: "The Noise of Beirut"

A DISCUSSION ABOUT BEIRUT, ART AND (POLITICAL) PARTICIPATION
MODERATED BY DENISE SUMPF (COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY NEW YORK), 60 MIN, IN ENGLISH

Current events in the region revived aspirations towards political, economic and social changes amongst the people in the Arab region. Artistic and creative minds are often conduits to document, frame and communicate demands for change as well as lend an alternative voice to the aspirations and expectations of (young) people. Artistic and creative expression requires not only large degrees of freedom (i.e. freedom of speech, freedom of expression), but also entails an awareness of the artist's role in society and a responsibility for conscientiousness influence on changes over time.

The documentary "Noise of Cairo" shows vividly how the Egyptian revolution influences different artists (e.g. musicians, dancers, painters), their works and understanding of their role for society and in society. The panel discussion following the screening of the documentary aims to highlight how the current political situation in Lebanon influences creative life and expression in Lebanon and vice versa. The discussion hopefully adds the voices of artists living and working in Lebanon to the ones heard from Egypt.

Some possible questions to guide the discussion: How has the work of artists and creatives changed in Lebanon considering the regional changes triggered by the Arab Spring? What is the roles of artists and creatives in Lebanese society? How have the means involved in the creative process from conception of an idea to its implementation changed (e.g. innovative fundraising, changing approaches to engaging the audience)? Where do the arts and politics intersect? How does the political system in Lebanon influence artists and their work? How do creatives/artists influence politics and vice versa? If so, how do artists/creatives politically participate? What are the incentives and/or motifs? If so, how do artists engage with the public to encourage political participation?

PANELISTS

TANIA SALEH, Musician (http://www.taniasaleh.com)*
MAYA ZBIB, Zoukak Theatre Company and Cultural Association (http://zoukak.org/pages/about-us)
MOHAMED AL MUFTI, Architect and Painter (http://www.ateliermufti.net/index.htm)
KARIM GHATTAS, LibanJazz (http://www.libanjazz.com)
FIRAS ABOU FAKHER (مشروع ليلى - Mashrou' Leila)

*Kindly note that Tania Saleh had a small accident the evening of the event and could not participate. However, I asked Hanan Hajj Ali who was present to join the panel on short notice.

Speaking Notes

Introduction to the film screening

Welcome to the screening of the documentary "Noise of Cairo" a film by Heiko Lange. The film sets the stage for the following conversation with creative people in Beirut to explore how the current political situation in Lebanon influences creative life and expression in Lebanon.

The "Noise of Beirut" will add the voices of artists living and working in Lebanon to the Egyptian ones, such as Karima Mansour and Keyzer that you will hear now in the film.

Enjoy the film and I hope you will come out with lots of questions for a rich conversation afterwards in the library.

Opening of the discussion

I hope you all found the documentary interesting and without further ado I will briefly introduce the participants

- Tania Saleh: ... Just released her fourth Album "A Few Images" worldwide in collaboration with Erik Hillestad and KKV, Norway after an incredible success of her crowdfunding campaign. She was invited to perform at the Baalbek International Festival and joined joined music composer/trumpet player Ibrahim Maalouf on stage as a guest at the Byblos International Festival. Her lyrics address daily worries of a troubled society, of love and hate and everything in between.

- Firas Abou Fakher: ... studied architecture and composes for and plays with MashrouLeila, a band that formed in <u>Beirut</u>, <u>Lebanon</u> in 2008 as a music workshop at the <u>American University of Beirut</u>. To date the band has released three studio albums, *Mashrou' Leila* (2008), El Hal Romancy (2011), an EP, and Raasük (2013). ML is know for satirical lyrics and themes. I am very pleased that Firas is able to take time out of the band's busy tour schedule to be here tonight. Mashrou' Leila's entertaining themes and satirical <u>Lebanese</u> lyrics reflect the many faces and flaws of <u>Lebanese society</u> which are not addressed by mainstream Arabic music. The band is critical of the problems associated with life in Beirut and they are known for their liberal use of swear-words in some of their songs.[5] Their debut album's 9 songs wittily discuss subject matters such as lost love, war, politics, security and political assassination, materialism, immigration and homosexuality. "Latlit" one of the Mashrou' Leila album tracks is a caricature of the Lebanese society overridden by gossip.

- Maya Zbib: ... Zoukak Theatre Company. Maya and her colleagues have just completed a 7 week residency at New York University Abu Dhabi during which they worked with 17 students and premiered"Organs, Tissues and Candy Games". Also Zoukak theatre company was recently award the 9th edition of EuroMedAward, organized by the Anna Lindh Foundation and Fondazione Mediterraneo.

- Mohamed Al Mufti: ... ALBA, architect, painter

- Karim Ghattas: ... Founder and organizer of Liban Jazz festival. The festival has organized more than 150 concerts in Beirut, Amman, Damascus, Paris and Istanbul... He has managed various artists such as Dhafer Youssef and manages the band Mashrou'Leila since 2011. He is also the manager in the region of Yasmine Hamdan.

Notes for the Discussion

Shirin Neshat at the World Economic Forum:

"I tend to consider artists as a conduit, art and culture as a bridge between people and the people of power. I consider art as a form of communication, art as a way to have emotional and intellectual impact on people without having any specific political or ideological agenda.

[She asks the people in power, such as governments to] take care of your artists, your intellectuals, and accept that art is no crime, that it is every artist's responsibility to make art that is meaningful, that questions tyranny, that questions injustice. It is the artist's task to advocate change, peace and unity."

Taking the statement into consideration and in view of what the Egyptian artists in the film said about "having a voice", how does your work in your respective areas (music, theatre, architecture) add a voice to "burning political and social questions" in Lebanon?

- Has the work of artists and creatives changed in Lebanon considering the regional political, social and economic changes and challenges brought about by the Arab Spring?
- In your experience, how does working in Lebanon compare to working abroad (i.e. performing outside Lebanon, organising events)?

Being made in 2012, the documentary conveys the strong sense of hope and enthusiasm of the people interviewed and on behalf of the Egyptian people towards positive political change (ie. actual freedom of speech, giving hope to the youth and so on). Now two sobering years later the enthusiasm seems dampened in Egypt.

- Given the tense situation in Lebanon due to the challenging regional environment - including the Syrian Crisis - do you have a sense of hope and enthusiasm towards free artistic expression and political change that can be triggered by your involvement?
- Has the work of artists and creatives changed in Lebanon considering the regional political, social and economic changes and challenges brought about by the Arab Spring?

A graffiti in the documentary reads: "Art = freedom, freedom = equals responsibility, 2B an artist = 2B responsible".

- Would you agree?
- What does it mean to you and how do you assume said responsibility?

Ezzat Izzail (?) considers his performances "as practicing my role as a citizen, not just an artist".
- In your view, what is the role of artists and creative people in Lebanon and for Lebanese society?

Prior to the revolution, artists were trained to avoid censorship and to "make art that is intelligent enough to transcend censorship". With the revolution in Egypt, artistic expression is perceived as having moved out of the studios, using a "new language" (ie. freedom to be more confrontational) and having become more engaging with the public to encourage political participation.

- Can similar observations be made in Lebanon?
- Is there active encouragement towards your audience to politically engage?

In the documentary, the choreographer Karima Mansour raises the issue of independent vs. "state-run" art/artists.

- Is that a concern in Lebanon?

- Or is that a concern for organising cultural events (e.g. LibanJazz concerts, festivals, etc.)? For example, Is there also generational change that artists today are more "daring" or "outspoken"?

In terms of cultural infrastructure, have the means involved in the creative process from conception of an idea, to its implementation changed (e.g. innovative fundraising tools - crowdsourcing, changing approaches to engaging the audience) given an institutional (political) framework in Lebanon that is rather fluid and maybe not as reliable?

Closing

Towards the end of the documentary [xxx] says "Before I reached no one alone with my voice, but now I know we are more, I am not alone, there are many artists, musicians, painters, poets, and actors". According to Karima Mansours artists make a lot of noise and I hope tonight added some noise from Beirut and I ask you all to keep involved.

I thank you all very much for coming and please allow me to draw your attention to: (1) Tania Saleh's latest album just having been launched, (2) Maya's next project, (3) ML's latest CD "Raasuek", (4) Karim organising the last LibanJazz concert with Anthony Joseph at Music Hall, and (5) Mohamed: lots of success for his proposal for the new Guggenheim Museum in Helsinki going to the next round of the competition.

I would also like to thank everyone who contributed (Salim behind the camera, Conor for making the flyer), Dawawine for the venue and Heinrich-Boell Foundation for their support.

Additional possible questions to guide the discussion:

- Where do the arts and politics intersect?
- How does the political system in Lebanon influence artists and their work?
- How do creatives/artists influence politics and vice versa? If so, how do artists/creatives politically participate?
- The issue of political participation has been a substantive area of interest for both sociologists and political scientists, mainly because it pertains to the quintessential act of democratic citizenship, how is political participation by means of culture and arts happening in Lebanon?