CHAPTER 21

The Narrow Path: Acts of Citizenship by the Arab Youth. Lessons from Egypt and Morocco

Assia Boutaleb

All commentators agree that the youth played a crucial role in the Arab Uprisings of winter 2010-2011. It is true that these uprisings can partly be seen as a reflection, one neither spontaneous nor mechanical, of qualitative changes in the sociological structures and relationships that have taken place as a result of demographic changes in Arab societies.[1] Long-term demographic developments have weakened the patriarchal structures and led to the questioning of authority in general and of politics in particular. The youth has become a significant aspect of demography and an important socio-political factor, one that has put forward claims for dignity and civil rights. Its activism has changed the political map in a number of countries. At the same time, politics has become increasingly interested in youth. The notion that youth is the driving force behind current political mobilisations and the promotor of new forms of participation has become axiomatic.[2] As political freedom and socio-economic rights were at the heart of the uprisings, and because the youth had suffered the most from social, economic, and political exclusion, it is unsurprising that they stood at their foreground.

Despite this, one important factor must be highlighted. The Arab youth is no different from the rest of the population; it makes the same claims to dignity, social justice, and equal rights. It may express them more loudly, capturing the attention of the media, but it plays the role of spokesman rather than constituting the *avant-garde*. It is important to bear this in mind because the distinction between the youth and the rest of the population is a political and social construction. It has its own social motivations and serves political objectives, but these

[1] Youssef Courbage and Emmanuel Todd, *Le rendez-vous des civilisations* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2009).
[2] See the special issue edited by Emma Murphy, "The Arab Youth and Politics," *Mediterranean Politics* 17 (2012), and especially the introduction: Emma Murphy, "Problematizing Arab Youth: Generational Narratives of Systemic Failure," 5-22; and, on Morocco, Thierry Desrues, "Moroccan Youth and the Forming of a New Generation: Social Change, Collective Action and Political Activism," 23-40. On the youth during the Arab Spring, see also Stephanie Schwartz, "Youth and the 'Arab Spring'," *United States Institute for Peace*, April 28, 2011, accessed May 20, 2014, http://www.usip.org/publications/youth-and-the-arab-spring.

can be, and often are, misleading. As Irene Bono demonstrated in the case of the Moroccan February 20 Movement, "the qualification of groups as youth movements, expressing a desire for specific participation contributes to the negation of the universalist character of the demands that the movements promote."[3] The struggle for citizenship is the key to understanding the Arab Uprisings and explains the wide-ranging public involvement in it.[4] Conveying the message that the Arab youth has specific claims for rights only narrows the scale of the popular uprisings; if youth does play a unique role this lies more in forms of organisation and modalities of participation.

According to a report on Egypt, whose conclusions can be extended to other Arab countries that experienced popular uprisings, over the last four years the changing power structures and the predicament of political transition "have influenced the evolution of citizenship rights [...] This evolution has not been linear and the rights discourses of political actors were not consistent at all times."[5] In this chapter, I will argue that this statement can also be made about youth acts of citizenship. They are neither continuous nor permanent, and they face constraints and interruptions as well as experiencing periods of revival and moments of enhancement. In this sense, they can be seen and understood as strongly linked to and influenced by political and social contexts. For argument's sake, and to avoid the trap of generalisation, I will mainly focus on Egyptian and Moroccan youth, with some examples from other countries.

The concept of "acts of citizenship" is one of the key contributions citizenship studies has made to the field. It allows one to revisit the concept of citizenship and to establish its "dynamical, projective and relational nature as well as issues about political subjectivation that it contains."[6] Acts of citizenship and political subjectivation interact with the legal dimension of citizenship, but due to its anthropological approach citizenship is no longer considered strictly as a status.[7] Seen from an anthropological perspective, citizenship is a set

[3] Irène Bono, "Une lecture d'économie politique de la 'participation des jeunes' au Maroc à l'heure du printemps arabe," *Revue internationale de politique comparé* 20 (2013): 145-66.
[4] Roël Meijer, *The Struggle for Citizenship: The Key to Understanding the Arab Uprisings*, Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre Report, February 2014. The February 20 Movement has been designated the Moroccan version of the Arab spring; see note 20, below.
[5] Ragab Saad and Moataz El Fegiery, *Citizenship in Post-Awakening Egypt: Power Shifts and Conflicting Perceptions*, European Policy Centre, January 21, 2014, accessed March 23, 2014, http://www.epc.eu/pub_details.php?cat_id=1&pub_id=4087.
[6] Catherine Neveu, "E pur si muove! Ou comment saisir empiriquement les processus de citoyenneté," *Politix* 26 (2013): 207.
[7] Catherine Neveu, "Les enjeux d'une approche anthropologique de la citoyenneté," *Revue européenne des migrations internationals* 20 (2004): 89-101.

of practices of co-construction and dialogical space, more or less asymmetrical, between "actors" and "subjects." Defined as "acts that produce citizens and their others,"[8] acts of citizenship may be punctual or limited but they always imply the significant and concrete exercises of civic freedoms. Following the theorists of those acts, "the first principle to investigating acts of citizenship is to interpret them through their grounds and consequences, which includes subjects becoming activist citizens through scenes created."[9] Although it is not easy to extensively analyse the consequences of acts of citizenship, I will pay particular attention to the created scenes and their meanings.

First, I will give a brief snapshot of the Arab youth and its participation in the uprisings. Secondly, I will try to present a few examples of youth acts of citizenship that occurred in the aftermath of those uprisings, which will enable me to highlight some of their characteristics. Finally, the idea of their reversible nature, or, at least, the constraints place upon them due to political contexts will be explored and discussed. In other words, even if "youth is only a word,"[10] for political authorities and actors it definitely exists as a category and social reality. If it is true that the Arab Uprisings have liberated the voices of the youth it is also true that these voices reached the ears of the powers-that-be, for better or worse.

A Snapshot of Arab Youth and their Participation in the Uprisings

Some brief demographic facts, without being too specific on the exact on definition of youth, are crucial for understanding the position of the Arab youth. The proportion of the youth within the population of each country in the Middle East is extremely large, the second highest in the world---only in sub-Saharan Africa is it larger. Sixty per cent of the Arab world's population is under thirty, twice the percentage of North America.[11] Thirty per cent of the Arab population is between the ages of 14 and 24,[12] and more than half the people in the

[8] Egin F. Isin, "Theorizing Acts of Citizenship," in *Acts of Citizenship*, ed. Engin F. Isin and Greg M. Nielsen (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2008), 37.
[9] Ibid., 38.
[10] Pierre Bourdieu, *Questions de sociologie* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1992 [1984]), 143.
[11] Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, *The Future of Global Muslim Population: Projections for 2010-2030,* January 27, 2011, accessed March 23, 2014, https://www.google.nl/?gws_rd=ssl#q=Pew+Forum+on+Religion+and+Public+Life%2C+The+Future+of+Global+Muslim+Population:+Projections+for+2010-2030.
[12] USAID, "USAID Convenes Conference of Arab Youth Development," press release, November 14, 2011, accessed May 20, 2014. http://www.usaid.gov/news-information/press-releases/usaid-convenes-conference-arab-youth-development.

region today are under the age of 25.[13] Moreover, youth unemployment is extraordinary high in the MENA region; four times higher than in other regions of the world. In some areas youth unemployment rates are as high as 80 per cent.[14] According to the data available for the years 2004-5, Tunisian youth represented more than three-quarters of the country's total unemployed, and 30 per cent of those aged between 20-24 were unemployed.

On a more qualitative level, Michael Hoffman and Ameney Jamal have summarised some characteristics of the Arab youth, based on an analysis of the Arab Barometer.[15] The chances are that they are, comparing to youth from 20 years ago, on average, better educated, unemployed, more prone to protest, and less inclined to vote.[16] Young Arabs are generally more supportive of political Islam and the implementation of *Shariʿa* than older citizens. Likewise, they are more likely to identify themselves primarily as Muslims than older generations. The data collected by the two authors suggest that youth mobilisation against the regime was not caused by grievances against the regime; "on the contrary, it appears that opportunities created by the uprisings ---both real and perceived---may have motivated the youth to mobilise. The young are more connected with the rest of the Arab world and the international community than any generation that preceded it, and seems to be highly optimistic about what ordinary citizens can do."[17]

To understand the Arab Uprisings, the youth can be considered "not only as developing beings or proto-adults but mostly as present beings and social agents with their own reality."[18] Their social and political exclusion is a major characteristic behind their rationales for and narratives of mobilisation. Nevertheless, while they may have been the most vocal, they were not the only actors. Rather, they played the role of spokesmen (and women) for the rest of the population. Nothing expresses this idea better than the following statement,

[13] Mounira Chaieb, "Young in the Arab World: Lebanon," *BBC World Service*, February 8, 2005, accessed March 23, 2014, https://www.google.nl/?gws_rd=ssl#q=Mounira+Chaieb%2C+%E2%80%9CYoung+in+the+Arab+World:+Lebanon+%E2%80%9D%2C+BBC+World+Service.

[14] Jack Shenker et al., "Young Arabs Who Can't Wait to Throw off Shackles of Tradition," *The Guardian*, February 14, 2011, accessed March 23, 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/feb/14/young-arabs-throw-off-shackles-tradition.

[15] Even if the data used in their analysis predate the Arab Spring by several years, it can be assumed that they are still valid.

[16] Michael Hoffman and Amaney Jamal, "The Youth and the Arab Spring: Cohort Differences and Similarities," *Middle East Law and Governance* 4 (2012): 168-88.

[17] Ibid., 187-8.

[18] Filip de Boeck and Alcinda Honwana, "Faire et défaire la société: enfants, jeunes et politique en Afrique," *Politique Africaine* 80 (2000): 6.

made by a member of the February 20 Movement:[19] "So far, the achievement of the movement is not that the king made promises. The true accomplishment is to have sent a clear message to all Moroccans: 'we want to be citizens and not subjects.' And they have to do the same, because our message is theirs as well. We crossed red lines, we challenged the words and the position of the king. We gave the right to speak---with our constant presence in the streets--- to those who never had it. People inside and outside the movement are no longer afraid to ask for their legitimate rights."[20]

The Uprisings led to two situations: in the first, the country witnessed a change in political leadership and began political transition; in the second, the mobilisation failed to generate political changes. In both situations, however, youth political activism witnessed an unprecedented revival. In the first case, the youth's participation can be strongly linked to the shifting political phases of the transitional period after the Arab Spring. Or, to put it another way, it was strongly influenced by the changing political configurations that dominated the transitions and their aftermath. That led to what can be called a "hiccup pattern" in youth participation: fully present and deeply involved during demonstrations and other forms of protest,[21] it was conspicuously absent during elections and seriously under-represented in elected institutions. On an organisational level, this form of participation is reflected in the rapid formation and equally quick dissolution of youth political organisations or groups, such *al-'Adl* ("Justice"), *al-Tayyar al-Misri* ("the Egyptian Current"), or *Misr al-Huriyya wa-l-Wa'i* ("Free and Awakened Egypt") in Egypt.[22] However, when results are meagre the dynamic engendered by protests dissipate quickly. Consequently, the youth often deserted the political field to invest instead in social activities, through what can be called moral affairs. As such, the protests against the "Daniel Gate" in Morocco[23] during the summer of 2013 are

[19] This broad coalition of Moroccan activists was not associated with any political party or specific civil society groups. It is named after the demonstrations that took place in more than fifty cities in the country, calling for democracy and a new Constitution, on February 20, 2011.

[20] Omar, 25 years, ATTAC Morocco, quoted in Cédric Baylocq and Jacopo Granci, "'20 Février': discours et portraits d'un mouvement de révolte au Maroc," *L'année du Maghreb* 8 (2012): 239.

[21] In Egypt the demonstrations and riots in Mohamed Mahmoud Street during November-December 2011, and in Tunisia the occupation of the central square in Tunis in front of the prime-minister's office in March 2011, so-called Kasbah I and II, as well as during the summer of 2012, were led by youth movements.

[22] Nadine Abdalla, "Egypt's Revolutionary Youth: From Street Politics to Party Politics," *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik*, March 11, 2013, accessed March 24, 2014, http://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publications/swp-comments-en/swp-aktuelle-details/article/egypts_youth_from_street_politics_to_party_politics.html; see also Azzurra Meringolo, "Revolutionary, Creative, Heterogeneous and Unorganized: Young Egyptians Facing Elections," *Egypte/monde arabe* 10 (2013), accessed March 23, 2014. http://ema.revues.org/3132.

[23] Called after the Spanish paedophile Daniel Galván Viña, who was sentenced to thirty years in prison in 2011 for the rape of 11 children in Kenitra. On the occasion of Throne Day (July 31, 2013) in Morocco, King Mohammed VI, according to a well-established tradition in the Kingdom, pardoned 1,000 detainees, among

emblematic: they were organised through communication channels previously used by the February 20 Movement and considered by former members of the movement as a revival of its spirit. This distinction between the two cases (or situations) is, however, theoretical, and the two types of participation can, in reality, overlap.

Considering the experiences of uprisings in the Arab world, very few political groups used the label "youth" during and after them: the Yemeni *Shabab al-thawra* can be regarded as an exception.[24] Strikingly, at a particular point in time the most vocal and important youth groups stopped choosing names that referred to their youthful following: the April 6 Group in Egypt and the February 20 Movement in Morocco were named after the day they called for demonstrations. Besides this convenient mnemonic practice, the choice clearly reflects their strategy of making claims that go beyond those that are related purely to the youth itself. Indeed, the usual pattern was that the youth took up those themes they shared with older generations, as was the case with the Egyptian Kifaya movement, the Algerian Barakat movement,[25] and the Moroccan February 20 Movement. None of the groups that became famous before and during the Arab uprisings were exclusively youth groups; their strategy of choosing common generational themes has been considered as having significantly enhanced their impact.

However, it remains true that such movements, hastily and carelessly referred to as youth groups, have, in common, the fact that they behave more as protest groups than opposition forces. It is necessary to make this division in order to understand their dynamics[26] and the reasons they failed to transform themselves into sustainable movements.[27] They simply lacked the resources to win elections. They were, however, extremely capable of

---

them Daniel Galván Viña. The ensuing outrage spread like wildfire on social networks and massive popular mobilisations occurred in several cities.

[24] Marine Poirier, "De la place de la libération (al-tahrir) à la place du changement (*al-taghyir*): transformations des espaces et expressions du politique au Yémen," in *Au cœur des révoltes arabes*, ed. Amin Allal and Thomas Pierret (Paris: Armand Colin, 2013), 31-50.

[25] Meaning "Enough" or "it's enough," this grassroots movement was founded on the March 1, 2014, to protest against President Bouteflika's announcement to run for a fourth period in office, and its Facebook page quickly collected 32,000 fans. However, its horizontal nature and lack of leadership weakened the movement after the re-election of President Bouteflika.

[26] The distinction between opponent and protester is based on the classic definition of opposition. See, for instance, Leonard Schapiro, "Foreword," *Government and Opposition* 1 (1966): 2, where he argues that the main characteristic of the opponent is to gain power. As such, the Arab youth can hardly be described as an opponent, as it did not seek power. For more on this topic, see Assia Boutaleb, "L'enjeu égyptien: protestataires, opposants et ruse de la raison autoritaire," *Les Temps Modernes* 664 (2011): 41-54.

[27] Assia Boutaleb, "Ce qu'un soulèvement fait aux espaces politiques: dynamiques de la protestation et de la mobilisation en Egypte," in *Les soulèvements populaires dans le monde arabe*, ed. Michel Camau and Frédéric Vairel (Montréal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2014), 201-20.

explaining and analysing the political game and its rules, and the ins and outs of the electoral system. The innovative means of communications they introduced, such as use of the Internet and social networks, about which much has been written, have deepened this division, because they are far more capable of mobilising protest, disseminating indignation, and analysing the political situation than they are of mobilising people for electoral purposes.

Following the uprisings and during the transitional phase, youth activists followed different paths and made varying choices. Nevertheless, in Egypt, for instance, the category of "the revolutionary youth" remains "quite a problematic category that lumps together different types of youth that have part in successive and simultaneous uprisings over the past three years in an unified political 'bloc'."[28]

Nevertheless, the uprisings and their aftermath produced various initiatives that enhanced the participation of the youth in the public sphere. Despite the meagre results of the Uprisings, something irreversible has occurred in the Hirschman's "voice" with regard to youth.

Youth Acts of Citizenship, Horizontal Bonds, and Dialogical Work

The examples that follow are based on several field trips conducted during the Spring of 2012 in Egypt and from the beginning of 2014 in Morocco. In these two countries the youth initiated several projects aimed at promoting dialogue and discussion between themselves and with society at large. As well as being political activists and youth who were or became political militants, many young Moroccans and Egyptians practised activism in a more civic sense, or, in other words, performed what Engin Isin calls "acts of citizenship". In fact, not focusing on the more "visible" youth allows us to see other youth profiles and therefore other means of engaging with them.

One of the problems the uprisings revealed was, according to some of the youth, the distance that separated activists and "the street," or ordinary people. If an emotional unity existed during the occupation of Tahrir Square, maintaining this unity over time turned out to be much more complicated. Such was the general feeling of the youth I met in Cairo. Finding a way to reach people, or the "street," as some of them called it, was, therefore, a major

[28] Chaymaa Hassabo, "Les illusions perdus des 'jeunes de la révolution'," *Orient XXI* (March 20, 2014), accessed May 20, 2014, http://orientxxi.info/magazine/egypte-les-illusions-perdues-des,0544

challenge. As Ashraf, a volunteer from a group calling itself "tweetshare3," put it: "In the beginning, we were three, three that followed the events, who were passionate about them without any political involvement or experience. However, we soon realised, after discussions with our siblings and neighbours, that the gap between people on the internet (activists) and the "real" people was widening. So we decided that we, the youth, have to go (into the street) and explain the situation to the people." During this process they employed various creative ways to reach the people. Tweetshare3 first set up a website, after which they attracted volunteers to set up a sensibilisation programme and organise an awareness campaign. One of their strategies was to select, a few days before the first round of the legislative elections of 2011-12, a big gas station in the al-Abasiyya neighbourhood of Cairo, and for a week a group of six or eight volunteers dedicated three hours per evening to "explaining the situation to the people." This station is famous as a meeting point for taxis, and the volunteers' strategy was to distribute flyers explaining the function and meaning of the electoral process. On these flyers they printed charts explaining issues such as the composition of the parliament, the national topics it discusses, and electoral procedure. What they did not do was canvas for a particular political group; they did not "run for someone." Instead, they explained that "we targeted the taxis because taxi drivers talk to everyone. In our country, for many people the taxis have the same function as the media." "Take a cab and you'll have all the information you need to know, not just about the city but also about politics," explained Hassan, another member of the group. Through distributing flyers the group members created the opportunity to discuss politics with the drivers. They sometimes had to explain certain issues, but mainly they engaged in dialogue about the current political situation. Most importantly, this allowed them to engage in the patient work of sensibilisation of the value of voting, which led to the (re)appropriation for the people of the political issues that concerned them. As Amani explains: "The revolution has taught us that politics is ours. Not theirs. I can do something myself; I don't have to wait for the elders to realise that something has to be done and to do it." These acts of citizenship are not heroic transgressions of the political order or radical disruptions of civic norms. They are instead minor, everyday acts, such as discussing or arguing about issues of public interest, but through them a civic relationship between ordinary citizens is produced.

Members of Tweetshare3 came from different social backgrounds but they pooled their resources and skills: one member knew a printer, another was an expert in computers or infographics, while a third made his car available to the group. Their activities were fairly

modest, but repeated on a regular basis they gained clout. In the months before the elections they met on a daily basis to discuss their plans. After the election of Morsi as president their activities concentrated on the explication of the constitutional draft, and flyers were produced highlighting the importance of the constitution, entitled "Your Constitution is your Future," while important newspaper articles were commented upon and explained. The example of the Cairo group had, by this time, been emulated by other groups, and in the Spring of 2012 no less than five other Tweetshare3 groups had sprung up in different provincial towns. Even if certain actions were specific to local circumstances, the general idea was to engage in general discussions with common citizens with whom the youth does not usually engage. Through these acts, this youth group gained experience in participating in public affairs and working for the common good. As one member remarked, "through the group, I met people whom I would never have spoken to before; I discovered that others think like me, or at least that others want to do things. I discovered that together with others (as a group) we have something to say and even to teach."[29] Their activities opened up a new world for the activists. Choosing the appropriate form of action, and evaluating its effects and meaning, led to intensive discussions among the group-members, defined their relationship with the public sphere, and determined their entrance into the civic arena.

The same experience was analysed by Laila Abu Lughod during fieldwork in a village in Upper Egypt. There, she discovered that "youth were galvanized by the uprising to solve local problems in their own community, feeling themselves to be in a national space despite a history of marginalization. They also used a particular language for their activism: a strong language of social morality, not the media-friendly political language of 'rights' and 'democracy'."[30] In the discourses and acts of the members of Tweetshare3, the emphasis was on their dialogical work and their relationships with others. This can be called the horizontal dimension of their activism, as opposed to the vertical, hierarchical relation of power, which is regarded as exclusively the state's sphere. As such, the activities of the groups differ from those of other social movements, whose various politics are directed at the authorities upon whom claims are made. Citizenship acts are fostered at the margins of the state, as the latter is regarded as a subject of critical debate and suspicion, not an interlocutor and source of rights.

[29] All the quotations are from my personal fieldworks notes of October 2012

[30] Laila Abu Lughod, "Living the 'Revolution' in an Egyptian Village: Moral Action in a National Space," *American Ethnologist* 39 (2012): 21.

If, in Egypt, the focus was on the learning process itself and how to communicate with other citizens, in Morocco the issue was explicitly formulated by some youth as "citizenship training." In Morocco, the act of citizenship is formulated primarily in terms of self-expression; debate in itself is regarded as the beating heart of citizenship. This is especially significant for projects initiated by the February 20 Movement. As in Egypt, the idea that "something has to be done" was very strong, and was expressed in a host of different activities, ranging from the artistic to the educational. However, they had one characteristic in common: they always avoided official party politics. As in Egypt, the Moroccan uprisings, even if they were less distributive, were a triggering event. Their long-term effect was expressed by Hosni, a member of the "Theatre of the Oppressed" ("Théâtre de l'Opprimé"): "after 2011, we kept the spirit, but we changed the tools."[31] A few examples of significant discussion initiatives were: *Falsafa fi 9zanqa* ("Philosophy in the Alley/Street"), Capdema,[32] the Prométhéus Institute for Democracy and Human Rights,[33] and Women Choufouch.[34] Their common aim was to encourage people to think about and discuss "their relationships with each other, with the state, and with this culture of subordination," to quote Tarik, a member of CapDema. As he explains, "we promote a participatory formula through which we aim to make people realise that they have something to say and that they have ideas about who they are, what they want [...] and what kind of citizen they are. That's why our last summer session will be about citizenship. The previous one was about the society's project, what society we want."[35]

Founded in 2008 by Moroccan students in France, CapDema started its activities in Morocco in 2011 with a summer camp. A brief look at its program and activities shows the pedagogical nature of its activities. For instance, it organised a regular "Democafe" (démocafé), with critical discussions of issues such as national security, the role of the media, national pride, the function of democracy, and the foreign policy of Morocco. It also organised conferences on topics such as the "European Union and Morocco" and "The Monarchy and its Future," as well as summer workshops. Debates were organised as a means

[31] Quoted in Camille Dupire, "Les Formes alternatives de participation populaire au lendemain d'un mouvement social: Étude de cas dans le Maroc 'post-20 Février'," *Master Dissertation IEP de Lille* (2014): 50.
[32] This is an abbreviation of "Cap Démocratie," which can be translated as "towards democracy."
[33] The institute was created on June 1, 2013 by 9 young Morrocans, most of whom were previously members of the 20 February group. The purpose was to conduct various activities to raise awareness of democratic values/human rights among the youth.
[34] Created by Majdouline Lyazidi and initially named "SlutWalk Morocco," Women Choufouch is a feminist movement campaigned against sexual harassment in Morocco and for the promotion of women's rights.
[35] Personal interview with Tarik, March 12, 2014.

of creating social networks and stimulating participants to engage in other arenas and to exert themselves further. It was quite common, for instance, to meet the same people in different activities, motivated by a desire to discuss and debate various topics. This marked, for some participants, the first step toward regular activism; on the other hand, greater self-consciousness, self-assertiveness, and outspokenness among the youth has become a general feature of the past two decades. Other initiatives were based on the need to discuss and deal with youth-specific issues. For example, the Student Union for Change in the Educational System ("Union des Etudiants pour le Changement dans le Système Educatif"), known as UECSE, or X with their members, was created during the summer of 2012, via social networks, to discuss and propose reforms to the Moroccan educational system. One of its main initiatives was the Popular University, which, in its approach and aims, resembled the initiative Falsafa fi 9zanqa. Open to all, and mostly organised in public spaces such as parks (for example, the Cervantes Park in Rabat), the courses of the Popular University covered themes including "good and bad," "freedom," and "morals or religion." Often specialists are invited (lawyers, human rights activists, or professors), and their presentations are followed by a debate. Apart from the participatory dimension, these meetings have a clear pedagogical aim: each presentation is transcribed and made available on the organisation's website, which also includes lessons on major philosophers or explications of philosophical issues. According to Anas Hmam, the founder of the Popular University, "discussing philosophical issues and subjects is important, first of all because they make people think, but also because in Morocco philosophy was repressed during the 1980s, the 'years of led.' The state preferred to open departments of Islamic thought rather than philosophy. During these years, the state did not want us to think [...]. In my view, (critical) thinking is the first and essential step to citizenship."[36] The number of participants varied considerably (from about 20 to 100), but, as with Tweetshare3 in Egypt, the initiative was taken up by groups in different cities, and in 2014 popular universities were established in Casablanca, Marrakech, and Tangiers.

In all these initiatives the key words have been open discussion and freedom of speech. Everyone is allowed to speak and express their ideas. In this sense, the discursive dimension is essential to these acts of citizenship; through debating in such ways, the youth enact citizenship even when the official political establishment does not take them seriously and excludes them. These activities enabled youth activists to overcome their exclusion. For instance, Capdema did not limit its meetings purely to speeches, but also drew up concrete

[36] Personal interview with Anas Hmam, December 13, 2013.

proposals for reforms and produced draft laws that were disseminated through social networks and on social media.[37] The documents produced by Falsafa fi 9Zanqa, as well as the courses it put online, were primarily meant to be to be circulated in order to engender discussion among the youth and to serve as examples to be emulated. In all of these, the main idea was to convey that the youth not only have ideas but are aware of the major issues with which society is confronted. This ability to express their opinion is precisely what had been denied to them up to then. The discussions and debates they organised are dialogical acts of citizenship that allow them to re-appropriate issues of public interest.

This re-appropriation is far from being a linear or irreversible process. Four years after the uprisings Tweetshare3 only continues to exist in two cities, and had to face accusations of being pro-al-Sisi. In the political arena the uprisings changed little, and the social position of the youth has not improved. The youth are still stigmatised and have been turned into a cause for exclusion, marginalisation, or, still worse, repression. While the advantage of acts of citizenship is that they are not as visible or prejudicial to public order as political activism, they suffer from their volatility and sensitivity to political contexts.

Youth: A Convenient Scapegoat

In a recent issue of the journal *Anthropologie et Sociétés* devoted to citizenship[38] many authors underlined the fact that the construction of citizenship is, historically, a process that evolves "from below," but one that also can be stopped or constrained from below as well. For instance, in that volume, Francine Saillant analyses how the Afro-Brazilian movement lacks an intermediary such the urban and educated elite to formulate and defend its claims, which constrained its ability to promote the citizenship of its members.[39] In the case of the Arab youth, on the other hand, the limits and constraints should also be sought in the strategies and actions "from above."

It is not possible to speak about youth activism or civic activism without talking about repression. Indeed, if the youth are portrayed as spokesmen (and women) they will also be the

[37] For instance, they presented a memorandum about the constitution, while their most recent work is focussed on the societal issue of abortion in Morocco.
[38] Natasha Grangé and Catherine Neveu, eds.,"Citoyennetés," special issue of *Anthropologie et Sociétés* 33 (2009).
[39] Francine Saillant, "Droits, Citoyenneté et Réparations des Torts du Passé de l'Esclavage: Perspectives du Mouvement Noir au Brésil," in "Citoyennetés," *Anthropologie et Sociétés* 33 (2009): 141-65.

target of coercion. In general, the police are highly suspicious of the youth, and of young men in particular. The youth are often portrayed by the state as a threat to the stability of society. In recent years, repression has increased to such an extent that the youth as a societal group has been put on trial, accused of a variety of crimes and seen as the main source of the deep societal crisis, increasing national insecurity, growing political chaos, and rampant cultural decay. The ambivalent attitude of the general public towards the uprisings is often associated with the role the youth played in them.

In more concrete terms, political activists in general and the younger generation in particular are systematically put on trial, on fabricated evidence. For instance, the charges brought by the public prosecutor against the Algerian activists of the Barakat movement were that they had organised a "non-military gathering that may disturb public safety," a curious accusation that goes back to a decree of 1975, the time of the one-party system, which relates to Articles 97 and 98 of the penal code.[40] In Egypt, arrests are often made on charges of selling drugs. In Morocco, in May 2014 eleven members of February 20 Movement were condemned on charges of "illegal participation in a non-authorised demonstration." They had been arrested during April 6 labour unions demonstrations but they were able to prove the legality of, and their authorisation for taking part in, that demonstration. In the same year, the well-known rapper al-7aqad was arrested for illegally selling tickets to a football match. In a recent article Mâati Mounjib revisited a series of cases of resistance leaders and activists who had participated in or supported the February 20 Movement, ranging from members of the Islamist al-ʿAdl wa-l-ihsane to members of secular organisations, demonstrating that accusations were always related to sexual, financial, or drug scandals, and states that "for each activist, a 'crime' was fabricated, playing on the taboo of their ideology in order to discredit and undermine the Moroccan version of the 'Arab Spring'."[41] Since the end of the summer of 2014, nearly 85 of the activists of the Moroccan Association of Human Rights have been banned in the country. This general atmosphere of repression has sent a clear message that no-one is safe from prosecution, and created a climate where public initiatives are no longer seen as harmless.

[40] Ghania Mouffok, "Á Alger, 20 Ans n'est plus le plus bel Âge de la Vie," *MondAfrique* May 12, 2014, accessed May 25, 2014. http://mondafrique.com/lire/politique/2014/05/12/a-alger-vingt-ans-nest-pas-le-plus-bel-age-de-la-vie.

[41] Mâati Mounjib, "Setups and Slander against Morocco's Dissidents: Sex, Drugs, Money and Videos," *Jadaliyya*, April 14, 2015, accessed May 25, 2015. http://turkey.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/21370/setups-and-slander-against-moroccos-dissidents_sex

Acts of citizenship, partly because they are spontaneous and elusive, are, in such an atmosphere of repression, particularly discouraged. With so few visible and concrete results, the public sphere can become erratic, and in this respect the Egyptian case is the most revealing. Not everything can be explained by repression from above, but such proved to be even more of a barrier when met with that from below. In other words, not only do youths have to face societal and political suspicions, they have to accomplish social requirements such as finding a job, getting married, and, lastly, becoming adults and being considered as such by society. Because the youth are at a time of life when much has to be done, Arab youth acts of citizenship are, more than those of other categories of the population, dependant on the political and social context. They follow the ups and downs of Arab political transitions and their own socio-economic background. The paradox in the Arab world is that the demographic majority---the youth---has continued to be reduced to an activist minority trying to claim its place. For the Arab youth, the Arab Spring constituted a historical opportunity to drastically change its position in society, one it missed. Nonetheless, it is clear that something has changed.

Neither immutable nor predetermined, citizenship is strongly determined by asymmetrical power struggles. While this asymmetry limits, at the same time it may be full of possibilities, as it does not exclude anything that is possible. As the French philosopher Jacques Rancière stated, "political invention occurs in acts that are at the same time argumentative and poetical, shows of strength that open and reopen as frequently as may be necessary the worlds in which those acts of community are acts of community."[42] What Rancière refers to as acts of community ("actes de communautés") can be called, in my view, acts of citizenship. However, one must not forget that citizenship is also a status, and that the struggle for it remains an important issue for the Arab youth, particularly after the Uprisings.

Bibliography

Abdalla, Nadine. "Egypt's Revolutionary Youth: From Street Politics to Party Politics." *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik*, March 11, 2013. Accessed March 24, 2014. http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2013C11_abn.pdf

Abu Lughod, Laila. "Living the 'Revolution' in an Egyptian Village: Moral Action in a National Space." *American Ethnologist* 39 (2012): 21-25.

[42] Jacques Rancière, *La Mésentente* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1995), 89.

Baylocq, Cédric, and Jacopo Granci. "'20 Février': discours et portraits d'un mouvement de révolte au Maroc." *L'Année du Maghreb* 8 (2012): 239-58.

Boeck de, Filip, and Alcinda Honwana. "Faire et défaire la société: enfants, jeunes et politique en Afrique." *Politique Africaine* 80 (2000): 5-11.

Bono, Irène. "Une lecture d'économie politique de la 'participation des jeunes' au Maroc à l'heure du printemps arabe." *Revue internationale de politique comparée* 20 (2013): 145-66.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Questions de sociologie*. Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1992 (1984).

Boutaleb, Assia. "L'enjeu égyptien: protestataires, opposants et ruse de la raison autoritaire." *Les Temps Modernes* 664 (2011): 41-54.

Boutaleb, Assia. "Ce qu'un soulèvement fait aux espaces politiques: dynamiques de la protestation et de la mobilisation en Egypte." In *Les soulèvements populaires dans le monde arabe*, edited by Michel Camau and Frédéric Vairel, 201-20. Montréal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2014.

Chaieb, Mounira. "Young in the Arab World: Lebanon." *BBC World Service*, February 8, 2005. Accessed March 23, 2014.
https://www.google.nl/?gws_rd=ssl#q=Mounira+Chaieb%2C+%E2%80%9CYoung+in+the+Arab+World:+Lebanon+%E2%80%9D%2C+BBC+World+Service.

Courbage, Youssef, and Emmanuel Todd. *Le rendez-vous des civilisations*. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2009.

Desrues, Thierry Desrues. "Moroccan Youth and the Forming of a New Generation: Social Change, Collective Action and Political Activism." *Mediterranean Politics* 17 (2012): 23-40.

Dupire, Camille. "Les formes alternatives de participation populaire au lendemain d'un mouvement social: étude de cas dans le Maroc 'post-20 Février'." Master Dissertation IEP de Lille (135p.), 2014.

Ghania Mouffok, "Á Alger, 20 ans n'est plus le plus bel âge de la vie." *MondAfrique*, May 12, 2014. Accessed May 25, 2014.
http://mondafrique.com/lire/politique/2014/05/12/a-alger-vingt-ans-nest-pas-le-plus-bel-age-de-la-vie.

Grangé, Natasha, and Catherine Neveu, eds. "Citoyennetés." Special Issue of *Anthropologie et Sociétés* 33/2 (2009): 2-275

Hassabo, Chaymaa. "Les illusions perdus des 'jeunes de la révolution'." *Orient* 21 (2014). Accessed May 20, 2014.
http://orientxxi.info/magazine/egypte-les-illusions-perdues-des,0544

Hoffman, Michael Hoffman, and Amaney Jamal. "The Youth and the Arab Spring: Cohort Differences and Similarities." *Middle East Law and Governance* 4 (2012): 168-88.

Isin, Egin F., and Greg M. Nielsen, eds. *Acts of Citizenship*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Mounjib, Mâati. "Setups and Slander against Morocco's Dissidents: Sex, Drugs, Money and Videos." *Jadaliyya*, April 14, 2015. Accessed May 25, 2015.
http://turkey.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/21370/setups-and-slander-against-moroccos-dissidents_sex.

Meijer, Roël. *The Struggle for Citizenship: The Key to Understanding the Arab Uprisings*. Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre Report, February 2014.

Meringolo, Azzurra. "Revolutionary, Creative, Heterogeneous and Unorganized: Young Egyptians Facing Elections." *Egypte/monde arabe* 10 (2013). Accessed March 23, 2014.
http://ema.revues.org/3132.

Murphy, Emma. "Problematizing Arab Youth: Generational Narratives of Systemic Failure." *Mediterranean Politics* 17 (2012): 5-22.

Neveu, Catherine. “E pur si muove! Ou comment saisir empiriquement les processus de citoyenneté.” *Politix* 26 (2013): 205-22.

Neveu, Catherine. “Les enjeux d’une approche anthropologique de la citoyenneté.” *Revue européenne des migrations internationals* 20 (2004): 89-101.

Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, *The Future of Global Muslim Population: Projections for 2010-2030*, January 27, 2011. Accessed March 23, 2014. https://www.google.nl/?gws_rd=ssl#q=Pew+Forum+on+Religion+and+Public+Life%2C+The+Future+of+Global+Muslim+Population:+Projections+for+2010-2030.

Poirier, Marine. “De la place de la libération (al-tahrir) à la place du changement (*al-taghyir*): transformations des espaces et expressions du politique au Yémen.” In *Au cœur des révoltes arabes*, edited by Amin Allal and Thomas Pierret, 31-50. Paris: Armand Colin, 2013.

Rancière, Jacques. *La Mésentente.* Paris: Editions Galilée, 1995.

Saad, Ragab, and Moataz El Fegiery. *Citizenship in Post-Awakening Egypt: Power Shifts and Conflicting Perceptions*. European Policy Centre, January 21, 2014. Accessed March 23, 2014. http://www.epc.eu/pub_details.php?cat_id=1&pub_id=4087&year=2014

Schapiro, Leonard. “Foreword.” *Government and Opposition* 1 (1966): 1-6.

Schwartz, Stephanie. “Youth and the ‘Arab Spring’.” *United States Institute for Peace*, April 28, 2011. Accessed May 20, 2014. http://www.usip.org/publications/youth-and-the-arab-spring.

Shenker, Jack, et al. “Young Arabs Who Can’t Wait to Throw off Shackles of Tradition.” *The Guardian* February 14, 2011. Accessed March 23, 2014. http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/feb/14/young-arabs-throw-off-shackles-tradition.

USAID. “USAID Convenes Conference of Arab Youth Development.” Press release, November 14, 2011. Accessed May 20, 2014. http://www.usaid.gov/news-information/press-releases/usaid-convenes-conference-arab-youth-development.