



## **Middle East – Topics & Arguments**

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### **Call for papers #9**

#### **Youth**

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The uprisings of 2011 challenged many predominant concepts of ‘youth’ in the MENA region. Before, young people were often merely discussed as a ‘youth bulge’ – a demographic, quantitative problem, even a potential terrorist threat. In other stereotypical representations, youths and young adults hardly appeared as political subjects, but rather as objects of policies that had to change: unemployed and socially excluded, passive victims of a failed social pact negotiated between former generations and authoritarian regimes. Movements that contradicted both stereotypes, like the Moroccan and Tunisian unemployed graduates, who had been protesting ‘apolitically’, negotiating their employment with authoritarian regimes for over a decade, hardly received any attention.

A new idol emerged in the course of the 2011 events in the MENA region: the ‘young Arab protester’ was acclaimed as a heroic vanguard against fossilized autocratic regimes ruled by old men. For many, this figure seemed to embody certain democratic ideals and practices that apparently had lost impetus in the established democracies of the West, especially in the wake of the global economic crisis. Here, new social movements like the Spanish ‘indignados’ were highly inspired by the ‘Arab Spring’. Now, young people in the MENA region were also given credit as protagonists in the cultural field, which was often directly related to their political mobilizations. Western media started to show interest in their creative productivity, whether in literature, music, their use of new media and ICTS, or everyday practices like football and its respective fan cultures.

In academia, this sudden public attention was echoed by a boom in research on ‘youth’ in the MENA region. But many of the studies and policy papers hardly involved critical theoretical reflections of the term ‘youth’. Again, young people were mainly researched as members of an age cohort, defined in quantitative terms, although now with different expectations. On the other hand, critical discussions regarding the empirical significance of youth in reproducing social inequality and catalyzing processes of social exclusion continue to revolve around the situation of young people in ‘the West’. These debates often seem oddly disconnected from the social reality in the MENA region – a region that empirically has been inseparable from ‘the West’

throughout long histories of colonialism and migration, and in which young people constitute, after all, the majority of the population.

Against this backdrop, we welcome papers that address the overarching theme of the call, including those that consider, but are not limited to, the following topics and questions:

- How do the concepts of 'youth' and 'generation' help to understand these recent developments?
- To what extent does social age, 'youthfulness', or generationality matter when we discuss power relations, the reproduction of social inequality, and actors' agency in the region?
- How much does it influence analyses and discussions of recent developments, e.g. regarding refugee policy and refugees' agency, or Jihadist recruitment in the MENA region and in the West?
- Does it suggest different policy interventions and media attention when we frame a certain phenomenon, such as political violence, social exclusion or inequality, as a 'youth' issue, or as a problem between generations?
- How do actors position themselves in intergenerational relations and refer to generational narratives, on which grounds, and to what purpose?
- How are these narratives related to specific fields of cultural production or everyday practices?
- What are the spatial dimensions of 'being young'?
- How are 'youth' and 'adulthood' defined in different social spaces, contexts, and fields?
- Can we discern respective transitions to adulthood, and if so, how are they organized and negotiated?
- How does social age matter at intersections of class, ethnicity and gender?

We call for articles from a broad array of disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, political science, literature studies, cultural studies, media studies, history and economics, which critically engage with concepts of youth related to the MENA region, or which present new empirical findings.

Submissions relating to the issue's focus topic are published in the FOCUS section and reflect original research. Articles in this section should be between 2,800 to 4,600 words. In addition to papers for the FOCUS section, we call for contributions for META's special sections:

The CLOSE UP section features a short written portrait of a person who has a special relation to the issue's main topic, e.g. a researcher who has constitutively contributed to the field. It links that person's biography with their contribution to the field. Article length is 1,500 to 3,000 words.

The META section also relates to the issue's focus topic, with the papers in "meta" discussing the main topic from a theory-centered perspective. Regional scope is not limited to the Middle East, but may also consider theoretical approaches involving other world regions. Article length is 2,800 to 4,600 words.

The ANTI/THESIS section juxtaposes two rivaling positions that highlight different lines of argument, pros and cons, and/or competing narratives. These can be presented either by one author together, or by two different authors in two different articles. Article length for each paper is 1,500-3,000 words.

All articles that fall into the general framework of the journal, but do not relate to the special topic "Youth", will be taken into consideration for the OFF TOPIC section.

Prior to developing a complete manuscript, authors are asked to submit an abstract (300 words max.), a short CV (150 words max.), and 3-5 key bibliographic sources. Please clearly indicate the research question, the method to be used, and the empirical material your research will be based on. Papers are accepted in English only.

The editors will make a preliminary decision regarding the topic's relevance to the journal's aims and scope and may provide suggestions for developing the manuscript. Please consult our website for further information about the journal's concept, sections, and authors' guidelines.

**The deadline for abstract submissions is December 20<sup>th</sup> 2016.**

**The deadline for article submissions is April 15<sup>th</sup> 2017.**

Proposals, manuscripts and other editorial correspondence should be sent to: [submissions9@meta-journal.net](mailto:submissions9@meta-journal.net)