

Culture, Development, and Social Transition Towards Democracy Summary



Project

Dedicated to

Hassan Abbas, the human

“Safir” is an ambitious program dedicated to the youth and the sustainable development goals in nine countries in the MENA region: Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, and Algeria.

Five entities are part of the project, which is supported by: [the Institut Français and the European Union: Arab NGO Network for Development](#) | [Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie](#) | [Canal France International](#) | [Pitchworthy](#) | and [Lab'ess..](#)

Within the context of this project, the Arab NGO Network for Development conducted a study on the role of culture in development and in social transition towards democracy and human rights in Arab and South Mediterranean countries. The main research paper was developed by five researchers: Dr. Hassan Abbas, Ms. Jihan Abou Zeid, Ms. Atidel Mejbri, Ms. Mina Houjeib, and Ms. Jana Al-Dhaibi. Mr. Adib Nehme was responsible for the coordination and drafting of the final report. Both teams of the Arab NGO Network for Development and the Institute Français de Paris contributed to the development, preparation, and review of this research project.

Report Methodology

The production of this report required 15 months of continuous work (from April 2020 to July 2021) structured in three phases: First, the preparatory phase (conceptual paper, researchers and methodology selection); Second, five background papers using a complex research methodology that incorporates the following methods:

- 1- Desktop research;
- 2- Participatory action research through interviews with professionals or selected concerned activists and youths, and focus groups (mainly in case studies);
- 3- Content analysis networks (especially in research related to virtual space, as well as Facebook and Instagram pages).

Third, the final report, which was based on the material consolidated and produced during the second phase, included a second analysis of the material available from two inputs: the first is thematic, and the second is based on case/spatial study. The final report followed a synthetic and analytical methodology, with particular attention to the theoretical and conceptual aspect.

Click here for full report: https://annd.org/uploads/publications/Culture_development_and_social_transition_towards_democracy_-_En.pdf

Prelude

"The country is still fine....as long as everybody is participating in the funeral of a poet!", says a Damascene citizen watching Nizar Qabbani's funeral scene in the series "The Four Seasons" by director and artist Hatem Ali. The same scene took place in Damascus on the first day of 2021 in [Hatem Ali's](#) funeral who had passed away a couple of days earlier (29 December 2020). Thousands marched in a funeral shrouded in sincere and sweeping grief in a country torn apart by war and battered by troubles and COVID-19. Hatem Ali was stronger than division, hatred, and war: He brought them all together to his funeral. This is the secret of arts and culture.

Arab countries have known cases that are similar in essence but different in scale and geographical scope. The funeral of the Tunisian poet [Mohamed Al-Saghir Awlad Ahmed](#) (passed away on 5 April 2016) was a demonstration of freedom and a blow to patriarchal traditions, as Tunisian women accompanied him to his resting place. Reem Al-Banna, the Palestinian artist (passed away on 24 March 2018), touched so many Palestinian hearts with her death that her funeral turned into a symphony of love for Palestine and freedom. Similarly on the other side of the Mediterranean, "Idir" (one of the most famous Algerian Amazigh artists who passed away on 3 May 2020) had the same effect in evoking feelings of overwhelming joy and melancholy, especially in his famous song "A Vava Inouva", in an almost magical scene.

Decades ago on 3 February 1975, and just like they always waited for Kawkab al-Sharq Umm Kulthum to sing, 4 million Egyptians (along with tens of millions through the media) bid farewell to her in a funeral comparable only to the funeral of the historical leader [Gamal Abdel Nasser](#). It is as if artists - who are the embodiment of culture - accumulate in their creativity the essence of

a generation, people, or an entire era. It is as if nothing is truer than culture as an expression of identity, values, and dreams.

We are not here celebrating death and funerals; death itself is rather nothing but an occasion to celebrate the life whose endless flow is accumulated in culture and its creators, as they spread joy, hope, emotions, and behaviors of all kinds among people - all people - in a way that makes them better able to act and influence their lives and the life of their community. It is, therefore, about life and about culture, which is a representation of the daily life of common people, and a creativity outcome of diverse affiliations and interests who were able to shape the features of very rich phenomena and movements that cross borders and transcend time.

As culture is also a life and a practice, we cannot, in a post-Arab Spring era (2011), overlook thousands of innumerable innovations and contributions made by young women and men of the Arab countries in sit-in squares from Tunis and Cairo all the way to Yemen, Beirut, Baghdad, Algiers, and Sudan, and the associated artistic and cultural production and creativity, as well as behaviors, practices, and values, whether manifested in the streets or in virtual space that witnessed innovations of no less importance. All of this has led to a culture - which can be considered new - built by tens of thousands of male and female citizens. It will undoubtedly constitute a very rich asset for contemplation and study on the meaning of culture, its impact, and the identity of its makers.

However, this celebration of culture has also stirred hostility. What would make a ruler or a party in a country or authority assassinate a cartoonist like [Naji Al-Ali](#) (Palestinian artist assassinated on 29 August 1987) had it not been for his definite ability

Prelude

to influence people? Or why would they abolish philosophy and related social sciences education, as it was the case in Morocco in the sixties? Why would tyrannical regimes fear every unattended public space to the point that almost all of them, at the same time, enacted laws that criminalize expression of opinion on social media under the pretext of national security and counter-terrorism? This confrontation with culture takes multiple forms exercised by the institutionalized authority through its institutions, or sometimes it takes the form of confrontations at the base of society as if it were a clash of multiple cultures within the same society.

This report addresses these questions and more.



Chapter 1: Conceptual framework and research problematics

1. Three concepts: culture, development, and democracy

The report adopts a definition of culture rooted in the anthropological definition that is consistent with the definition of UNESCO at the World Conference on Cultural Policies in Mexico City in 1982, where culture was defined as: **“The set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs.”**

The report distinguishes between primary (inherited) and secondary (voluntary) cultures, and examines the forms of interaction between them as a dynamic that explains the general context of the development of culture in society, especially between tradition and modernity, and between backward looking values and human rights values. It is a conflictual interaction governed by the priority of current political and societal functions in these societies more than it is a simple extension of the inherited past.

As for development, it is a path of societal advancement in the five economic, social, environmental, political, and cognitive/cultural dimensions. Cognition and culture must be treated as an independent dimension as important as the others, and its omission (along with the political dimension) reflects a shortcoming in the prevailing and partial interpretation of sustainable development.

Democracy and its associated “democratic transition” pathways in the Southern Mediterranean countries after the Arab Spring have two levels: **the most** important **political** level and the **technical** level, represented by what falls under the notions of good governance

and institutional modernization. In the Southern Mediterranean Arab countries, the political level is by far the decisive level due to the neopatrimonial nature of the state, which is key to understanding conflict and transformation dynamics that were intensified by the shared demand of Arab Spring revolutions: **“A modern democratic civil state.”** This demand represents the historical answer to the structural crisis in the countries of the region, and the unequivocal destination that must be sought. This means that **the demand for democracy, the civil state, and human rights is the most powerful and widespread popular demand in the countries of the region, which diminishes the notion of democratic exception or malfunction often associated with the countries of the region described as stagnant and fatalistically submissive to tyranny.** It also means that describing the current situation in these countries as “transitional” is partial, **given the foundational and formative nature** of the deep transformation path that underpins the context of events and developments.

2. Global and regional problems

Public policies are not directly and explicitly concerned with the cultural process as a contributor to development and change, but rather as a consumer perspective-based tool for profit, market mechanisms, and media promotion, or as a (religious, ideological, or identity-related) political ideology used to establish control and impose specific paths for political mobilization as well as shaping authorities and supporting their choices.

The report considers that cultural (and other) problems in Southern Mediterranean Arab countries are not different than the global problems, with a particular emphasis on four global phenomena/problems:

1. The massive expansion of consumerism;
2. The rise of right-wing populist movements;
3. The retrogression to sub-identities; and
4. The COVID-19 impact on the future of community organization, and the resulting reinforced proclivity for individual/public life control, and extremist technological tendencies, and ingrained economic approaches.

These problems are strongly present in the Southern Mediterranean Arab countries, where they are coupled with five main regional problems:

1. Democracy and human rights, the question of “democratic exception”;
2. The hegemony of patriarchal-masculine culture and the position of women in society;
3. Sub-identities;
4. Societal disintegration and overall cultural deterioration resulting from wars and occupation;
5. Weak knowledge and artistic production, poor quality of education, and official political hostility towards culture.

All these problems are analyzed integrally in the various sections of the report, which adopts an atypical approach that stands out from the mainstream literature.

Chapter 2: Regional context

The Arab Spring

The huge upsurge of 2011 was nothing but a natural and logical outcome of its context. The surprise or even the **shock** expressed by most parties was not imputable to the fact that the Arab Spring was out of context, but rather to the **lack of visions or the neglect of accumulating factors behind the deteriorating situation, whether due to a lack of knowledge, an interest, or the projection of ideologically biased cultural perceptions on the region's societies as an exception that is not qualified or predisposed for democratization or modernity**. All the transformations that took place in the Arab countries fall within the overall globalization context, and are consistent with the global context that witnessed significant setbacks in relation to the human rights value system, the return of militarism and securitism, and the dominance of consumerism over everything else. **Immigration** and **education** systems in the Southern Mediterranean countries are an expression of structural factors that are still active today and are directly related to the topic of the report.

Immigration: Repulsive societies for youth and citizens

Developments, wars, and violent conflicts in Arab societies of the Southern Mediterranean shaped them into countries that drive away their citizens, especially their youth and professional and educated elites (not to mention labor force migration in general). **This desire for emigration cannot actually be traced back exclusively to a single reason**. Migration brings about significant changes in the awareness and behavior of the migration-seeking person and in their immediate circle of family and friends. When this movement turns into intensive mass migration, it causes changes in the receiving countries and societies,

as well as at the individual level, as a result of what is sometimes deemed as a “civilization shock” or “culture shock”, triggering cultural shifts in different directions.

In 2020, 22% of the Arab countries population expressed a desire to migrate, according to the Arab Opinion Index report. The destination choices of those willing to migrate entail complex components, which are not devoid of cultural dimensions.

The comparison of the Arab Opinion Index results **between 2011 and 2020 shows that Europe's share as the most desirable migration destination has increased from 33% to 38%, while “Western” countries' share (Europe, Canada, and America) has increased from 51% to 58%. Nevertheless, the desire to migrate to Arab countries dropped 14 pp from 31% to 17% (desire to migrate to the Gulf states decreased from 16% to 12%)¹. The clear preference for migration to Europe, Canada, and America, contradicts the prevailing stereotypical perception of a cultural aversion between the East and the West** (and by extension between Christianity and Islam in some cultural ideologies). Migration is not a mere spatial/geographical transition in the physical sense, but rather **a transition to a societal-cultural space that is characterized by a wide margin of freedom protected by law, offering opportunities for cultural blooming with multiple options that was suppressed in the country of origin**. Migration is not a cultural shift that occurs at an individual level (or in the migrating community), but it is related to the fact that the very cultural elements unfolding in the host country were probably latent in the country of origin and forcibly prevented from developing to their fullest potential and flourishing publicly.

¹ Arab Opinion Index 20-2019 main results in brief. Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies, Doha; 2020. <https://arabindex.dohainstitute.org/AR/Documents/The-20-2019-Arab-Opinion-Index-in-Brief-AR.pdf>

"...A human needs a clear identity in order to belong to a group that protects them - such as a sect or religion - but in Germany, the state protects me with the law regardless of my ideological or ethnic affiliation. I am protected here by human rights principles, while in Syria I needed to belong to a sect and a family."

Jamil: Syrian in Germany after 2011

Education promoting conservative culture

Education systems in the Arab countries **are still traditional and adopt indoctrination curricula that do not encourage creativity nor freedom of thought and criticism, and lack mechanisms for interaction and engagement between students, the faculty, the administration, and the community. Additionally, curricula are outdated from a scientific and technological perspective, and also in terms of values and concepts that they convey to students, especially citizenship and human rights values.**

In general, enrollment rates have improved in the countries of the region during the last two decades, but problems related to education quality are more severe, as only 50% of students who complete the first stage of secondary education have the minimum required proficiency in mathematics, and only 40% of students complete secondary education². Middle East and North African students consistently rank among the lowest in the (global educational achievement) assessments.

Teaching obedience and compliance

The World Bank's report "Expectations and Aspirations: A New Framework for Education in the Middle East and North Africa"³ indicates that education systems in these countries are hampered by behavioral norms and conflicts. **They tend - due to their predominantly traditional character - to give precedence to imitation, discipline, certificates and control over standards that are most in line with modern trends.**

²-Arab Sustainable Development Report 2020, ESCWA

³Expectations and Aspirations: A New Framework for Education in the Middle East and North Africa, World Bank 2020.

⁴The Second Social Development Report: Inequality, Independence, and Change in the Arab World. ESCWA, 2017. <https://bit.ly/3ngQo4A>

According to an United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) report, "the education system in the Arab region has been **designed to slow the pace of social change...** Authoritarian regimes did not content themselves with developing educational curricula that seek to instill conservative values in students, but also **used them as a tool to indoctrinate beliefs.**"⁴

"...The state today is concerned by a citizen who thinks freely and follows scientific rules, a citizen who says no to a dark reality. Unfortunately, it succeeded in doing so due to the lack of ability to reason."

Rahma: A Tunisian student

In addition to the aforementioned, **two crucial factors have a great impact on the cultural formation of learners:**

1- The first is the segregation between males and females in certain schools, in a way that reinforces stereotypes and gender/sexist discrimination, as well as the idea of alienation and separation between the sexes, which is at the core of the patriarchal mindset.

2- The second is the fact that student councils in schools (and universities) are either rarely allowed to be established, or allowed to act as dummy councils, meaning that a young man or woman graduates from high school without any real life experience in institutional management, which is an indispensable primary democratic experience, and without engaging in any sort of dialogue and negotiation with those who are closer to being a higher authority in their school. This chapter relies on thematic inputs for the analysis and covers five problems:

- 1- Identity**
- 2- Religion**
- 3- Democracy**
- 4- Gender equality**
- 5- The culture of consumerism.**

Chapter 3: Analysis of main problems (thematic approach)

1. Identity problem

The nation-state composition has a symbolic component that constitutes a national identity as well as a common affiliation with other citizens that defines them as a group-people. This newly formed identity transcends (and does not abolish) the traditional identities inherited from the pre-modern state era. However, decades of accelerated globalization led to the emergence of the modern national identity crisis and stimulated the rise of other supra-state and infra-state identities of every kind, especially the revival of sub-identities inherited from the pre-modern periods and pre-modern civil state era, most notably:

- **Familial, clannish, tribal identities**, and identities that have a local spatial character and are mainly based on kinship ties;
- **National, ethnic, or racial identities**, sometimes with linguistic specificity (the particular language of the concerned group); and
- **Religious or sectarian identities**.⁵

Identity in its common meaning is an expression of a "fixed" essence in the individual, which represents - in the individual's or group's opinion - their authentic intrinsic nature and deep-rooted culture that determine their attitudes. This essence seems a natural given that is not acquired during the course of their personal life and through social relations that contribute to shaping them as a social individual. Culture - as a conscious lifestyle and practice - becomes an identity when it develops an all-encompassing content in the individual and collective structure of the self; and when the gap between the individual and their group grows smaller, their identity usually takes a collective character rather than an individual one. Collective identity - as materialized in the predominant practice - **is the expression of the**

collective ego that is different from/contrary/opposite to the collective other.

The basis of the plurality of identities lies in the socio-historical reality of a given society. A sub-identity may have a current function that overshadows other identities, especially the modern civil national identity, whether in terms of defending privileges, or - which is the predominant case - in terms of creating mechanisms of solidarity against what is considered injustice or discrimination by the authority or another dominant "identity".

The primary identity does not determine the nature of the state and social relations; it is rather the latter that determines the former to a large extent, knowing that new identities do not cancel older ones, but transform and change their hierarchy in public life, modify their functions, or in the least interact with them.

Jamil (a young Syrian living in Germany where he migrated after 2011) says: "Before the outbreak of the revolutions, I was the Syrian, the theater actor, and the young man imprisoned in a long list of traditional identities that were imposed on me and that I did not choose. When the revolution began, the identity of the political activist, the relief activist, and the artist emerged to the surface. Other identities remained, but their positions changed. Changing circumstances reinforce one identity and bury another."

The universal principles governing social life and the state (such as a constitution and a legal system protecting everyone) play a decisive role in the transition from self-identification as a non-unique member of a primary group (a sect, a family, etc.) to a citizen - an individual who only needs to be protected by the law.

⁵The gender identity, which is as important as the other three types of identities, should also be noted. However, this fourth identity has a special status and penetrates other identities, including modern civil identities; it is referred to later in the report.

Identity and youth after the Arab Spring

Arab revolutions had a tremendous effect on the relationship of youth with identity that is closely linked to the popular movement's view of the crisis as a comprehensive one with a very strong cultural component. The demands for dignity, regime change, freedom, social justice, livelihood (bread) and work... are interconnected in an implicit holistic effort aiming to get rid of the prevailing state model as well as its cultural component and all the troubled individual and collective identities imposed by this model. The inclusion of a cultural dimension in the change agenda and the pursuit of a new societal model (the modern democratic civil state) is a key factor in raising the problem of identity, as a fundamental issue in the journey of transformation sought by the Arab Spring uprisings.

The more lacking democracy, social justice, and equal rights are, the stronger a sub-identity becomes, as it develops into a hegemonic identity and a tool of collective effectiveness and takes a confrontational stance against the prevailing political and societal regime, which loses its inclusive national character. **Also, the more**

"...I used to proudly identify myself as Egyptian during the revolution. I was in harmony with the collective identity of Tahrir Square and other squares. I thought that my many identities as a woman, as an atheist, and as a photographer would find some space. But after the revolution's defeat, we redefined ourselves with parts of the identity for which we were persecuted... We define ourselves once again by expressing our opposition to the regime... I stopped defining myself as Egyptian..."

Nour, Egypt

countries, regimes, and societies tend to truly recognize diversity, the principle of equality, the rule of law, and democracy, the less severe is the clash between identities and the cultural components of a society and a country.

Identity in the age of technology and internet

Technology has enhanced the abilities of any small group (or large in number) to communicate

with like-minded others in other parts of the world. However, the characteristics of the virtual space, especially social media, enable it to act as a venue where like-minded people come together, generating a special dynamism for the development of its members' ideas and attitudes towards extremism and radicalism. This dynamism is also driven by the lack of content controls (with some exceptions) and catalysts injected by those in charge of the page in question or the most organized block in it.

In this sense, social media (and the virtual space in general) are not more honest in expressing the actual reality, as they can be considered biased to the most radical ideas, and the content they deliver often lacks internal consistency. However, this space, for the same reasons previously mentioned, also represents an important source for research into the dynamics and opinion trends that form at the bottom and margins of society, and among the age groups that most frequently use it (youth and adolescents), which represent a component of the realistic picture of societies and culture without abridging them all.

2. Problem of religion

Religion plays a critical role in the social and political life of Southern Mediterranean countries. However, numerous pitfalls can impair objectivity in favor of an ideologized understanding based on paradoxes or exaggerations.

We refer specifically to the approaches that isolate religion from its political framework (its current political functions as an ideology) or from culture and the cultural factor with its all-encompassing nature, as well as approaches that reduce all religions to one specific religion (Islam) and neglect the existence of other religions (Christian, Jewish, Baha'i, and so on), **and approaches that do not recognize sectarian affiliations whose effectiveness seems to be more powerful than general religious affiliation** (for example, sectarianism in Lebanon and Iraq and its political and cultural role, or the Shiite or Sunni sectarian affiliation that is most

present in the region's conflicts with its political content and overshadows the affiliation to the common religion, Islam). We must not overlook the fact that the role of religion-sect includes Islam and other religions, especially Christianity, where they have a tangible and influential presence (Lebanon, Egypt...), or Judaism (and we have an extremely radical model in the State of Israel which defines itself as a fundamentally religious state).

Religion is not an essence that remains static, fixed with time, nor is it a principle that explains (almost) everything; it is rather a social, historical, and cultural phenomenon that needs to be interpreted as part of its changing context and current functions, and should not be dealt with as a fixed, simple, and flat reality.

Is change starting to take place after the Arab Spring?

About half of the Arab youth (49%) say that religion is losing its influence in the Middle East: "I agree with those who say that religion has lost a lot of its influence after the Arab revolutions." This is how **Rami** (an Egyptian poet of Nubian origin living in Cairo) answers, describing the revolutions as being originally a revolution against political constants and intellectual postulates. As a result, groups of youth expressed their religious doubts, and some of them even publicly declared their actual abandonment of religion, citing "the widespread abandonment of hijab that Egyptian society witnessed and is still witnessing, which began timidly in the months following the revolution and then soon spread in the governorates, without reaching the villages where hijab is prevailing as a cultural symbol rather than a religious one." Assessment varies from one country to another. **Sanaa**, a Tunisian feminist, sees that Tunisia's secularism under Bourguiba and Ben Ali was like a fig leaf that obscures a religious culture deeply rooted in the people and emerged on the surface after the revolution (2011). **Mohammad** (Libyan journalist) believes that the revolution in Libya led to the questioning of all prevalent beliefs, be them religious, tribal, or attitudes towards women.

Religiosity characteristics in opinion polls

The distinction between **social religiosity and politicized and ideologized religiosity** is necessary in order to understand the role of religion in society. In the Arab Opinion Index report 2019-20⁶, 40% of respondents defined a religious person as a person who regularly performs religious duties (**ritual aspect**) and 30% considered that the most important characteristics of a religious person are moral such as honesty and integrity (**ethical aspect**), while about 25% gave priority to how a person treats others (good treatment, respect for kinship with relatives and family - **social-relational aspect**). It should also be noted that religious faith and religious ideology are both closely related to sectarian divisions, as we rarely find religiosity in its pure religious form as much as we find it in its sectarian-denominational form.

In short, we see that religion is not the first and sole determinant that acts independently from other factors. Rather, the role of religion can be interpreted through the political and social history of the country in question, as well as the characteristics of its political system, political crises, and other developments. The current religiosity (Islamic in particular) is therefore different than the inherited religiosity. It is a very contemporary religiosity that is another manifestation of globalization and the post nation-state era.

Hanan, a young Jordanian computer engineer, questions the **religiosity of male youth, and describes it as a selective, formal religiosity** that only aims to enhance their presence in society as religious youth, and seeks primarily to tighten control over women. Although the patriarchal culture is completely sufficient to impose male domination on women, religion adds to that domination a sacred and irresistible power that weakens women's resistance, often freezing it completely.

This function of religion – cementing culture, behavior, customs, and traditions on one hand,

⁶The Arab Index, source citée. Ces résultats s'appliquent à la période entre 2012 et 2020.

and reinforcing political power, social power, or any other power on the other– is replicated in all fields. We observe its most visible and extreme forms in the virtual space, where the most extreme religious perceptions are frequently used in order to justify prejudices of all sorts.

3. Gender equality

“...I was threatened with divorce when I wanted to take off the hijab, and my husband found the full support of the males in my family. The strange thing is that my husband does not pray, and he drinks Arak (a kind of alcohol), but he does not leave the prayer beads from his hand and invokes God in all his dialogues as if he believes that his actions are inspired by God!”

Hanan - Computer engineer, Jordan.

The superior attitude towards women, their status and roles is a major characteristic of the ideologies of ruling authorities, primarily due to political considerations. It is not possible to consider the current discrimination against women and the continuous quest to control them and their bodies as a linear extension of inherited traditions from previous eras. First and foremost, it reflects contemporary ideas and practices that serve current political functions, the **patriarchal ideology being a fundamental component of the structure of power in these countries, where the ruler borrows the image of the father (denying citizenship), and the father is granted an authority similar to the ruler's in controlling his family members, especially the women and younger members.** This authoritarian trade-off replaces male dominance over females in the private sphere with the authority of a tyrant over a society as a whole and over men specifically in the public sphere. Therefore, **any prejudice to the patriarchal authority in the private space (family, extended family, clan, tribe, immediate local domain) constitutes a direct threat to the legitimacy of the ruler and his regime, posing a risk of disruption.** Controlling women in the private and public spheres is a necessity when intending to restrict democracy and human rights in the state and society.

Women and the Arab Spring

Many wrote for instance, about **women and girls harassment being totally absent in sit-in squares**, including in a country like Egypt where this phenomenon is normally widespread. The lesson learned is: **when hundreds of thousands of citizens took to the streets during the revolution days, harassment of women and girls disappeared. And when people left the streets, this phenomenon returned**, and was even provoked systematically to keep women away from the streets and regain control over the public sphere.

Two lessons can be drawn from these facts:

- **First**, the assumption that harassment is a popular culture is wrong;
- **Second**, expelling women and preventing them from having an effective presence in the public space was a preparatory measure to pave the way for the regain of authoritarian control over the streets.

Hanin (from Jordan) says: “I lived my life in my family home negotiating with my father over my most basic rights, starting with my engineering studies, which were met with stiff resistance, and more recently with my desire to run for local elections, for which I was subjected to the most severe forms of physical violence by my older brother. Now my husband plays the role of my father and my male brothers. My negotiating skills with my husband have developed, but in the end I live according to the standards he sets for me, and the society before him.” In this case, Hanin was subjected to violence when she tried to seek a role in the public sphere (running for local elections), as this is par excellence a male's sphere that emphasizes the political function of patriarchy in perpetuating the clannish-familial foundation of the political power structure at the national level. This in addition to women's public renouncement of the prevailing tradition that is difficult to tolerate, and the choice of studying engineering, whose negative effects on the family image and damages can be limited to its surroundings.

Women's rights are inherently a sexual matter

These attitudes and debates raise questions about the nature of the intellectual and cultural background that underpins them. Two points are worth noting in this regard:

- **First**, whatever the subject under discussion is (familial, personal, economic, political, etc.), it turns into a **sexual topic** (and moral, based on the vocabulary used by people with such beliefs), as if women are sexual beings by nature and essence, which dominates all aspects of a woman's activity and individual and social life.
- **Second**, sexuality, which is considered a moral affair, is in turn a religious matter par excellence, so the **link is directly made from any position related to women to sex and ethics, and then to religion**.

Such situations emerge in their most extreme form in the virtual space, where there is no censorship, and where male domination is shamelessly flaunted.

4- Democracy, citizenship, and human rights

All Arab spring revolutions sought one direct political demand, i.e., to overthrow regimes and rulers. This demand intensifies the purpose of the movement which inevitably uses political change as a gateway towards achieving the ultimate objective of building the modern democratic civil state. Contrary to the prevailing stereotype, neither the religious idea, national idea nor social-class idea was the strongest and truest expression of citizen choices in these countries, which **completely undermines the idea of Arab exception and democratic malfunction**. The spontaneous and natural choice of the people who managed to liberate themselves from the pressure and coercion imposed on them was constitutional democracy, justice, and rights. As for other options that were previously and are still prevailing today in more than one country, they are imposed and incidental, and not the other way round.

Democracy in Opinion Polls and Studies

According to the Arab Opinion Index 2019-20⁷, 89% of Arab citizens are able to provide a content-based definition. It showed that 76% supported democracy, while 17% were against it, and 74% considered the democratic system as the most suitable for their countries. The impediment to democratic transition is partly due to the historical context, starting from the first renaissance era (end of the 19th century) to the **marginalization of (political and social) liberalism and the prioritization of the group over the individual, which consolidated non-democratic practices and culture in society and adversely affected the formation of an alternative culture**. Undermining religious reform movement in favor of the subordination of religious institutions to political power paved the way for the revival of conservative and hard-line perceptions of religion. We witness an extreme manifestation of this in the virtual space in debates about the values of freedom, tolerance, extremism, terrorism and other similar issues related to the cultural dimension of democratic transformation.

5- Globalization and consumerist culture

Approaching culture in South Mediterranean Arab countries by limiting it to the traditional, conservative, and inherited component defies the truth. There are other "cultures and discourses" that are closer to the **values of classical modernity, citizenship, and human rights**. The "consumerist globalization culture" is also widespread and coexists with the conservative component. Instagram presents an image of society and youth different from the image of the religious fanatic, those who boast about their group and traditions and do not appreciate their importance as an individual, or who prioritize their citizenship and their social and political effectiveness. **Here we are at the core of the globalized culture of consumerism, which is one of the components of the true picture of South Mediterranean societies and culture(s).**

The report analyzed Instagram content in Palestine, Algeria, and Tunisia, and concluded that the globalized culture of consumerism is widespread in these countries. A young man (Farouk) and young woman (Marwa) who post entertaining, social, general and marketing topics on their Instagram pages have around 5 million followers. Becky's page from Tunisia, which promotes cosmetics, has 1.4 million followers; the two sisters, Haya and Maram from Palestine, have one million followers; Mahmoud Al-Issawi from Palestine has also 1.8 million followers, etc. When we compare these pages with the AJ+ and all its capabilities - a regional-international page with 11 million followers supported by a media corporation (Al Jazeera) and regulating parties with huge capabilities, we realize that it only has twice the number of two Algerians followers (Farouk and Marwa), noting that the social media pages analyzed by this report had the highest number of extremist comments on religion, identity, hostility to the West, and rejection of gender equality and democracy, etc. It is also worth mentioning that the fact that some of these page owners wear hijab was not a determinant preventing these owners from being part of the consumerist culture, but was rather a factor that naturally coexisted with it. Consequently, unilateral interpretations of the hijab as a coherent cultural expression of the lifestyle are in a way reductionist. All of this should prompt us to question the stereotype that assumes that intolerant thinking in its various manifestations is the true and almost exclusive representation of Arab societies and their culture. This chapter adopts the "spatial" approach to the analysis and includes two case studies. The first is about the old city of Casablanca (Morocco) and focuses on the development of the ancient city, its tangible and intangible heritage, and relevant public policies. The second is about Tripoli (Lebanon) and focuses on identity problems and

the stereotypical image of the city as a stronghold of religious extremism, shedding light on the cultural vitality that contradicts it.

⁷ Arab Opinion Index 2019-20, previously cited source

Chapter 4: Morocco and Lebanon case studies ("Spatial" approach)

A - The old city of Casablanca

The old city has an important symbolic role, as it represents a key component of the city's identity, history, urban, cultural, and social heritage. The changes that occurred in its position in the urban fabric, and its relationship with the modern part of the city underline important aspects of government and popular interaction with culture, considering the living representation of historical culture the city embodies, and given the transformations that have taken place during the transition from ancient to modern and globalized cities.

Perspective towards the old city, its function and value changed over **two phases**:

- The **first phase** was characterized by a maximized understanding of modernity and contemporarity coupled with a decline of interest in the old city's cultural and heritage value and its economic role, especially with the expansion of trade and modern economic, service, and industrial activities, in contrast to the craftsmanship and traditional activities that used to distinguish the old city. During this phase, infrastructure and quality of life in the old city deteriorated, and its urban features were neglected or destroyed and replaced, where possible in favor of new commercial and economic activities.

- **Second phase was marked by a revived interest in the old city** for two main reasons: first, the need to avoid social and political instability resulting from deteriorating conditions, marginalization, and severe social inequality; second, the rediscovery of the importance of heritage and culture as an economic activity and a key tourist attraction.

In this context, a project to rehabilitate the old city was launched in 2011. This project was associated with a number of advantages, given

the significance of its strategy and the fact that it targeted buildings as well as individuals. However, it did not completely break away from contemporary development approaches that are marked by economic purposes.

Back to the holistic context

Some of the renewed interest in tangible and intangible heritage and culture does not necessarily reflect an appreciation of culture in itself, nor an elevation of its developmental, modernizing, and transformative role in society. In this sense, the importance of the transformative function of culture declines in favor of other functions, often economic and commercial, and sometimes political and social, in the service of existing patterns of relations stability. This is not limited to national governments, but the entry of donors, international companies, and international Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) to the "cultural investment" scene often intersects with this trend or at least coexists with it. This trend is faced with emerging objectional phenomena, some of which are direct and political (for example, the February 20 Movement) while some take the form of widespread factional or popular cultural expressions that carry political, social, or cultural undertones of an opposing nature.

Containment strategy

Civil and cultural activists in Morocco stress the close interlinkages between developments in these two fields and their forms of expression, work and activities on one hand, and the course of general political developments in the country on the other hand. These developments laid the foundations for new opportunities for democratic transition, but risk jeopardizing this path at the same time. Political transformations after 2000 attempted to accommodate and institutionalize "rebellious" cultural expressions (in the cultural sense) and allocate a place for them in the government's

"... Funding, whether governmental or foreign, has become an indispensable need for theatrical cultural activity in particular, given the budgets it requires... Today, the overall cultural climate has changed, new actors have entered the scene, and different criteria for evaluating success and effectiveness emerged. One result of that... is the increased polarization at the expense of convergence in middle common grounds, which social media strongly contribute to, in addition to other factors, including school curricula and political transformations."

Naima - Theatrist from Morocco

directions by primarily adopting a containment policy instead of direct confrontation, restriction, and prohibition. This stance was translated in a growing official interest in cultural initiatives which also grew in number (such as the Boulevard Festival, a street arts festival in Casablanca, the Mawazine Festival in Rabat, the Fez Festival of Sacred Music, the Essaouira Gnaoua World Music Festival, the Marrakech and Tangiers festivals, etc.). These festivals enjoy official sponsorship from central or local authorities and have prominent public and political figures occupying major positions in their administrations.

At the popular level, free artistic activity reached its peak in 2011 during the period between February 20 Movement and the formation of the new government, after the constitution was amended in September and the Islamist Justice and Development Party took over power post elections. During these transitional and restriction-free months, all kinds of creative and cultural activities saw a spontaneous spike in the streets and public spaces. Groups started to organize shows and showcase their artworks; some even organized open poetic readings and theatrical activities. That period witnessed an unprecedented activity on social media platforms and initiatives of all types (as it was the case in different countries during the first and second wave of the Arab Spring). This movement was brought under control after government formation, with occurrences of direct ban.

Culture of margins

Neighborhoods and marginalized groups were part of this context. Stadiums were the incubator and catalyst of other forms of artistic expression through the chants of football fans. This phenomenon was replicated in other North African countries (Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt) where stadiums provided a space for dissident political expression that sometimes preluded or actively interacted with popular street movements as soon as they erupted.

Summary

In the pre-1999 decades, **civil and cultural activists did not conceal the political and transformative nature of their movement and activities in two complementary directions: democracy (at the political level) and the values of modernity (at the cultural and social levels)**. The transformative function was the most prevalent. It was not restricted by the work of NGOs and mainstream-type associations, nor did these activities consist of projects funded by donors. The veteran generation of activists underscores that the previously evident separation lines between the cultural movement and the authority have become ambiguous and overlapping today; there has also been a significant change in the nature of the players' working methods, as well as in the manifestations and expressions of the cultural movement.

In this context, four developments are worth noting:

1. Strong involvement of the state apparatus in the fields of civil and cultural action and the assimilation of some of this action and its influential players.
2. Strong involvement of international players and their affiliated institutions, particularly cultural entities or international NGOs.
3. Growing cultural confrontation within the society itself, precisely between modern and conservative trends in the social and cultural field.

4. Rise of the “project” approach, funding, and partnerships with governmental and external actors, along with the emergence of atypical cultural phenomena, whether on the virtual space, in stadiums, or in neighborhoods, leading to a culture of the marginalized.

On the other side that seeks to reclaim the transformative role of culture, the popular movement (February 20 Movement in Morocco) represents an atypical cultural case in two senses. First, the movement presented directly the values of modernity, democratic transformation, citizenship, and human rights. Second, it constituted in itself a space for innovative and popular cultural and creative activities, towards conspicuous democratic transformation and culture of rights.

B- Tripoli (Lebanon) culture against stereotypes

Tripoli - Lebanon, at some point also called Lebanon’s “Kandahar”, was selected as a case study because of its stereotype as an incubator of terrorism as well as for poverty and marginalization that characterize it. This stereotype of Tripoli raises complex problems of both social and cultural nature about its identity and image compared to its actual reality. In the October 17 Revolution, Tripoli was also called “the bride of the revolution”, as it reflected an image that goes completely against the (Kandaharian) stereotype, in a prominent shift that calls for contemplation.

Context

The stereotypical discourse painted an image of Tripoli marked by three features: **isolation from the rest of Lebanon, an Islamic religious character, poverty and marginalization**. However, an objective look at the city’s path and reality reveals a decades-long vibrant social and cultural life. The city is home to **an exceptional cultural movement**, both at the level of local newspapers (such as Al-Bayan, Al-Insha’, Al-Raqib, Al-Tamaddun, etc.) or at the level of its cultural centers, annual book fairs, and cultural and artistic activities of all kinds,

whether before, during or after the 1975 War, albeit with varying players and institutions. Nevertheless, the repercussions of the conflict between Jabal Mohsen and Bab al-Tabbaneh (in its both rounds in early 80’s, then between 2007-2014) inflicted significant and serious damage to the political, social, and cultural life, exacerbated by some profit-oriented financiers, as well as a number of inadequate international projects for cultural heritage conservation.

One of the great losses endured by the city was the closure of cinemas in Al Tal Square and along the boulevard that separates the old and the new parts of the city. Cinema halls in poor neighborhoods were closed before that, but the closure was enforced across the city in the 80’s for security reasons. The Rivoli Cinema, a heritage building, was later demolished despite protests, and the historic “Allnja” theater had previously been demolished for commercial-real estate reasons (compare with the old city of Casablanca).

Some clubs and cultural centers maintained a reasonable amount of activity throughout this period, with the entry of new players operating based on more modern rules. In this regard, we mention **Nawfal Palace**, which hosted in the past seminars, lectures, training workshops, and educational and musical theatrical performances, and hosts a public library for students. Another important cultural edifice is **Al Rabita El Sakafia**, which is a prominent center in Tripoli’s cultural history and was and is still organizing the annual book fair. Besides these two institutions, the city was home to other eminent institutions, including the **University’s Club, the North Lebanon Cultural Council**, and other widespread associations active in all fields, including women, youth, and environmental associations, cinema clubs, and a distinguished club for classical music, not to mention theater groups and cultural activities conducted in all educational institutions.

With the recent wave of **cultural action supported by political parties** that also enjoy international

support, the **Safadi Cultural Center** was established in the Dam wal Farz area and the Armenian Archaeological School building in **El Mina was converted into a house of art** and later into a cultural center. These two institutions are active, but politically connected with local political leaders (Mohammed Al-Safadi and Najib Mikati) and operate according to rules different from the traditional cultural work that the city knew in the past.

Tripoli's **historical urban heritage and ancient markets attract great interest in the city and still constitute a major commercial hub**. The old city (Tripoli Citadel, Barsbay Tower in the port, the khans, the hammams, the old neighborhoods and their crafts - soap making, copper making, pottery in El Mina, etc.) was the subject of Tripoli cultural heritage revival project funded by the World Bank. This project provoked a major controversy between supporters and opponents, and was criticized for its many loopholes, including its lack of realism. The project was also criticized for overlooking the importance of linking culture to people's lives and livelihoods beyond the mere restoration of buildings. Ultimately, the project failed to achieve the desired outcome.

Moreover, **Tripoli International Fair**, which was **designed by the international Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer**, represents a significant modern heritage in the city. The fair, whose construction began in the early 70's, boasts a stunning engineering design, but was left incomplete and neglected to this day. It is a glaring example of the neglect and marginalization that the city endures, although it is an unparalleled landmark in Lebanon.

The bride of the Revolution

The October Revolution is a major turning point in awareness and practice in Lebanon, and this is also true for Tripoli. However, **its new image - the bride of the revolution - was in some sense latent or dominated by the previous stereotype, which turned out to be unilateral and to a large**

extent forced on it. The October 17 Revolution contributed to highlighting, refining, and developing the new image, but it did not create it out of this air.

Artistic and cultural expressions

The image of an extremist city expresses itself first and foremost through the ban of various arts and artistic expressions. Tripoli has known modern forms of artistic expression that transcended previous conventional forms of cultural work. One of the most significant artistic manifestations was the establishment of the "Al Fayhaa Choir," an international choir (a cappella) that changed the lives of dozens of Tripoli's youth, and painted a completely different picture of extremism and seclusion. The choir was founded in 2003 and brought Tripoli's name to the global scene. Another no less important experience is the **"Tripoli Film Festival"**, an annual event launched by Elias Khallat in 2014 as the Jabal Mohsen-Bab al-Tabbaneh clashes came to an end and the implementation of the security plan in Tripoli had started. This festival contributed to changing the profile of Tripoli as a marginalized city and placing it on the map of major cultural events in Lebanon, with regional and global visibility. The festival brought cinema to marginalized neighborhoods where people live in extreme poverty, by launching a new culture in these neighborhoods, i.e., "Cinema

"... I joined the choir ten years ago. Prior to that, my life in Tripoli was only about going out to the cafe, playing "cards", and smoking. I was also inclined to extremist ideas... During Jabal Mohsen - Bab al-Tabbaneh battles, I used to train young men to carry weapons, and I boasted about my knowledge of martial arts. Today I feel very proud when I talk about my experience, after I lived a profound transformation from a young man who was going to become unemployed or terrorist to a young man who is currently a musician, teaches music, and spreads a culture of peace, coexistence, and diversity. This transformation was not easy."

Muhammad Mawas (35 years old), is today a music teacher and has an institute in Tripoli where he teaches music to children.

on the Stairs". The initiative consisted of open-air shows on internal stairs in Jabal Mohsen, Bab

al-Tabbaneh, and al-Shaarani neighborhood, where some carefully selected films were shown, addressing young men and women in these areas and disseminating the cinema culture in popular neighborhoods.

Civil work too

Recurrent clashes between Jabal Mohsen, al-Tabbaneh, al-Mankoubin, and al-Qubba left their mark on all aspects of life in Tripoli. They also catalyzed many initiatives that opted for the cultural and civil approach to deal with this violent and sharp division in the city and address its effects, especially with the cessation of military battles and the implementation of the security plan in 2014, which paved the way for field work in the region and with its youth.

The "**Ruwwad Al Tanmeya**" association is located on Syria Street on the front lines separating Jabal Mohsen and Bab al-Tabbaneh. The center has two entrances, one to the Jabal Mohsen side and the other to the Tabbaneh side. This is a practical arrangement imposed by the location of the association, allowing the youth there to return to the area in which they live without being exposed to danger in case clashes erupted and they were caught in the middle. The activities of this association, which offered education grants to young men and women in exchange for social work between the two conflict zones, contributed to transforming the lives of a considerable number of persons in the area.

And so did March association, which chose a cultural approach to achieve similar goals in the same region through "**Kahwatna**" (Our Coffee) project in 2016, an artistic-cultural café on the front lines that brings together young men and women from Jabal Mohsen, Bab al-Tabbaneh, and al-Qubba that are most affected by the local conflict, and used it as a launching pad for dialogue sessions, artistic and theatrical activity, and open meetings between young people and with well-known Lebanese activists and artists. The president of the association, **Léa Baroudi**,

explains that "art has been able to transform hostility into friendship between the people of the two regions through our coffee. They initially gathered to co-author and perform a play inspired by their lives entitled "**Love and War on the Roof**" (2015). Most of the young people who took part in the play had previously participated in the fighting during the violent rounds of clashes in the city. This was followed by activities of various kinds, including a cultural and artistic festival on the front lines that attracted residents of Tripoli's other neighborhoods who had not visited Bab al-Tabbaneh for years.

Sit-in activities

Tripoli was the first city to bring down images of its traditional "leaders" as well as its current and former deputies and ministers without exception, expressing a renouncement of traditional loyalty. This is a phenomenon unmatched by any other region of Lebanon during the revolution days. The sit-in square in Tripoli has maintained a renewable and uninterrupted mass momentum over a period of weeks and months. It also witnessed various cultural activities and initiatives, such as the initiative of the activist Obeida Tikriti (29 years old) to establish a dialogue tent adjacent to Al-Nour Square called "**Square and Space**", the first among many dialogue tents set up at the same square, which later shifted to virtual dialogue seminars.

Participation of Tripoli's women

Women participation in Tripoli bears an additional significance. Tripoli, just like all Lebanon, is ruled by a patriarchal mindset that restricts the life, freedom and role of women. Besides, the conservative and extremist religious identity imposed on women during the previous decades subjected their participation to further repression and oppression, in addition to the prevailing idea that poor and popular communities have little interest in issues such as the emancipation of women and the promotion of women's rights, especially if poverty is combined with wars between neighborhoods and ongoing conflicts that increase the possibility of domestic violence,

disintegration and countless other problems. The transformations brought about by October 17 uprising in Tripoli affected the situation of women, as their presence in the public sphere emerged across regions and classes. During the uprising, specifically on November 10, Tripoli witnessed a large women's march (with the participation of thousands of male and female demonstrators).

Summary

Tripoli's example highlights the stark contrast between the stereotyped images of the city and its inhabitants that were widespread and seemed axiomatic, and the reality of the city and its actual identity. The stereotype dominance is not usually unfounded or entirely contrived. However, this stereotype suffers from two major flaws. **First**, it ignores the circumstances that led to the formation of this stereotype, which were often incidental and coercive (armed civil conflict in the city of regional political roots that has flared up intermittently between 1980 and 2014). **Second**, it relied on a falsified history of the city and its rich and diverse cultural and urban present for current political uses.

However, the example of Tripoli shows that the **natural state that expresses the true choices of people only consists of diversity, freedom and culture, and that extremism is imposed, forced, and temporary**. What applies to Tripoli is likely to apply to all cities and rural areas in all the countries of the region, as shown by some of the evidence in the thematic section of the report.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Obstacles

The research concluded that there are multiple obstacles preventing culture from playing an effective role in democratic transformation. Some of **these obstacles fall within the realm of culture** itself and consist of strategies of cultural hegemony, insularity and isolation, intolerance, the prevalence of stereotypes, or even the politicization of cultures and their instrumental use in the service of political aims sought by authorities or political parties.

Additionally, **there are obstacles from outside the field of culture**, the first of which is related to the political authority itself, as the relationship between culture and political authority is always under the sway of the latter, which has the upper hand in the country. The political authority “does not (...) look approvingly to culture due to a feeling (a well grounded one) that culture represents a parallel authority of equal power, materially and symbolically. This is combined with its awareness that the project of a new political authority always starts with culture.”⁸ Censorship is a typical practice adopted by the authority in such situations (starting with prior and subsequent censorship and ending with self-censorship as a self-protective behavior), in addition to containment strategies, which disrupt the transformative functions of culture and place them under the authorities’ control generally in a “soft and legal” manner. In extreme cases, authorities resort to direct repression that takes forms of varying intensity and cruelty.

Nevertheless, the current globalization contributes to disrupting the transformative functions of culture and instill a consumption-oriented drive in it. Globalization aims to consolidate all cultures in favor of the consumer marketing of lifestyles, in addition to marginalizing and obliterating cultures of limited spread and capabilities.

General conclusions

Below are some of the report’s main conclusions:

1. Generalizations and **reliance on a single source to assess the cultural situation and its relation to democratic transformation must be avoided**, no matter how important the source is.
2. There are discrepancies in the prevailing image of culture between the various sources. **Scientific observation and the analysis of Arab revolutions discourse and facts provide a more positive picture. It is likely that the situation representing the choices of people who are free from oppression and pressure, especially when they took to the streets in large numbers, clearly tends more towards secular ideas, citizenship, rights, and dignity than indicated in field studies and opinion polls.** The latter also reflects a diversity of more balanced trends than in the analysis of social media content, where extremist attitudes prevail.
3. Analyzing social media (including Instagram) is also in disagreement with the stereotype of the unilateral dominance of conservative and traditional culture in the virtual space, and supports the notion of the heavy presence of a globalized consumerist culture as well.
4. The research reveals large inconsistencies in the system of values and ideas adopted by different groups and segments, which makes generalized judgments misleading.
5. **Movements that have civic orientations and share the values of citizenship, human rights, and development do not seem to be organized and strongly active in the virtual**

⁸- Belkeziz, Abdulilah, “In the beginning was culture”, Afriqia al-Sharq Ed., Casablanca, 1989

space and to a certain extent in the area of studies and research, but they were - based on our observations - the strongest and most prevailing movements in times of spontaneous liberation from restrictions and coercion, and during massive popular presence in the street. It seems that the withdrawal from the street and the transition from an impulsive movement to institutionalized action (including through elections) limited the influence of these ideas in favor of other patterns. We do not have a conclusive answer explaining this phenomenon; it requires reflection and in-depth research in which the analysis would not be limited to the use of concepts of representative and participatory democracy, since the Arab Spring revolutions seem to be closer to a form of direct democracy. This aspect in particular requires verification and further research.

Recommendations for the civil society actors

1. It is necessary to acquire deeper knowledge of cultural factors when organizing any activity in a particular environment, to visualize the direct impact of the project and identify the potential challenges associated with these factors. Stereotypes in prevailing thinking must be broken without falling into counter stereotyping. This requires working with local groups to determine priorities based on local realities without imposing a stereotypical projected view of the environment in question.
2. Civil society actors should be aware of the risks and repercussions of the aggressive virtual space at times, which may negatively affect the success of a project that attempts to break stereotypes and prejudices in favor of spreading the culture of rights.

3. Civil society actors should start off from the idea that **people yearn for change and want diversity**, and that their perception of their own identity is complex and open to all possibilities of development, while **founding their action on historical and societal contexts** as well as successful experiences in the field.



Culture, Development, and Social Transition Towards Democracy Summary

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