

Youth, Social Media, and Social Justice

Discussant: Sharan Grewal (Princeton University)

This panel featured four exciting papers under the broad theme of youth, social media, and social justice.

Mark Thompson's "Societal Transformation, Public Opinion, and Saudi Youth" examined the political attitudes of youth in Saudi Arabia. Leveraging a national survey as well as interviews, focus groups, and a survey of students at King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, Thompson contends there has been a political awakening among Saudi youth, driven largely by a youth bulge, rising education levels, and growing unemployment. Operating through twitter and other forms of social media, these youth have facilitated the creation of an online civil society that is demanding increased governmental accountability and has, according to Thompson, pushed the regime to promote greater transparency over its policies.

Moving to Saudi Arabia's neighbors, **Alanoud AlSharekh's** "Social Media and the Struggle for Authority in the GCC" traces the impact of social media in the Gulf, especially Kuwait. Alanoud observes that while social media has provided a new vehicle for voicing criticism of the regime and cultural traditions, it has also led to the emergence of social media stars amassing thousands of followers and promoting themselves, their social commentary, and often commercial products. While online political activists have been repressed by the regime, some of these social media stars have been coopted, serving as the regime's new public relations arms in exchange for lucrative contracts.

Zeyad Elkelani, in his "Intergenerational Value Change in Egypt," seeks to complicate several commonly held assumptions about youth in Egypt during the Arab Spring. Drawing on survey data from the Arab Barometer and the World Values Survey, Elkelani suggests that Egyptian youth were more fragmented and materialistic than we may have expected. Elkelani leverages these results to push for reconsidering Ronald Inglehart's model of intergenerational value change in developing countries.

Finally, **Soha Bayoumi** in her "Egyptian Doctors' Fight for Health and Social Justice: The Paradox of the Activist-Expert," focuses on the mobilization of Egyptian doctors before and after the 2011 revolution. She traces how the doctors' mobilization against attempts to privatize the industry in 2007 foreshadowed and influenced the doctors' entrance into revolutionary protests in January 2011. Drawing on this case study of the Egyptian doctors, Bayoumi contends that political factors cannot be divorced from economic ones in explaining mobilization and revolution.