

JORDAN

Creative Street Activism in Jordan: Towards Innovative Civic Engagement and Accountability

This essay introduces concrete experiences with tangible results that show best practices and creative activism tools that promote innovative civic engagement and social accountability created and implemented by Leaders of Tomorrow organization in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Leaders of Tomorrow is a youth-focused non-profit organization that has been active in Jordan and regionally in the Middle East and North Africa since 2007. Leaders of Tomorrow builds a community of young Arab leaders who are educated, critical-thinking, initiative-takers, and capable of serving their local communities creatively. After founding Leaders of Tomorrow, the author developed Diwanieh, an innovative social initiative, and FADFED, a creative qualitative research methodology, in 2010 and 2012, respectively. FADFED and Diwanieh were created to combat elitism in the socio-political life, lack of trust in governmental officials and institutions, restricted freedom of expression, and a lack of critical and genuine civic participation which continues to plague Jordan and the MENA region. MENA citizens often experience political, administrative, and social institutions' failures in instilling accountability and trust in policy and change makers. In result, citizens continue to regard their governments as corrupt, ineffective, and unreliable because they are unengaged in decision-making processes and have few opportunities to provide feedback and seek accountability (Brix, Lust & Woolcock, 2015). Fortunately, FADFED and Diwanieh seek to solve these issues of importance and have successfully been used as tools for increasing social accountability of institutions and social engagement of citizens in Jordan and the MENA region as a whole. It also increased the grassroots motivation and incentives to participate in the public life.