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# MARGINALIZED, CHANGEMAKER, WORKFORCE, MIGRANT

An Exploratory Case Study of Youth Representations in the Danish Arab Partnership Programme 2022-2027

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# Abstract

Youth is more and more often emphasized in development policies that highlight this specific target group as essential to achieving a broad range of development objectives. This tendency has been termed a "global turn to youth" and is by some researchers understood to be driven by the promotion of neoliberal agendas.

The present thesis sets out to examine whether, and if so how, this global tendency of mobilizing youth in development underpinned by neoliberal logics takes place in national development policies. Through an exploratory case study of Denmark's official development cooperation with the Middle East and North Africa, the Danish Arab Partnership Programme (DAPP), it is analyzed how youth is represented in that context. This is done by engaging in a What's the Problem Represented to be-analysis of the DAPP 2022-2027 strategic framework. The analysis draws on the theories of representations, generationing, intersectionality, and New Political Economy of Youth. Based on these findings, it is discussed whether the identified representations of youth can be understood in relation to neoliberal logics, and consequently what this entails in terms of the understanding of development, and the objectives and strategies following from this.

The thesis concludes that youth is very present in the 2022-2027 DAPP strategic framework and that this presence is centered around four representations, namely youth as marginalized, youth as agents of change, youth as workforce, and youth as potential migrants. Together, these representations form the basis of an understanding of development, in which the legitimacy of youth as subjects of development is linked to employment – and whereby investments in enterprises on market terms – are positioned as key strategies. In a discussion of the effects following from this, it is suggested that mistaken assumptions have led to the application of a potentially ineffective, and certainly, risky means to achieve the vision of "[a] better life for young people in the Middle East and North Africa", and it is questioned whether the strong emphasis on employment is really in the best interests of youth, or rather a vehicle to protect Danish national interests. Finally, it is argued that national development programs have long been criticized for promoting neoliberal and Global North interests, and it is cautiously suggested, that the nexus between youth, employment and migration identified in the framework can be understood as new in that regard. However, further research is necessary to conclude whether this applies to other national development policies as well.

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# 1. Introduction

Youth and youth-related issues are increasingly embraced in development policies as categories and key issues to be addressed in order to combat problems ranging from poverty and global inequality to climate crisis and terrorism (see for example World Bank Group, 2007; EuroMed, n.d.; International Labour Organization, n.d.).

As stated by United States Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton at the conference *Youth Rising: Aspirations and Expectations* taking place in Tunisia in the wake of the overthrow of dictator Ben Ali: "Young people are at the heart of today's great strategic opportunities and challenges, from rebuilding the global economy to combating violent extremism to building sustainable democracies" (Clinton, 2012). Such perception is quite emblematic of the scope and character embodying the way many development policies are today employing the category of youth. This raises questions about what youth as a category comes to represent and which implications follow from this.

This thesis sets out to answer these questions and scrutinize the uncritical and unambiguous focus on, and use of the category, 'youth' in a case study of Denmark's official development cooperation with the Middle East and North Africa, the Danish-Arab Partnership Program 2022-2027. Here the vision is "a better life for young people in the Middle East and North Africa (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(d), p. 13)".

As will be outlined further in the theory section, youth is by no means a natural or fixed group – it is quite the opposite – a socially constructed and discursively upheld category. Looking simply at chronological age, i.e., the number of years since one's birth, the definition varies broadly. United Nations (UN) apply the definition of 15-24 years old, however, this span is not used consistently (United Nations, 2018, p. 4). The African Youth Charter defines youth as those aged 15-35 years (African Union Commission, 2006, p. 3), and from the side of the EU, both definitions ranging from 13-30 years and 15-29 years can be found (European Commission, 2011; European Parliamentary Research Service, 2012). Adding to this is the dimension of age-normativity also evident in much policy. That is, frameworks imbued with expectations for how certain chronological ages ought to be performed. Furthermore, there is

the issue of how youth are conceived and what attributes are ascribed to them in different contexts.

Analyzing these constructions, here seen as political, is important, because it, despite being merely a discursive phenomenon, does have very real material consequences on the lives of those deemed 'youth' as well as on those excluded from the definition. This is especially the case in development policies where such distinctions can determine access to scarce economical resources.

Thus, I will explore different dimensions of the discursive construction of 'youth' in the present strategic framework of DAPP which all play into the establishment of a quite complex category based on age. In addition to an analysis of these youth representations, I will apply the perspective of New Political Economy of Youth to explore the case of DAPP as part of this global tendency to focus on youth. The point of departure for this thesis is therefore the following problem formulation:

> *How is 'youth' represented in the Danish-Arab Partnership Program 2022-2027 and how are neoliberal logics reflected in this?*

My aim is thus to shed light on the particular way in which youth is represented in the present case, and the logics underpinning this, to understand which meaning these representations convey, and to analyze, from a political economy perspective, which implications it might have. I will apply a What's the Problem Represented to be (WPR) approach through which I will identify and analyze different problematizations of 'youth' and issues that are positioned in relation to 'youth' in the DAPP 22-27 strategic framework.

The thesis is structured as follows: In the upcoming section, I will provide a brief introduction to the Danish Arab Partnership Program. Then follows a literature review that outlines, firstly, how youth has been, and still is, conceptualized in research, and secondly, the link between youth and development policies in a historical review of key documents and research thereof. After presenting my methods and analytical framework, I will proceed with the analysis. The analysis will be structured around four thematic areas that each represent a dominating figure related to youth in the document. These are: Youth as marginalized, youth as agents of change, youth as workforce, and youth as migrants. I will then join the findings

presented in the analysis, and, by applying the theory of New Political Economy of Youth, discuss whether these can be understood in relation to a neoliberal "turn to youth" (Sukarieh and Tannock, 2014, ch. 1, sec. 1, par. 5)[1]. I conclude by a discussion on the conception of development it entails, and the potential consequences following from this.

## 2. The Danish-Arab Partnership Program – a brief introduction

The Danish-Arab Partnership Program is Denmark's official development cooperation with the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and was established by the Danish government in 2003 following the events of 9/11. It was then named The Arab Initiative and based on findings made in the Arab Human Development Report 2002, the objective was to support processes of reform and democratization in North Africa and the Middle East and to strengthen dialogue between the MENA region and Denmark (Danish-Arab Partnership Programme, n.d.). DAPP falls under the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is guided by changing strategic frameworks and program documents, covering periods between 2-6 years.

The first activities were implemented in Egypt, Iran, Yemen, Jordan, Morocco, and Syria with a special focus on women, independent media, and civil society organizations (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005, p. 4). Since then, objectives and activities have changed, and in 2017 it was decided to relaunch the program under its present name and to focus activities in Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, and Morocco due to the more stable contexts these countries provided (Danish-Arab Partnership Programme, n.d.). In this thesis, the object of analysis is the 2022-2027 strategic framework, which was officially launched in September 2022, and which adopts youth as its primary target group (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(d), p. 13). The framework is centered around two thematic areas, namely human rights and inclusion, and youth employment and entrepreneurship (ibid., p. 3). Here, the definition of youth is those aged 15-35 years (ibid., p. 13).

The implementation of the Danish Arab Partnership Program is managed by Danish civil organizations to whom the task is granted through a tender round prior to each new program period. The present tender is divided according to the program's two thematic areas. The first, Human Rights and Inclusion is implemented by a consortium consisting of Dignity, KVINFO, the

[1] This source has been accessed as an e-book without page numbers and references will therefore include chapter (ch.), section (sec.), and paragraph (par.) instead.

Danish Institute for Human Rights, and International Media Support (Kieffer-Døssing, 2022). The latter, Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship, by Plan International Denmark, the Danish Chamber of Commerce, GAME, and ActionAid Denmark (ibid.).

Denmark's development cooperation with other countries is structured slightly differently, as these strategies are set on a country basis rather than regionally. In a review of country programs from the 12 "priority countries" of Danish development cooperation, a focus on youth was found to be encompassed broadly. For Burkina Faso, for instance, it is stated that: "A key ambition is to protect and create jobs, with a special emphasis on women and youth" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021 (a), p. 17). In Ethiopia, there is "a cross-cutting focus on the engagement of youth" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d., p. 13) and one of the objectives of the engagement with Somalia is to: "Contribute to poverty reduction through inclusive and sustainable, private sector-driven economic development and job creation with a special emphasis on women and youth" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018, p. 3). In a recently presented new strategic framework covering Denmark's development cooperation with its "Eastern Neighbors [in Europe, red.]", youth is likewise highlighted as a key target group (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022, p. 13). Furthermore, the official strategy for Danish development efforts which outlines the direction of Danish development aid in the period from 2022-2025 states that: "We will contribute to strengthening democratic institutions, including political parties, and, especially empowerment of women and young people, as an important part of democratic processes" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021 (b), p. 14) Thus, the focus on youth is not exclusively a feature of development cooperation with the MENA region, but to some degree seems to be of general concern.

# 3. Literature review

This section reviews existing research within the field of youth studies, and on the link between youth and development policies. The purpose is to position the thesis in relation to existing bodies of literature, and thereby to create an understanding of where and how it contributes to these debates. I will first review literature related to the broader field of youth studies, as this research has been rather influential for how youth is conceptualized today. Next, I will turn to research on the adoption of youth in development policies and conclude with a few points regarding my position and contribution in relation to this.

## 3.1. Conceptualizing and understanding youth

Much literature has been written on the nature of the time in life that is called youth, and the generation forming part of it. The field today known as youth studies is highly interdisciplinary and has its roots in disciplines such as sociology, criminology psychology, and human geography (Cöte, 2014, p. 527). I will here outline some of the major debates that have formed the way youth has been understood and researched since its formation as a recognized field of study at the beginning of the 20th century.

Overall, two strains of conceptualizing youth can be said to have dominated the field (Bersaglio et al., 2015, p. 59). The first is the conceptualization of youth as a life stage. This implies a focus on the inherent qualities of youth, as well as the actions and interventions required to react properly to this formative period and gain the best possible outcome for both the individual and society. The second is the conceptualization of youth as a social category. Here, concern is rather centered around the processes of construction and deconstruction, as well as the implications of changing social definitions of what, and who, the category entails (ibid.).

Regarding the first, Lerner and Steinberg (2004) account for the way that developmental psychological models were what first initiated the research of the life phase termed "adolescence". According to the two authors, the earliest of these accounts are characterized by a focus on deficit, using either nature (e.g., Hall, 1940 as cited in Lerner and Steinberg, 2004) or nurture (e.g. McCandless, 1961 as cited in Lerner and Steinberg, 2004) to explain the lacking capabilities, motivation, and crisis of identity associated with adolescence.

Characterized by a more relational approach centered around the relationship between youth and society, Pruitt (2020) accounts for a field of thought, the youth bulge theory, that gained traction in the 1990s and which is still used as an explanatory model for youth behavior, for example in relation to the Arab Uprisings in 2011 (see for example LaGraffe, 2012). The youth bulge theory originates from the field of geography and was promoted by scholars connected to the CIA and the US State Department who stated concerns regarding growing generations of young people in the Global South as an issue for American foreign- and security politics (Pruitt, 2020, p. 716). The theory proposes that large populations of youth generations in a nation is a crucial factors to consider in the prediction of conflict, riots, and general political instability (ibid, p. 717). This causality is accounted for in different ways, the two most

prominent being: First, the assumption that young people (and young men in particular) are inherently more prone to violence (ibid, p. 715). Second, as a consequence of poor economic and social conditions, e.g., the failure to efficiently integrate the big numbers of young people into society for example by providing a sufficient number of jobs. This, it is understood will lead to frustration and, consequently, civil unrest, instability and violence (ibid.).

Another widely accepted and applied theoretical account of youth, very different from the youth bulge theory, is positive youth development. Damon (2004) explains how it is centered around the principle of empowering and embracing youth. This, the movement argues, stands in opposition to an earlier pathologizing of youth that approached it from a foundational negative position: "Positive youth development contrasts with approaches that have focused on problems that some young people encounter while growing up – problems such as learning disabilities; affective disorders; antisocial conduct; low motivation and achievement; drinking, drug use, or smoking" (ibid., p. 14). The movement instead emphasizes the need to acknowledge and foster the capabilities of young people in order to fully encompass their potential. Youth is thus conceptualized as a resource rather than a burden and with a high degree of autonomy and responsibility for their communities: "The positive youth approach sees the child as a full partner in the community-child relation, bearing a full share of rights and responsibilities" (ibid., p. 22).

As will be pointed out in the analysis, both the youth bulge theory and the positive youth development inform the DAPP framework and therefore influence the representations of youth analyzed in the thesis.

Turning to the second type of conceptualization, youth as a social category, Phillip Mizen (2002) argues that youth is not best understood as a process of transition towards adulthood, but rather as "most fundamentally a question of state and age" (ibid., p. 6). Mizen thereby draws attention to the politics of youth, and the motivations from actors such as the state in defining, and thereby managing, youth as a discrete and distinctive social category (ibid.). Similarly, James E Cöte (2013), argues for the need for a political economy perspective in youth studies in order to be able to investigate the exploitative relationship between adults and youth (ibid., p. 528). Thus, he aligns with Mizen's argument that youth should be understood in relation to society and other age groups. Huijsmans et. al. (2014) take this point further, as they call for a "sociology of age" in which: "…we theorize and study empirically how age as a concept and institution is created, maintained, challenged, and transformed; how assumptions, and beliefs

about age in general and about particular age categories inform and are reinforced by social statuses, norms, roles, institutions, and social structures" (Laz, 1998, as cited in Huijsmans, 2016).

## 3.2. Youth in development policies

Having accounted for the broader strains of research on youth, I will here provide an introduction to the history of youth in development policies. In so doing, I wish to contextualize DAPP in relation to other policy initiatives that focus on youth, providing insights into the extent and character of the youth and development agenda. This will be done by outlining key documents and events that have been influential. In instances where I have identified relevant research on specific policies, I will account for these as well.

As pointed out in the introduction, the definition of youth is far from universal, and the following is thus a reflection hereof, including documents targeting a wide array of people, all categorized as youth.

Policies targeting youth can be identified as emerging already in the middle of the 20th century, yet youth programming and policy intensified in the 1980s and took off by the beginning of the new century (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2015, ch. 1, sec. 1, par. 1).

In 1965, the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Promotion Among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding Among Peoples. The declaration is centered around the education and formation of youth in accordance with ideals such as peace and respect. It expresses a strong belief in youth and its importance for the future, "[b]earing in mind the important part being played by young people in every field of human endeavor and the fact that they are destined to guide the fortunes of mankind" (United Nations General Assembly, 1965), yet at the same with an underlying tone of threat associated with the potential failure to foster the new generation as desired (Ansell, 2017 (b), p. 38). The concern with youth at that time, was mostly centered around the growing population of unemployed and poor young people, mainly men, in the Global South, and the solutions proposed often emphasized the need for suitable training, and enabling young people to stay in rural areas and to contribute to rural development (Ansell, 2017 (a), p. 39; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2008).

Pertaining to the question of the UN, it is interesting to consider the fact that there exists no equivalent to UNICEF, the United Nations fund devoted to aid for children's health,

education, and welfare, that centers on issues related to youth. However, following the 1965 declaration, the first official 'International Youth Year' was declared in 1985 (Herrera, 2006), and in 1995, the *World Program of Action for Youth* was adopted by the General Assembly. None of the two entailed legally enforceable responsibilities, yet the latter encompasses commitments made on issues related to youth by signatory governments at various international gatherings, and provides "a policy framework and practical guidelines for national action and international support to improve the situation of young people around the world" (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.).

In 2001, the UN, the World Bank, and the International Labour Organization (ILO) joined forces and established the global alliance, the Youth Employment Network that seeks to mobilize priority of youth employment on the development agenda (International Labour Organization, 2010). Since then, employment[2] has moved to the forefront of the agenda taking centerstage as an issue to be addressed when it comes to the nexus of youth and development (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2008, p. 302). Take for example the 2007 World Bank Development Report that focuses on youth and "how human capital is kept safe, developed, and deployed" (World Bank, 2006, p. 5) or the ILO report, Global employment trends for youth: Special issue on the impact of the global economic crisis on youth in 2010, stating that unemployment is a problem, both for the individual and for the nation as young people are "drivers of economic development" (International Labour Organization, 2010, p. 6). Fergusson and Yeates (2013) have studied the policy priorities of the World Bank's discourses on youth unemployment. They find that the World Bank, has been a key agent in the promotion of youth, and youth employment, in particular, to the development agenda (ibid., p. 3), and argue that its policies promote youth unemployment as a condition resulting from human capital deficiencies, a youth bulge in the global population structure, and overregulated labor markets. A blend the authors term "business as usual" with reference to the neoliberal economism that underpins it and which have been characteristic for the policy orientation of the World Bank with respect to other issues and sectors as well (ibid., p. 15).

A more recent keystone event is the UN Security Council's passing of Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security in 2015. The resolution is historic, because it was the first of its kind at that level, to voice the importance of the inclusion of youth in matters of security (United

[2] I use the term 'employment' to encompass both traditional employment relations between employer and employee as well as self-employment such as entrepreneurship.

Nations, 2015; Williams, 2016, p. 103). The backdrop of the passing was an increase in radicalization amongst youth which the resolution targets to counter by: "enabl[ing] young people to participate meaningfully in peace processes and dispute resolution" (United Nations, 2015). Debates have thus centered around the question of whether the document should be seen as a "breakthrough" and "paradigm shift" towards a recognition of the positive role played by young people in peace building, or merely an act of presenting old wine in a new bottle, reinforcing a rather longstanding perception of youth as a security threat (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2018, p. 855; United Nations, n.d.). Sukarieh and Tannock (2018) argue the latter and position the resolution as part of what they term the "the global youth, peace and security agenda". In their article, they outline how youth have always been linked to issues of development and security as a double-sided figure portrayed both as a problem and a possibility. What is new in this agenda, they argue, is "the transition of youth from being primarily a local and national to a global security concern" (ibid., p. 855). This tendency is to be understood in relation to the so-called 'security-development nexus', a concept describing the emerging link between the area of security and development, primarily in the beginning of the 21st century (see for example (Beall, Goodfellow, & Putzel, 2006; Sørensen, 2016; Thomas, 2001). Here, youth become important agents to be managed through development policies (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2018, p. 855).

In a similar vein, Brock Bersaglio, Charis Enns & Thembela Keep (2015) have analyzed the representation of youth in the largescale participatory process leading to the UN Sustainable Development Goals adopted in 2015. They find that three representations are central in this development agenda, namely youth as assets, youth as risk, and youth as good citizens in the making (p. 68). The authors argue that these representations are rooted in a neoliberal agenda and serves to extent and deepen this ideology through the means of development practices. This is done by an encouragement of youth to embrace their entrepreneurial selves, combined with a depiction of youth as risks whereby interventions are justified, and finally by steering youth towards economic and political status quo by positioning them as good citizens in the making (ibid.)

On a more regional basis, the sixth edition of the Arab Human Development Report (AHDR) was published by United Nations Development Program in 2016, this time under the headline *Youth and the Prospects for Human Development in a Changing Reality* (United Nations Development Programme, 2016). The report, which was long overdue because of the Arab

Uprisings, was the first of its kind to focus entirely on the question of youth in the region (Sukarieh, 2017, p. 70) and addresses issues ranging from education and employment to gender and migration. A document which, given the status of the AHDR series as "central to the political construction of knowledge in and about the Arab region" (ibid., p. 72) is considered flagship, and is referred to in several other reports and policies, including the 2017-2021 DAPP Program Document (Danish Ministry of Foriegn Affairs, 2016, p. 3). In her research on the report, Mayssoun Sukarieh (2017) finds that it epitomizes what she terms "The Arab Youth Paradigm". Sukarieh notes that the identity and category of youth has, up until a few decades ago, mostly been predominant in the Global North, and points to a rapid increase in the centrality of the term in current security and development discourse that emphasizes the central importance of youth to the development of the MENA region (ibid, p. 74). What distinguish the Arab Youth Paradigm from the global tendency to center youth in much development politics is, first, a shift from discourses of deficit to surfeit, and second the use of the Arab Uprisings as a core argument for both the potential and threats that youth constitute. Where earlier discourses have centered around deficit, lack and backwardness, the Arab Youth Paradigm focuses more on surfeit – of skills, knowledge, aspirations etc. – with its root in the youth bulge theory and the notion of growing generations of youth in the region. The link to the Arab Uprisings concerns the way that the revolutions have been framed as promoted first and foremost by youth, thereby holding youth accountable, not only for the so-called Arab Spring but also for the Arab Winter that followed – a narrative underpinned with a notion of threat (ibid., pp. 74-75).

## 3.3. My contribution

Considering the above literature, I argue that the present thesis contributes to the field in at least two significant ways. First, by its focus on a national development policy.

As illustrated above, all research on the link between youth and development policies has so far been concerned with global tendencies, analyzing global policies and documents which are argued to have been highly influential on the way that youth is adopted and promoted within the field. A critical scrutiny of how this unfolds in the context of national development policy remains to be seen, and here I find the DAPP strategic framework an interesting case in point. This relates to my second contribution, namely a concern with the link between development and migration and how it relates to youth. Much of the literature reviewed is concerned with the neoliberal influence and presumption which, it argues, is evident in the

perception of both ends and means of development in the policies in question. As will be outlined in the analysis, I argue the same to be true for the 22-27 strategic framework of DAPP, but in addition to this, migration is a major theme in the document. Therefore, this is a new dimension added to the analysis, that will consequently reflect on the way that both anti-migration and neoliberal sentiments underpin the policy and how they relate to each other and to the representations of youth.

# 4. Methodology

This thesis seeks to understand the youth representations presented in the DAPP program and to investigate how this phenomenon can be understood in relation to a global "turn to youth" based on the theory of New Political Economy of Youth. The analysis is designed as a case study and is informed by the What's the Problem Represented to be approach, whereby I seek to investigate the DAPP 2022-2027 strategic framework with a focus on the presumptions, genealogy, silences, effects, and dissemination of the specific youth representations identified in the documents. I will elaborate on the approach and data shortly, but first I will account for my theory of science in order to provide a framework for the choices that have been made in the development of the research design. I will discuss potentials and limitations along the way.

## 4.1. Theory of science

The point of departure for this thesis is a social constructivist position. This implies a conceptualization of the world and the phenomena within it as being intersubjective, dynamic, and formed by contexts such as social, historical, and spatial conditions (Klotz & Lynch, 2007, p. 3). In terms of objects of analysis, interest is mainly on the ideational aspects of development and international relations, and emphasis is placed on the dynamics of meaning-making and relational interpretive processes, including "norms, rules, meanings, languages, cultures, and ideologies" (ibid., p. 7). In the context of this research project, this means that the major object of analysis is the meaning-making in the form of representations of youth as presented in the DAPP strategic framework.

In terms of epistemology, knowledge is understood as inherently constructed, that is, as always dependent on the researcher and the context in which it is created rather than isolated

truths to be uncovered. I therefore also acknowledge my own role as a researcher in the production of this thesis given the choices, I have made in the development of the research design and the process of analysis – all of which I will account for shortly.

The thesis has come into being by way of an iterative approach, that is, through a "weaving back and forth between data and theory" (Bryman, 2016, p. 23). My point of departure was observations made on the strong presence of youth in development policies, including the 2022-2027 DAPP strategic framework, through my internship stay at Oxfam IBIS in the fall 2021[3]. The tendency seemed to transcend different organizations and sectoral foci, and this somewhat unstated consensus sparked my curiosity. In order to better understand these observations, I consulted research in the field which helped me elaborate my scope of interest as well as research design further. Hence, my data has informed my use of theories and vice versa.

## 4.2. Research design

This thesis is designed as a single case study, which entails a "detailed and intensive analysis of a single case" (Bryman, 2016, p. 66). I understand a case to be "a construction that emerges during the research process, through the constant relation of observation and theory, and international and global forces and processes by which it is shaped and on which it reacts back" (Lai & Roccu, 2019, p. 81). Thereby I recognize my own role in the construction of the case and reject it to be a given entity existing independently of my research process. Rather, it is the combination of my position, the observations made, and the theory applied that have impacted what is "marked out, emphasised, and privileged" and what "recede into the background" (Lund, 2014, p. 224).

The purpose of conducting a case study is to examine whether, and if so how, the global tendency of promoting youth underpinned by a neoliberal agenda, as presented by Sukarieh and Tannock (2015), takes place in national development policies. As introduced in the literature review, research on the topic of the relationship between youth in development policies and neoliberalist logics has so far only been conducted with reference to international

[3] Oxfam IBIS were leading the implementing consortium for the 2017-2021 program. They applied for the 2022-2027 tender but were reject.

policies. I therefore find it relevant to broaden the scope of this field of research to also include national development policies. For these reasons, I consider the case to be exploratory, as it "investigates distinct phenomena characterized by a lack of detailed preliminary research[…]exploring a relatively new field of scientific investigation" (Mills et al., 2010, p. 373).

### *4.2.1. Case selection*

I have selected Denmark as a case for several reasons: Firstly, Denmark is part of the Global North. Considering the history of development aid (and later development cooperation), the traditional roles have been that of Global North countries as aid-senders and Global South countries as aid-receivers[4] (see for example Escobar, 1995). Denmark, as a considerably rich country belonging to the Global North, has a long history of engaging in the provision of bilateral development aid (Yding Brunbech, 2012), and thus constitute a more traditional donor country. With bilateral development policies being a well-established tradition in Denmark, this context provides a rich source of data for investigating both current as well as past tendencies of problematizations and logics, and thereby to examine whether the recent phenomenon of promoting youth holds true in this case. Adding to this, there is the practical dimension of choosing a development program that is formulated in Danish, my first language. While the strategic framework is available in English, other data, which will be presented shortly, is not, and the linguistic accessibility has thereby contributed to a detailed and precise analysis.

The Danish Arab Partnership Program, more specifically, presented itself as a good program to look into, first of all because of the very explicit focus on youth in the current strategic framework. With its continuous centrality to Denmark's engagement in the MENA region, the program has been running more or less permanently since its beginning in 2003, and therefore also allows for examination of genealogical developments, as per the WPR-approach. Furthermore, it is quite a well documented program with all former documents accessible at the website of the Parliament, as well as its own website, www.dapp.dk, where

[4] My use of the concepts 'Global North' and 'Global South' is not without hesitation, since it is concepts that obscures the many differences existing *within* each the two categories. Yet, as I am concerned with geopolitical power relations in development aid, I stick to these terms in order to highlight the "interconnected histories of colonialism, neo-imperialism, and differential economic and social change through which large inequalities in living standards, life expectancy, and access to resources are maintained" (Dados & Connell, 2012, p. 13).

information on achievements and news are shared. It is the combination of these factors that makes it a suitable case to investigate here.

### *4.2.2. Reflections on research design*

Before proceeding to the analytical framework, it is important to discuss some of the limitations related to the research design. A debated issue here regards the generalizability of this type of research, as it has been questioned whether case studies can be representative and produce results that are applicable more generally (Bryman, 2016, p. 62). This of course depends on which kind of case it concerns, including the data and methods chosen. Here, the case was designed as an exploratory piece of research through an iterative process. This meant that I had a presumption about the centrality of youth in the data chosen before conducting the analysis. However, I did not know to which extent and in what way this relation existed, which is what I then decided to investigate. To be able to establish whether the conclusions drawn in this thesis can be characterized as part of a broader tendency or not requires further research on development policies from other nations.

Furthermore, there is the question of context specificity, as there are of course a variety of factors informing the way that development policies are formulated, and which can impact the generalizability. These include the donor country's historical relationship with its partner countries, and the national political context in which the development policy is indeed embedded. For example, the Danish context has in recent years undergone a paradigm shift where "[a]id has been cut by almost a third, and the composition of instruments has changed with reduced allocations to bilateral country programs, reduced allocations to the poorest and most stable countries, and increased allocations to humanitarian aid and areas of origin of migrants" (Kjær, 2022, p. 1). It is of course impossible to conduct a case study that takes all context specific factors into account, but this does not preclude the potential for comparison. With sufficient knowledge to draw on, it will be possible to outline 'most likely' and 'least likely' scenarios, highlighting whether such characteristics impact the way, and extent to which, youth is included in development policies. This again highlights the need for more research within the field to maximize the potential of the findings produced in this case study.

## 4.3. What's the Problem Represented to be?

The What's the Problem Represented to be (WPR) approach is useful for the analysis of this case as it, unlike more conventional modes of analysis, does not consider policies and policymakers as merely proposing solutions to "already- present" problems existing isolated in the world (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, pp. 14,16). Rather, it perceives the work carried out when addressing 'problems' as part of the process of constituting the 'problem' in the first place (ibid.). This is not necessarily a deliberate attempt from the side of policymakers to misinform or manipulate but rather constitute an inevitable part of producing policies (Bacchi, 2009, p. 1). Thus, the WPR-approach is occupied with the process of making and un-making of problems; how and why something becomes represented as a problem and the consequences following hereof(ibid.). This entails a critical scrutiny of categories and classifications stated in policies as these are neither fixed, essential or outside the policies in case but rather shaped and negotiated as part of the problematization ( (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 14). The WPR-approach therefore invites us as researchers to "work backwards" by examining the logics and ways of thinking that underpin a certain problem representation, and in doing so, emphasizing how such thinking is not located outside time and space but "has a history" and is continuously sustained and adapting to new circumstances (ibid., p. 16). These characteristics, I argue, qualifies the use of the approach in this context, as it enables a critical scrutiny, especially of the category of youth, and how it is problematized in relation to issues of development.

The WPR-analysis is guided by six questions that build on top of each other and provide concrete guidelines for how to analyze problem representations in order to grasp the various dynamics that form part of the problematization. The six questions will be accounted for in the following, complemented by reflections on their relation to my empirical data and hence the operationalization.

1. *What is the problem of 'youth' represented to be in the Danish-Arab Partnership Program 2022-2027?*

The first question sets out to identify the problem representation implicit in a certain policy by taking the solution(s) proposed as its point of departure (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 20). In so doing, the work of questioning or unravelling the, otherwise unexamined, ways of

thinking about certain things or subjects related to "the problem" can begin (Bacchi, 2009, p. 3; Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 20). The 2022-2027 DAPP strategic framework is saturated with the concept of 'youth' which also takes centerstage in the overall vision of the document. Therefore, I start from this rather broad concept and examine how the term is defined, and what it is about it, that is problematized, i.e., which domains is it highlighted in relation to, and which proposals that are presented in that regard.

*2. What presuppositions or assumptions underlies this representation of 'youth'?*

Question 2 investigates how the problem representation identified in question 1 has become possible by looking into the underlying logics underpinning it. Here, logics are understood as the "unexamined ways of thinking", that is, taken-for-granted knowledge and the worldview – ontological and epistemological assumptions – that is in place in order for the problem representation in a given policy to be accepted as truth (Bacchi, 2009, p. 5; Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, pp. 21, 36). This is done through a discourse analysis. Bacchi adopts Foucault's understanding of discourse as a "socially produced forms of knowledge that set limits upon what it is possible to think, write or speak about a 'given social object or practice'" (McHoul and Grace, 1993, as cited in Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016). The identification of discourses includes a critical engagement with concepts, categories, and binaries in the policy document (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 21). Thereby, this question proceeds the findings in question 1, as I will dissect the concepts, categories and binaries that are linked to youth or nested within this overall category to understand in more detail, how youth are thought about, and which knowledge that has shaped this understanding.

*3. How has this representation of 'youth' come about?*

The purpose of question 3 is to understand how the current problem representation has come into being by tracing back the genealogy of practices that have contributed to its production (Bacchi, 2009, p. 10; Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 22). The Foucauldian understanding of genealogy adopted here, approaches history as processes of "discontinuity" and "twist and turns" (Bacchi, 2009, p. 10; Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 44). Thereby, policies and 'problems' are not perceived as a result of a straightforward and linear trajectory but rather as continuous battles over knowledge that take place over time (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 44). Thus, the goal of this question is to "upset any such assumptions about 'natural' evolution"

in order to make visible the alternative shapes that the 'problem' could have taken and could take in the future (Bacchi, 2009, p. 10). Here, I will pay attention to the ways that the term youth has – or has not – been used in earlier DAPP documents ranging from its beginning in 2003 until today in order to understand the archaeology of the present logic that relates to the problem of youth. This include a scrutiny of how such a potential link has been stated, and how it has developed; in relation to which areas and which proposals have youth been in/excluded?

4. *What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can 'youth' be thought about differently?*

In question 4, the aim is to look at the limits of the existing problem representation and bring into light those issues, that are not included (Bacchi, 2009, p. 13). This is a way of pointing to simplifications in the problem representation and provide possible alternatives for how it can be thought about in a different way (ibid.). Here, I will draw on findings from other research to critically engage with the representations at stake and propose alternative ways of defining and perceiving youth.

5. *What effects are produced by this representation of 'youth'?*

Question 5 is about the effects produced by the problem representation. Rather than focusing on outcomes as in much conventional policy evaluation, the objective is here to assess the political implications that are "much more subtle in their influence" (Bacchi, 2009, p. 15). The WPR-analysis operates with three distinct, yet interconnected types of effects, namely discursive effects, subjectification effects and lived effects. Discursive effects refer to boundaries set by the problem representation in terms of what can be thought and said (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 23). Through the discourses and articulation of deep-seated assumptions inherent in all problematizations, certain "social intervention[s] are closed off" due to the particular ways of thinking about things that are invoked (Bacchi, 2009, p. 16). The notion of subjectification effects assumes that discourses contribute to the formation of the positions we can acquire as well as our understanding of ourselves and others. Part of this is what Foucault terms "dividing practices" namely the way in which problem representations often place people in opposition to each other, for example through the use of binaries. By doing so, desired behaviors are promoted and vice versa (ibid.). In a similar vein, it can be useful to look into the attribution of responsibilities in the policy, and as well as the impact produced for the people

targeted by the policy (ibid., p. 17). Finally, lived effects are the material effects that directly effects people lives (ibid.).

In this thesis, this step will of course focus on the effects in relation to development practices and the resources it involves. Thereby, the questions raised includes: Which positions of youth as beneficiaries are deemed legitimate, and which interventions does this legitimize? Who are excluded on that basis? What are the consequences hereof?

6. *How/where has this representation of 'youth' been produced, disseminated, and defended? How could it be questioned, disrupted, and replaced?*

The final question of the WPR-analysis is concerned with the practices and processes that enables a certain problem representation to dominate (Bacchi, 2009, p. 19). The focus is thus on the means through which the "knowledge" that makes a specific problem representation possible is made legitimate, and how all of this reaches its audience (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 24). This furthermore implies the possibility of examining potential alternatives in terms of ways to destabilize these practices and mobilize resistance to the dissemination taking place (ibid.) Here, I apply the theory of the New Political Economy of Youth, to examinate whether the problem representation of youth can be understood to be promoted by a neoliberal ideology and discuss how it has been contested in a Danish context.

In addition to these six questions, Bacchi requires the researcher to submit one's own problem representation to critical scrutiny by applying the WPR-analysis (Bacchi, 2009, p. 19). I have attempted to do so throughout the whole process of developing the project, but I will also note that it is an ongoing, and admittedly difficult, process, which will most likely continue after this thesis has been finalized. Nonetheless, I will do my best to be explicit about these reflections related to self-problematization and will share them along the way, whenever I find it relevant.

The use of the six questions in the analysis can be either *systematic* – clearly answering each of the questions in an ordered manner – or *integrated* – whereby the questions are not explicit in the analysis which rather takes the form of a "carefully argued whole" (Bacchi, 2021). I make us of the latter model. Furthermore, not all questions need to be asked every time, a principle that will be reflected in this thesis, since not all questions have been relevant to apply in all parts of the analysis (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 24). Concerning the first part of the

problem formulation on youth representations, question 1-4 of the WPR-approach have predominantly guided my inquiry, whereas question 3, 4, 5, and 6 have been more evident in my attempt to answer the latter part of the problem formulation on the reflection of neoliberal logics in this.

There are of course limitations to the use of the WPR-approach, that also relates to the choice of data. Most importantly, it is a method concerned with the policy-level, that is, it does not enable an inquiry of the actual implementation and therefore neither of the practical impacts of a given policy.

## 4.4. Data

### *4.4.1. Data selection*

The main source of data for this thesis is qualitative, taking the form of the DAPP 2022-2027 strategic framework (see appendix A). This choice, of course, relates closely to the development of a case study design, which was formulated "begin[ing] with a puzzle… [and], a tension, and then seek[ing] to explicate it by identifying the conditions that would make that puzzle less perplexing and more of a 'normal' or 'natural' event" (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 27). The choice of the strategic framework as my main data was thus an essential step to a better understanding of the way that youth is represented in this case of a national development policy, its relation to neoliberal ideologies and what it means for the way that development is understood in the present DAPP program period.

The framework consists of three documents, namely the overall framework that sets the general direction for the program as well as the two program frameworks that outline the justification, interventions, and budget for each of the two sub-programs on Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship, and Human Rights and Inclusion, respectively. I have chosen to include all three because I find that the combination provides the best opportunity to get an in-depth knowledge of the program. Furthermore, past DAPP strategic frameworks and program documents will be included in order for me to trace the development of how, and to which extend, youth has been mobilized in the program since its establishment in 2003, accordingly with question 3 and 6 of the WPR-approach. All these documents are available online at the official archives of the parliament. Finally, a few consultation responses (høringssvar) from the Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs, as well as newspaper articles are included to provide information on criticism that has been raised regarding the present strategic framework, and

which points to both the assumptions underpinning the framework and the silences it entails. The 2022-2027 strategic framework documents are all retrieved in English, whereas some of the earlier program documents as well as consultation responses and newspaper articles have been subject to my translation.

### *4.4.2. Policy documents as a primary source of data*

Documents as a primary source of data should be used, not as a "windows into social and organizational realities", but rather as a "distinct 'reality' in its own right" (Bryman, 2016, p. 560). That is, documents are significant because of what they are supposed to accomplish and who they are written for (ibid.). With the case in point being a policy document, the interesting part lie in the intent and, to some degree, plan for action outlined. Thereby, the data selected are documents that set the direction for Denmark's official development cooperation with the MENA region and thus provide me the opportunity to investigate how Denmark, at an official discursive level and in this specific regional context, conceptualizes development and its relation to youth. Furthermore, the inclusion of former DAPP documents "provide a means of tracking change and development" (Bowen, 2009, p. 30) in the way that youth have – or have not – been included and represented in the Danish-Arab Partnership Program throughout time. What the data does not allow me to inquire are the motivations leading to the final formulation of the framework nor the actual implementation and impact of the policy, as there are of course gaps between the intentions stated in a policy and the actual execution hereof. So, what the policy *is* useful for in this regard, is the framework it presents that points us to Denmark's vision for what development should do, how it should do it, and whom it should serve in the context of Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, and Morocco.

# 5. Analytical framework

In this section, the analytical approaches of the thesis will be introduced. Here, I rely on four theories namely theory on representations, generationing, intersectionality and New Political Economy of Youth. Combined, they help me conduct my analysis, as they open up my understanding of the data and allow explanations of my findings, whereby these can be converted to academic findings. The possibilities and limitations, as well as the motivation for choosing these theories will be accounted for on an ongoing basis.

## 5.1. Representations

A key concept in this thesis is 'representations'. Many understandings of the term exist, but I here use it as defined by Stuart Hall whose extensive authorship has been formative of the field (see for example Saward, 2006).

According to Hall (1997) representations are a system of language, signs and images used to make sense of the world and to represent feelings, concepts or ideas in a way that can be decoded by others (p. 5). This is not to say that representations only work to transmit messages about objects whose existence and meaning have been established and which thereby exist autonomously in the world. Rather, the process of representing is part of constituting these objects in an always ongoing process of co-constitution (ibid., p. 6).

There are two "systems of representation" involved in the process of representation. The first is the complex scheme by which "all sorts of objects, people and events are correlated with a set of concepts or mental representations which we carry around in our heads" (ibid., p. 17). In other words, it is a conceptual roadmap that enables us to make sense of the world, and which comprises clusters of concepts in a complex net of associations and dissociations between them (ibid.) It is these conceptual arrangements that determine why we for example in some cases consider a tree and a bird similar – as belonging to nature – and in others different – the bird alive, the tree not.

The other system of representation is 'language'. Language is here understood in a broad sense as any sound, word, image or object that is capable of carrying meaning, and which forms part of an organized systems with other such meaning transferring sounds, words, images and objects (Hall, 1997, pp. 18-19). This system of representation, language, is necessary because it makes it possible to capture and convey meaning. The two systems, concepts, and language, are mutually constitutive, and it is the interplay between them that allows us to transfer and decode meaning – or put differently, to represent objects, people, events, real or imagined, to other people (ibid., p. 15).

It is exactly this concern with the relation between language and meaning that makes the theory useful here, as I seek to understand, based on written data, which meanings are communicated regarding the concept of youth. The theory thereby, in combination with the

WPR-approach, opens up for an exploration of the conceptual arrangements that hide behind the strategic framework regarding youth (and which, subsequently, contribute to further conceptions hereof). In the analysis, I operate with four representations which constitute the overarching structural principle: Youth as marginalized, youth as agents of change, youth as workforce and youth as potential migrants. These representations are a product of my iterative approach and have come into being in the intersection between data and theory. Thus, my initial and careful readings of the strategic framework revealed a repetition in the thematic areas which youth are referred in relation to. These areas resonated well with conceptualizations of youth found, in parallel, as part of my literature review. This knowledge has of course informed my identification of these patterns in the data. For example, there are clear links between the representation of youth as agents of change and the theory proposed as the positive youth development as between youth as workforce and the tendency to focus on employment identified in the historical review of youth in development policies.

## 5.2. Generationing

As described in the literature review, youth is a category and target group increasingly employed in development policies. However, the conceptualization of the term is rarely accounted for. The theory of generationing attempts to counter this fact and offers a thorough outline of how the term can be understood and applied in research.

Generationing is here understood in line with Huijsmans, Gerorge, Gigengacks and Evers' conceptualization (2014). The authors draw on Barry Mayall's description of generationing as a "relational process whereby people come to be known as children, and whereby children and childhood acquire certain characteristics" (Mayall, 2002 as cited in Huijsmans et. al., 2014). They extend this definition to encompass all age categories, including youth. The concept is thus a reaction to the lacking focus on the conceptual status of age in both development research as well as in childhood and youth studies where children and youth have been increasingly studied, however often with a categorizing approach that uncritically adopts age-based categories and is based on the perception of chronological age as a given (Huijsmans et al., 2014, p. 165). Chronological age refers to the "figure identifying the number of (Gregorian) calendar years that have passed since birth" (Huijsmans, 2016, p. 8). This is generally a common understanding and structuring principle. Take for example schools where students are

stratified by chronological age, or civil rights which are assigned to you as you reach certain chronological ages (Worth, 2016, p. 4). This is not to negate the existence of chronological age but rather a matter of asking the question: Why are certain age categories *made* important in particular contexts? (Huijsmans 2016, p. 9). This question is key in the thesis.

A concept relevant to mention here is that of age-normativity. This is the attribution of specific rights, obligations, places and frameworks for evaluation of behavior connected to a specific life phase within the framework of strict chronological age (ibid., p. 14). This means that persons falling outside (the often middleclass, Global North-based) age normative performance will many times be pathologized and perceived as deviant. The concept is useful in the analysis, because it can help me to identify the normative suggestions of what it means – or should mean – to be a young person that underpins the youth representations and proposed interventions in the 22-27 DAPP strategic framework.

Central to the understanding of generationing is the application of a relational approach in which age categories are understood in relation to the social, historical, geographical, and economic context they are positioned in, and in which the relation between different age categories become relevant. As such, generationing is understood to be an exercise of power that attributes certain characteristics to specific age groups. Following this line of thought, development programs can be seen as exercises of power that contribute to the "restructur[ing] [of] generational social landscapes" (Huijsmans 2016, p. 5.). It is important to note here that the ontological understanding underpinning this theory also encompass the capability of young people to renegotiate, resist and shape their aged position and role – it is exactly in this interaction between diverse and dynamic actors and exercises of power that expressions of generationing come into being. However, the focus of this thesis is, due to the scope and data chosen, solely on the problematization of youth produced and re-produced in the DAPP 22-27, and not on the perspectives and performance of its policy subjects.

The generationing lens allows me to unfold the notion of age, that is otherwise rarely questioned in development policies, and to question *why* and *how* this category is impeded with meaning in the upcoming DAPP framework. This includes the assumptions regarding chronological age, age performativity as well as the relationship between the group defined as youth and other age groups and institutions such as family, government, and workplace. By

doing so, it also becomes possible to ask questions regarding the consequences hereof: Who are excluded from this conceptualization and what normativity is established for the policy subjects to align with in order to be considered target group?

## 5.3. Intersectionality

In addition to representations and generationing, my analysis is also informed by the theory of intersectionality.

The notion of intersectionality as it is most often understood today first arose from black feminist scholars and activists in United States (Tormos, 2017, p. 707). Because of a lacking recognition of their intersectional identities as both women *and* of color, their experiences were neither captured by feminist nor antiracist discourses, academic fields and practices which lead to their marginalization within both (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1244; Tormos, 2017, p. 707). The concept was thus developed from "the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1245), and is widely understood to have been coined by Kimberle Crenshaw.

Intersectionality highlights the multiple axes of social categories, such as age, gender, race, class, and ability, that contribute to- and shape patterns of subordination and inequality, as well as positions of privilege (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140; Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1249). The theory rejects essentialist notions of categories, but rather perceives them to form part of mutually constituted relationships that interact to produce distinct lived experiences. It is therefore not sufficient to simply list categories, nor add up inequalities; one has to consider their relationship and how they all come together to create specific experiences (Tormos, 2017, p. 708). As with the case of racism presented above, an intersectional analysis would suggest that racism affects black women differently from black men, as well as depending on social status, nationality, sexuality etc. Thus, it is a highly context sensitive theory that considers the specificities of the time(s) and place(s) in which inequalities are located and which rejects hierarchies of oppressions (ibid.).

Intersectionality is a contested concept with numerous definitions (see for example Hill Collins, 2015; Nash, 2008; Yuval-Davis, 2012). I here apply the following definition as it builds on top of Crenshaw's understanding and is precise yet comprehensive:

"Intersectionality consists of an assemblage of ideas and practices that maintain that gender, race, class, sexuality, age, ethnicity, ability, and similar phenomena cannot be analytically understood in isolation from one another; instead, these constructs signal an intersecting constellation of power relationships that produce unequal material realities and distinctive social experiences for individuals and groups positioned within them" (Collins & Chepp, 2013, p. 58).

The theory thus allows me to investigate how other social categories play into that of age and thereby potentially shape the problematization of youth. In that sense, intersectionality complements the generationing lens very well, because it broadens the scope of the identity categories that should be scrutinized and, importantly, ask the questions of how these different categories interplay. On the other hand, an intersectional approach also highlights what might be missing in problem representation, in vein with question 4, and to some extent questions 5, of the WPR-analysis. That is, are there relevant categories that are left out, and if so, which positions of power are privileged by this - and at the expense of whom? What are the consequences hereof? Both in terms of material realities and social positions made available.

## 5.4. New Political Economy of Youth

The New Political Economy of Youth is rooted in Mayssoun Sukarieh and Stuart Tannock's definition of the theory (2014) as a response to James E. Côte's call for "a revival of the political-economy-of-youth perspective" (Côte, 2014, p. 527). In line with Côte, the authors share the perception that the current youth studies scholarship is too concerned with empirical analyses of young peoples' lives, subjectivities, and agencies, and Sukarieh and Tannock thus set out to broaden the scope of analysis to include investigations of the construction and mobilization of the category of youth within the current political economical context of neoliberalism (Sukarieh and Tannock, 2014, ch. 5, sec. 1, par. 1).

Neoliberalism is here understood as "a set of theoretical principles and…socio-political practices . . . which are directed toward extending and deepening capitalist market relations in most spheres of our social lives" (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2008, p. 302) and "as a global political-economic project that involves renegotiating boundaries between the market, state and

civilsociety, through the promotion of individualism, privatisation and deregulation" (Bersaglio et al., 2015, p. 59)

The authors argue that there has been a "global turn to youth" (Sukarieh and Tannock, 2014, ch. 1, sec. 1, par. 5), and that this can be understood as being driven forward by a neoliberal logic. They are therefore concerned with the mobilization and modelling of 'youth' as a concept and social category throughout history and today. This category, they argue, has been extended throughout time both vertically and horizontally to "encompass a growing range of ages, as well as… the proportion of the population of different class, race, ethnic, national and religious identities that is now widely identified with this life stage" (ibid., ch. 1, sec. 1, par. 9). This expansion, they find, is at its core, underpinned by neoliberal ideologies and has been driven forward by a complex interplay of public and private, financial, educational institutions, foundations and organisations. Examples hereof are the World Bank, the Ford Foundation, The Alliance for Youth, a public-private partnership led by former US General Colin Powell, and United States Agency for International Development to name some, all underpinned by a neoliberal logic (ibid.).

Thereby, "youth as a social category never simply emerges as an automatic effect of social and economic change, but it is actively constructed as a tool and technology for managing social and economic change as well" (ibid.).

At the heart of it lies a new and emerging set of practices related to how youth is talked about and worked with in both research and programming, namely that of positive youth development, also presented in the literature review. Sukarieh and Tannock argue that:

"The positive youth development movement represents another such shift, in which in neoliberal society, the competence, strengths and maturity of youth are emphasized and celebrated, as grounds for pulling young people into the workforce, opening up the spheres of education and youth development to market forces and business interests, promoting the ideology of neoliberalism among the young and undermining the traditional entitlements of welfare state provision" (2014, ch. 1, sec. 2, par. 2).

In this process of expanding and altering the conceptualization of youth (and promoting a neoliberal ideology), Sukarieh and Tannock points to three tendencies that have enabled it.

Firstly, youth has often been used as a symbol of change and the desirability of renewal in capitalist societies, both of which are highly cherished. It is a concept and trope used to "package and sell new ideologies, agendas, practices and products" (ibid., ch. 1, sec. 1, par. 9), exactly because of the historically strong link between youthfulness and progression. Second, there are striking resemblances between youth as a social category and the values promoted by capitalism, such as personal development, individualism, growth, aspiration, and mobility (ibid.). Thereby it is useful in the project of renegotiating normative understandings of rights and responsibilities in the relation between the state and the individual. At the same time, it is a highly fluid concept open to interpretation which makes it suitable for constantly adjusting the ideology to overcome disapproval and fit a wide range of contexts (ibid., ch. 7, sec. 1, par 3). Thirdly, by applying youth as a main category through which inequalities should be understood and solved, other categories such as class, race, and gender can be backgrounded. In so doing, structural inequalities can be rendered invisible despite an often-stated intention of "empowering youth" when resources are allocated towards interventions targeting young people (ibid.).

My motivation for choosing this theory therefore lies in its macro-level perspective that positions the document as part of a broader tendency to increasingly focus on youth in much development work. Thus, by applying this theory, I am capable of asking: Which political and/or economic interests are nurtured by the mobilization of the social category of youth in this specific place and time? What role does the mobilization of youth hold in the furthering of the political project underpinning the new strategy? What are potential implications of focusing so strongly on youth?

I want to note here, in accordance with Bacchi's request to self-problematize, that the definitions of neoliberalism are many and often contested. Importantly, Connell and Dados (2014) point out that most understandings of the term within research are based on knowledge that prioritizes the Global North, interpreting the global spread of neoliberalism as a "by-product of the internal dynamics of the global North" exported to the Global South (p. 124). This, they argue, is an unnuanced account that undermines what they term a "re-weaving of worldwide economic and social relationships" that is multidirectional and also embedded in Global South politics and economies (ibid.). I find that this an important point to bear in mind in order not to reimpose the Global North-biased and unidirectional conception of neoliberalism. However, given the limitations regarding data presented above, this thesis will

not be able to examine how the neoliberal logic of national development policies is, for example, impacted by national political agendas of the partner countries or contested on the ground.

Taken together, the theoretical framework provides a point of entrance to the data that first, enables a concrete and nuanced understanding of the youth representations in the document – focusing on the construction of social categories and the interplay between them – and second, allows me to contextualize these results within a broader framework of global development and political economy.

# 6. Analysis

In the following, I will conduct an analysis of the four youth representations that I argue are the most prominent in the DAPP strategic framework 2022-2027. Following the analysis, a discussion will be conducted in which I pull together points from each of the representations and comment on the conception of development it entails, including the potential consequences following from this.

## 6.1. Youth as marginalized

In the following, I will analyze how youth are problematized by virtue of their marginalization and how this relates to other categories, especially gender, while also considering which categories are silenced in this representation. I find that a continuous emphasis is placed on age as a main axis of inequality, and consequently that a silencing of other identities takes place. This is despite some inconsistent attempts to apply an intersectional approach, which overall does not seem to be the logic underpinning this problem representation. On that basis, I argue that while being less explicit than the remaining three, this representation is important to take notice of, as it forms the basis of the other and thereby constitutes an important entry point for understanding the document.

The vision of the strategic framework is, as presented in the introduction, to ensure "[a] better life for young people in the Middle East and North Africa" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(d), p. 13). It is a rather vague statement, yet it implies the assumption that life prospects of young people in the region are not good enough and should be enhanced. This is

specified in the strategic objective: "Youth have better opportunities for employment and civic/human rights engagement – thus more likely to create a future in their own countries and less likely to migrate" (ibid., p. 14). I will return to the latter point on migration in a later section of the analysis dedicated to this matter and for now focus on the first part of the strategic objective. Here, it becomes clear that the perceived lack of prospects relates, partly to limited opportunities to engage in civic/human rights issues, and partly to lacking opportunities for employment. For example, it is stated that: "While human rights violations affect everyone, they often affect youth disproportionately" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(b), p. 3), and that: "Youth[…]remain largely excluded from any dialogue [with duty-bearers] on political, economic, and societal progress." (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(c), p. 2).

It is therefore very clear that a key assumption here is that youth is to a larger extent than other groups excluded from different spheres of society.

Age is not the only category considered in the program. Similarly, however to a lesser extent, both gender, class, education and place of residence is recognized: "The youth target group is obviously diverse, and the categories of youth targeted by the program will have multiple levels of capacity, challenges, and needs according to gender, education, location, class, and age sub-groups" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(d), p. 13). This points to a general awareness of the intersection between categories, and a recognition of the different ways that young people experience marginalization. However, there is a high degree of inconsistency in the way that the categories are used and highlighted in relation to each other. Let us analyze a few examples of how this presents itself since this can also point us to the logic underpinning the notion of youth as marginalized.

"The political space in the DAPP countries and in the MENA region in general is dominated by an older generation of men, while the youth and women are largely left out" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(d), p. 3). What we see is a binary between (old) men on the one hand, categorized as powerholders, and women and youth on the other, as a shared group of marginalized: "It is after all men, whose role in society, politics and in the home help to cement inequalities between men and women" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(d), p. 7). In these instances, youth and women are used as separate categories, and the intersection between them is not considered. This poses the question of the gendered dimension of youth, namely: Do young men not constitute part of the category of men, and young women not part

of the category of women? The answer to this seems to be that age overrules gender; it is mainly by virtue of their age, that youth is marginalized.

This, on the other hand, is not the case in other parts of the framework where the specific conditions facing, especially young women, are included: "The lack of gender equality particularly affects young women, e.g. those that suffer from dominating gender stereotypes and poor access to maternal health facilities, particularly in rural areas" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(c), p. 3). What we see here is an acknowledgement of the different ways that age and gender can intersect and limit one's opportunities in a very specific way.

The position of young men is similarly addressed. However, compared to that of young women, in a more equivocal manner: On the one hand, the negative impact of gender stereotypes on young men and in that sense their marginalization is recognized: "Young men are likewise affected by gender stereotypes, such as seeing themselves as the main breadwinners, and are the ones most likely to migrate, e.g. due to their inability to start a family because of a lack of opportunities" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(c), p. 3). At the same time, they are stated to be the ones most likely to migrate and to become radicalized. I will elaborate on this point in the chapter on youth as migrants, but for now the takeaway should be the ambiguity with which young men are represented:

"A dearth of space for dialogue and economic, religious and political exclusion can breed dissatisfaction, migration, and radicalisation, especially for youth and young men" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(d), p. 3).

While paying attention to the relationship between age and gender, there is little to no recognition of additional categories as otherwise stated in the introductory comment presented above. From this perspective, the intention of maintaining a nuanced view on young people remains to be seen. Concerning the treatment of the relation between gender and age, it appears to be volatile and at times conflicting; sometimes, it is age *and* gender, addressed as separate categories, sometimes it is age *with* gender, in accordance with an intersectional perspective and sometimes – most often – it is simply youth.

In order to understand how this representation has come into being, I find it relevant to look back at former DAPP strategic frameworks to consider the genealogy of the use of

categories. This will highlight the development in the positioning of two key categories, namely youth and women.

Youth and women have historically been closely linked in the strategic framework of DAPP. First time in 2009-2010, where one of the objectives of the program was to: "Strengthening youth's and women's participation in society and in reform processes" (Danish Ministry og Foreign Affairs, 2011, p. 8). Prior to this, youth was mentioned only occasionally and did not constitute a general theme or target group. In 2011, youth is for the first time included in the program on a more serious basis. The category is here integrated in relation to track one of the framework, "Support to democratic institutions as well as enhanced cooperation with civil society and agents of reform", in which "youth[…]human rights, women and equality" were focus areas (Søvndal, 2012, p. 2). What we interestingly see here, is the fact that the concept of 'youth' is being ascribed meaning by virtue of its connection to women and human rights. This link is nowhere articulated explicitly, yet one can practically apply the concept of 'womenandyouth', similar to that of Cythia Enloe's "womenandchildren" with the common denominator being their social and political marginalization and an underlying assumption that these two groups have shared experiences of oppression that are best addressed together (Enloe, 1991as cited in Rosen & Twamley, 2018, p. 1). This proceed to be the case in the following years, and in 2013-2016 "[p]romotion of gender equality and the active participation of women and young people in all aspects of social life are mainstream elements" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013, p. 14).

According to the 2017-2021 program document, youth and gender equality are "top of the agenda" (Danish Ministry of Foriegn Affairs, 2016, p. 3), and "young men and women are key beneficiaries of the economic opportunities program in recognition of their specific challenges and potential" (ibid., p. 4). Thus, the increasing emphasis on youth seems to be linked to an increasing focus on employment – a tendency similar to what was pointed out in the review of youth in development policies. Arriving at the present framework, the tendency seems to be a foregrounding of youth as target group, at the expense of women who are to some extent silenced. However, and as illustrated in the analysis above, the link between the two remains.

Bearing this in mind, I argue, reinforces the picture of an underlying assumption of an inherent vulnerability when it comes to youth. The problematization is, furthermore,

characterized by an assumed commonality between the age group 15-35 years and an understanding of age as being a key factor when looking at who is marginalized. Thereby, (chronological) age stands out as the main axis of inequality that contributes to the marginalization of youth according to the strategic framework.

By applying the generationing lense it becomes visible how age is *made* important in this specific context, and that this has not always been the case. We see that, despite an initial recognition of conditions such as class and geography (see quote on p. 24), these are, by and large, silenced throughout the program along with almost all other categories of identity. Gender is the exception here which, when foregrounded, is to a great extent emphasized in relation to a binary of 'men' as powerholders and 'women' as marginalized. This notion greatly spills over when it comes to young women, who are overall understood as marginalized, whereas young men are represented in more ambiguous terms, sometimes as belonging to the powerholders of men, sometimes in a unique position as young men that poses a potential threat and sometimes as mainly belonging to the marginalized category of youth. All in all, this representation appears a bit messy leaving us with one point, namely that age, and youth more specifically, remains the main axis of inequality that is highlighted in the strategic framework.

## 6.2. Youth as agents of change

One of the most prominent and often repeated representations of youth in the DAPP 22-27 framework is that of youth as agents of change. I argue that such perception is highly influenced by the positive youth development, and that this representation is intrinsic to the "global turn to youth" identified by the New Political Economy of Youth. I will analyze this correlation here in order to gain access to a better understanding of the meaning imbued on youth when it comes to changing the future. I find that this representation of youth is characterized by a high degree of belief in – and thus, responsibility placed on – the shoulders of the youth, that constitute the target group of the DAPP 22-27, both in terms of creating a better future for themselves and on the region as a whole.

The DAPP strategic framework presents the interventions under the Human Rights and Inclusion subprogram as a means to engage youth as agents of social change and widen the space for active citizenship (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(c), pp. 1,11). This is done based on the strategic consideration that: "young people need to experience opportunities for

being active and protected citizens in order to create a better life for themselves in their home countries" (ibid., p. 10). More concretely, the interventions referred to, include technical assistance to youth movements, Human Rights Organizations, journalists and minority groups, among others, on matters such as "improved dialogue, public debates, creation of civic spaces, and facilitating participation in legislative and policy work" (ibid., p. 12). Furthermore, there are initiatives targeted at the mobilization and enhancement of young people for them to be able to advocate for their rights (ibid.). Thereby, the problem here is represented to be shrinking civic spaces and, consequently, lacking opportunities for youth to engage as agents of social change.

A key concept in this regard is that of 'change'. The strategic framework is imbued with the notion that youth is capable of and ready to create change, but what the term in fact implies is not defined. It is, however, strictly used as a positive term:

"Across our development efforts, we will support young people, who work to create positive change" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(c), p. 4).

"If engaged on their terms, the young can become important agents for change and positive development" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(d), p. 7).

This logic is strongly in line with that of the positive youth development that considers youth to be assets or resources to be fostered: "The world's largest generation of children and young people is a huge resource for sustainable and lasting change" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(c), p. 4). This, it can be argued, is in some sense an instrumentalized way of perceiving youth as a vehicle for a "positive change" defined, not by themselves, but on the premises of the program.

The main assumption inherent in this notion is that young people hold great potentials in terms of transforming society – a potential that can be unlocked by support from programs such as DAPP.

This representation of youth as being capable and responsive is, partly, underpinned by reference to the Arab Uprisings of 2011, where youth is understood to have played a crucial

role. For example it is stated that: “Disappointment with the outcomes of the Arab uprisings, and disaffected youth unable to engage productively in society are just a few of the serious challenges confronting the region" and “[t]he energy of youth-led social movements challenging the political decision makers and demanding better protection can be harnessed and built on” (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(d), pp. 2,8). This perception is even more evident in the DAPP strategic frameworks produced in the wake of the uprisings where it is for example stated that: “[M]any of the initiators of change [the Arab Uprisings red.], mainly younger men and women, feel discarded” (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013, p. 10). This is a general tendency as the uprisings are often understood in the light of youth. For example in the 2016 Arab Human Development Report, which states that: “the wave of protests which has swept through a number of Arab countries since 2011 with youth at the forefront” (United Nations Development Program, 2016, p. 5, see also Al-Momani, 2011; Honwana, 2019; Shehata 2012; Zambakari & Kang, 2016). Indeed, young people did play a crucial role in the protests, but by amplifying their contributions, the role and impact of the wide variety of actors, such as trade unions, political parties, faith-based movements etc., that also took part and were constituted by both youth, adults and elder, are silenced (Bishara, 2012; Shehata, 2012; Sholkamy, 2012; Sukarieh, 2017, p. 77).

This tendency to, discursively, isolate youth is not only evident in relation to the Arab Uprisings but is characteristic for the strategic framework in general. As stated, youth are placed as forerunners of the – by DAPP defined– desired future, and this is done so in an secluded manner that includes no one, but women: “[t]he development objective of the interventions is to increase the capabilities of youth and women to assume their roles as active and responsible, global citizens, and agents of change” (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(d), p. 22). The only time attention is paid to other age categories, is with reference to the marginalization of youth – something which is ascribed primarily elder men, as also pointed to in the above chapter. This representation thus builds on top of the former on the marginalization of youth, which is exactly what necessitates their empowerment in order for them “to assume their roles as active and responsible, global citizens, and agents of change” (ibid.). Accordingly, the ‘change’ pushed by youth is represented as inherently revolutionary and progressive, and the cohesion of young people with other age categories is silenced. Furthermore, it is worth noting how youth as a category in this representation is nowhere

nuanced in accordance with an intersectional perspective. Quite the contrary, all youth are lumped together in a revolutionary mass of drive with a supposedly common notion of the kind of change they want.

Thereby, I argue, a normative age figure of youth is established where they are ought to make use of their willingness and capabilities to create change – not only for themselves but for their respective home countries as they represent the future. This implies that young people falling outside this age normativity, e.g., by not working towards a purpose deemed "positive" by the program (and thereby the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs), will not gain access to the resources allocated by DAPP. I will elaborate this point in the section on youth as workforce and youth as migrants, both of which concern the way some aspirations are deemed legitimate and others not. This will all be summed up in the final section on the New Political Economy of Youth where I argue that the strong emphasis on the abilities of youth, among other things, functions to pull young people into the workforce and serve a neoliberal agenda as well as being a protection mechanism for aid-sending countries.

What is important to take away for now is the strong normative age figure of youth as drivers of an undefined positive social change. It is a representation strongly saturated with references to the positive youth development, that assumes young people to be capable of- and willing to create change in their society. Furthermore, the representation builds on an isolationist approach focusing solely on youth and thereby silencing ties to other age groups and parts of society. It thus becomes a clear exercise of power that restructures generational landscapes, placing youth at the very forefront of an agenda defined by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

## 6.3. Youth as workforce

Given the subprogram on Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship, the representation of youth as workforce is both very explicit in the strategic framework documents. What I wish to point to is the use of aspirations of youth to create an age normativity highly focused on employment as the right way to be "coming of age". Employment thereby comes to represent decent transition to adulthood, and unemployment the opposite, namely stagnation. This results in a youth representation where the interests of youth become closely aligned with that

of business, and the investment in private sector growth becomes an investment in youth and vice versa. All of this is underpinned by the logic of the youth bulge theory which necessitates the interventions proposed as a matter of security – both for the countries in case and for Denmark.

It is stated that for the individual "[h]aving meaningful and decent employment is essential to human well-being" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(e), p. 6). As such, employment is positioned as an unavoidable and central pathway to a desirable future qua the connection to "human well-being". Employment is framed as especially important to the age category of youth as it connects closely, and even leads to, transitioning from youth to adulthood. Something which is ascribed the human development as well as monetary, and thereby social, independence that follows from employment:

"Employment empowers the individual, not only in monetary terms but also in increasing self-esteem, respect, and strengthening the ability to form social networks. Furthermore, employment is an important step for young people's transition into adulthood through monetary (and social) independence from family and parents." (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(e), p. 6).

In this context, the invocation of potential futures is very strong; young people are framed as in a period of transition where future possibilities are encompassing everything. And here, employment is stated as key for them to fulfill this potential and ensure individual social mobility. Given the program's overall vision of "[a] better life for young people in the Middle East and North Africa" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(d), p. 13), employment is thus positioned as an essential means in that matter, and the problem here is unemployment with the underlying assumption being that employment leads to adulthood as well as a better life.

In contrast to the notion of "human wellbeing" stands that of "youth dissatisfaction" and the assumption that frustration is as a potential danger following from unemployment. As we shall see, this is not only stated as an issue for the individual, but similarly, and even more so, to society:

"Unfulfilled life-ambitions among young people often translate into frustration, anger, protests, and ultimately migration" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(d), p. 13).

"Similarly, the lack of jobs can contribute to frustrations related to feeling disempowered, lacking a voice and experiencing basic human rights not being respected – which again can drive migration" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(e), p. 3).

"Net job creation is low and a majority of newly created jobs have not corresponded to the areas with highest unemployment levels, both in terms of economic sectors and geographical areas. This is leading to an increased frustration in the population, especially among youth" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(e), p. 37).

It is continuously stated that "large youth generations"/"relatively large youth populations"/"growing youth cohorts" creates "mismatch between demand and supply in the labour market" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(e), pp. 2,14). In that sense, a notion of a "youth bulge" is invoked, whereby a lack of jobs is problematized within a demographic framework. What I argue is thus that there a resemblance with the youth bulge theory where connections are made between the demographic issue of "large youth cohorts" and the risk of instability and civil unrest due to inability of young people to have their life expectations met – in which we have just established that employment is essential:

"Denmark has placed particular emphasis on collaboration with and inclusion of young people and youth-led organisations. This emphasis is in recognition of youth disenfranchisement and lack of opportunity to participate as active members of society cause frustration and anger and can lead to radicalization" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(d), p. 9).

In addition to the problem of unemployment as related to individual and societal development, it also extends to issues of migration. Whereas riots and violence were earlier framed as the ultimate risk related to poor future prospects of youth, this is now migration. This, I argue points towards a securitization of migration in the program as it is presented in line with "frustration", "anger", and "protests" thereby evoking pictures of angry brown men

also used in discourses related to terrorism (Hendrixson, 2004). Securitization can be defined as: "the process of presenting an issue in security terms, in other words as an existential threat" (Buzan & Hansen, 2009, p. 214). As already touched on, the link between development and security matters is far from new. Beall et. al. (2006) for example finds that this turn towards security in development cooperation emerging as a result of the 'War on Terror', lead to the conceptualization of security – that is, Global North security – as both an objective and instrument in official development discourses.

I will return to this in the section focusing on youth as potential migrants, however it is important to mention the strong link drawn between migration and youth unemployment with the assumption that youth unemployment leads to migration:

"Denmark's youth focus is tied to addressing the lack of prospects and opportunities especially jobs that cause young people to leave their home countries. Denmark seeks to improve the living conditions in the countries of origin and transfer, thus reducing the need for irregular migration, especially for young people" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(d), p. 9).

Turning to the solutions proposed in the framework, it is interesting to consider how the aspirations of youth are aligned with those of the private sector in a sort of win-win solution framework. It is stated that:

"The supply of jobs in the public and the private sectors is insufficient to absorb the large youth generations that enter the job market each year. As such there are two main challenges related to jobs which the DAPP employment program seeks to address i) lack of jobs for the growing youth cohorts; and ii) lack of candidates with the right qualifications for jobs in the private sector" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(e), p. 2).

Three projects with each their objective are outlined, namely:

- Youth Inclusion and Employment Project with the objective of enhancing employability of young men and women and engage them in entrepreneurship through skills-training and including them in "relevant business ecosystems" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(d), p. 13). Employment is understood as a broad term to encompass both

formal decent jobs, irregular jobs in the formal or informal economy, self-employment in the informal economy, and basic income generating activities (ibid., p. 5).

- Green Growth and Job Accelerator Project with the objective of enabling growth, and thereby job-creation, of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through supporting development or scaling of innovative ideas (ibid.).
- Sharaka Capital Investment Fund Project with objective of enabling growth and thereby job-creation of SMEs by improving access to finance and technical assistance (ibid.).

According to this proposal, focusing on the private sector and on youth is the best solution, as the interests of youth (obtaining suitable skills to acquire a job) are aligned with that of the private sector (securing a productive and skilled workforce). In that way, SMEs become an essential part of the solution for securing a desirable future for young people in the region and for the region itself. This is further amplified with the following quote where it is pointed out how poor business environments constitute part of the problem addressed by the program: "Despite improvements in the **business environment** in some of the DAPP countries, it generally remains non-conducive to private sector growth" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(c), p. 4, original emphasis).

A third aspect of the focus on employment is entrepreneurship which constitutes a big part of this subprogram. Entrepreneurship is likewise, and maybe to an even higher degree, embedded in notions of independence and individuality. It signifies the ultimate liberalization in the sense that it does not require dependence on an employer and holds great potential when it comes to the opportunity for creating one's own success. It is therefore quite symptomatic for the logic underpinning the aspirations presented in the framework.

Looking at the genealogy of the way that employment has been addressed, it becomes clear this focus has been present in earlier strategic documents. First time in 2011 where "focus is on job-creation, including for youth" (Søvndal, 2012). In 2013-2016, one of the issues addressed were: "large groups of unemployed young people" with the statement that: "strengthening economic growth and creating jobs and prospects for a better future, not least for young people and their families, represents key issues across the region" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013, p. 12). Similarly, the 2017-22 framework is structured around three different initiatives that focus on labor market and social dialogue, youth participation and

employment, and entrepreneurship, respectively. As such, the preoccupation with (un)employment amongst young people in the present framework cannot be seen as a breakthrough but rather as an intensification of past focus areas.

In this problem representation, there is little recognition of the fact that young people's lives might be highly connected with other age groups through social structures and relationships, such as the family.

Family is, to a large extent, considered a corner stone in many Arab societies (Ibrahim & Howe, 2011, p. 2469; Okasha et al., 2012, p. 3; Thome et al., 2011, p. 1). Here family, including extended family, often provide funtional, material and emotional support, e.g. in the care of older members of the family (Ibrahim & Howe, 2011, p. 2470; Kronfol et al., 2015, p. 836). Traditionally, this organizing principle has manifested itself in the praxis of intergenerational living where multi-generational households has been common standards (Sibai & Yamout, 2012, p. 65). Children often stay living with their parents up until marriage, after which they move and establish their own household Thome et al., 2011, p. 4). However, upon changes of the parents' living conditions related to ageing, e.g. health or income, they might resume living with their children, especially married sons (ibid.). As such, the caregiving relationsship between parents and children is "developmental and bidirectional", meaning that the role of caregiver and carereciever changes between parent and children throughout time depending on changing needs (Beitin & Aprahamian, 2014, p. 24). This, it can be argued, is closely linked to the welfare politcs in the region which is often limited, leaving especially elderly with their children as a main source of support (Angeli & Novelli, 2017, p. 7). In the cases of Egypt and Tunisia, research points to an increase in the importance of the nuclear familiy in recent years, however the extended family has maintained its importance in matters such as substitution for parental loss and absence, mediation in conflict, business and property partnerships, arrangements of marriages and help with expenses of healthcare (Angeli & Novelli, 2017, p. 9).

Bearing these points in mind, there seems to be a gap between the normative age figure underpinning this representation and the local understandings of youth. Where the former is characterized by a strong focus on individualization and the age-normative figure that young people should strive for full independence in all aspects of life through employment, the latter might be more characterized by a relational understanding of youth as constituting part of a collective unit holding certain responsibilities which employment can help fulfill.

Based on these findings I argue that the two logics underpinning the discourse on youth employment and entrepreneurship, namely neoliberal aspirations and the youth bulge theory, work to juxtapose the interests and aspirations of youth and private sector companies. A strong logic evident in the DAPP program is that of youth as being a life-phase related to gaining independence. Here, the western normativity of the self as an inherently individual unit (see for example Dwairy et. al. 2006; Erikson 1950; Sampson 1988) plays an important role in imposing a normative developmental process of youth centered around independence, hence erasing local understandings of youth. This normativity is closely connected to employment, and thus, a normative age figure is created which is characterized by transition centered around employment as the entrance to adulthood, and a source for living a meaningful life. Therefore, unemployment evokes notions of stagnation and is portrayed not only as a hindrance to personal but also societal development. Here, it is "growing youth cohorts" – and their lack of relevant skills that is problematized, and the solutions are to be found in skills training, entrepreneurship, and private sector growth.

It is interesting noting here as well, that the strategic framework states to be working towards *decent* jobs for its target group, while at the same time admitting that this might not be possible to offer from the outset (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(e), p. 13). This objective, and the road towards it, is nowhere elaborated in further detail, thus leaving the impression that quantity ranks higher than quality when it comes to priorities regarding job creation. Thereby, the overall message seems to be that employment is key, no matter the cost, imposing a rather individualistic age-normativity.

## 6.4. Youth as potential migrants

A key focus area in the DAPP 22-27 framework documents is migration. In the following, I account for how the strong link between youth and migration is produced and argue that the problematization of migration is based on a logic of security – and that it relates to the youth bulge theory where, especially young men, are framed as potential threats. Consequently, the support for young people in the four program countries and their process towards achieving better life prospects is bound to their distance from Denmark and Europe.

Overall, migration constitutes a central problematization in the strategic framework, as it is presented as the main reason for its focus on youth:

"Recognising that a youth focus is key to ensuring better, more secure, and more prosperous lives in the MENA region, the new DAPP phase 2022-2027 adopts youth as its main target group[…]By seeking to improve youth's general conditions in their home countries, DAPP is designed to address some of the root causes of youth migration towards Europe, which is a key policy priority for Denmark" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(d), p. 1).

Young people are thus assumed to be integral to the stated problem of migration: "DAPP recognises youth as central to the demographics of migration" (ibid., p. 13). This connection is made with reference to aspirations for a better future as also touched on in the chapter on employment:
"Economic downturns in even the strongest economies of the region, disillusionment and disappointment with the outcomes of the Arab uprisings, disaffected youth unable to engage productively in society and increasingly seeking solutions beyond their borders… are just a few of the serious challenges confronting the region" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(d), p. 2).

Thereby, migration is presented as a desperate way for youth to fulfill aspirations for a better future: "The young should not be driven to migrate because they have no hope for the future" (ibid., p. 13).

When looking into the basis on which the problematization takes place, an interesting binary to consider is that of stability vs. instability. Migration is linked to instability and for example it is stated: "Addressing migration is a key Danish policy priority. Denmark places great importance on ensuring stability in the EU's Southern Neighbourhood, and the increasingly unsustainable pressure from refugees and irregular migrants" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(d), p. 9). Further, concepts related to the sphere of "home" help promote this sense of risk related to migration and thereby instability. For example, it is stated that: "MENA countries are a particular priority as they are at the doorstep of Europe" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(e), p. 9), thereby migrants are in a sense framed as uninvited

guests exceeding a clear limit of private ground. Similarly, the four DAPP countries are referred to as the "home countries" of the young people that constitute the target group (see for example (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(c), pp. 4, 8, 11; Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(d), pp. 1, 5, 9; Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(e), pp. 9, 12). Thus, there is an underlying notion that they are "out of place" when seeking a better future outside the borders of the region. In other words, youth as migrants are represented as threats to an existing order of things, something which is harmful to both youth themselves and to Denmark. This means that migration to Europe as a way of seeking fulfillment of life-ambitions, i.e., employment, is deemed illegitimate. By migrating, young people transcend the category of hardworking, innocent, and decent "resources" established through the representation of youth as agents of change and youth as workforce. Hence, their access to support, and the statement that "[e]very young person is entitled to a decent and meaningful job, individual freedom, and the chance to participate as an active member in society, free from violence, harassment, and discrimination" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(d), p. 1) is conditioned by their distance to Denmark.

I argue that such problematization is underpinned by the logic of the youth bulge theory. This is because migration is so strongly emphasized as a last resort motivated by deep despair. Thereby it becomes part of the claimed demographic causal assumption also presented in the chapter on youth as workforce: Youth unemployment and marginalization leads to frustration and anger, which potentially leads to civic unrest, radicalization and migration. Migration thus comes to connotate frustration and anger, and especially that of young men who are more clearly linked to this representation:

"A dearth of space for dialogue and economic, religious and political exclusion can breed dissatisfaction, migration, and radicalisation, especially for youth and young men" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(d), p. 3).

"Across the MENA region, youth, and young men in particular, are seeking to emigrate in search of a better life. While most would only do this legally, an increasing number are willing to risk the consequences of doing so illegally" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(d), p. 5).

“The migration agenda predominantly focuses on young men, given that they are the ones who most often migrate” (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(d), p. 10).

This point must be understood in light of the justification of the focus on migrations where it is argued that: “Denmark aims to counter threats against its own security and way of life and promote the principles, values and human rights upon which the open and democratic Danish society rests” (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(e), p. 9).Thereby, the underlying assumption of this representation is that youth from the region – and young men in particular – constitute a security threat towards Denmark because of desperate situation that their migration is motivated by and the instability of an existing order that it might cause.

Interestingly, when scrutinizing the genealogy of this problem representation, it shows that illegal emigration was already in 2005 introduced to the program as a problem to be addressed”:

“Of high priority on the agenda is the common concern over continuous terror threats from radical islamists in both the Arab countries and in Europe. Illegal emigration to EU from and especially through the North African countries is another problem that must be solved through a joint effort” (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005, p. 2).

Yet, subsequently, it disappears completely from the strategic frameworks until 2017. Here, “reduced migrant flows and brain drain” is centered as a specific foreign policy interest that DAPP attempts to promote (Danish Ministry of Foriegn Affairs, 2016, p. v). It is stated that: “A more democratic, stable and prosperous MENA region may help create an alternative to radicalism, cross-border crime and illegal migration, all of which pose a threat within and outside the region” (ibid., p. 9). Again, the notion of threat is invoked when it comes to migration which is linked to terrorism and in opposition to stability. Furthermore, migration here starts being linked to youth. Thus, it is stated that:

“The young feel marginalized, frustrated and angry and are excluded from society[...]If this frustration and anger is not addressed through provision of economic opportunities, it

could lead to further instability and also risks leading to increased migration and radicalisation" (Danish Ministry of Foriegn Affairs, 2016, p. 3).

The logic here seems to be very similar to that of the 2022-2027 strategic framework where the assumption of the link to lacking economic opportunities and exclusion from society is described as something specifically applying to this target group. These observations raise the question of why the problem representation of migration disappeared in the first place and then later reentered the program at that specific time? To fully answer this question would require analyses that fall outside the scope of this project. What can be said is, that the strong link to Danish security interests (see for example Danish Ministry of Foriegn Affairs, 2016, p. v), and the specific point in time, 2017, that is in the document also acknowledge as "a very different reality" compared to former program periods (ibid.), suggests that this turn might, at least in part, be a reaction to the so-called refugee crisis in which Denmark was involved in the years following from 2015. What is interesting in that regard is the silencing of other age groups as potentials migrants.

I will continue my reflections on this in the coming sections, and for now conclude that the strong link created between unemployment, migration, and youth functions in two ways: Firstly, by virtue of the youth bulge theory and the notions of security, investing in job initiatives become a matter of security, both for the DAPP partner countries themselves and for Denmark. Following from this, and because of the nexus created between future prospects and employment that has been established in previous representations, the Danish national interests and the interests of youth are aligned.

# 7. Revisiting youth in development

In this section, I will join the conclusions presented in the analysis above. By applying the theory of New Political Economy of Youth, I wish to investigate if the four representations can be understood in relation to neoliberal agendas as proposed by the theory, and if applicable, how. On that basis, I will reflect on what this tells us about the understanding of development in the DAPP strategic framework, and discuss the consequences it involves. Finally, I will touch

on the issue of migration which constitutes an extension compared to existing research on the link between neoliberalism, youth and development policies.

These reflections are not an attempt to normatively assess the program, but rather a matter of asking the questions proposed by the WPR-analysis concerning the silences, dissemination, and effects, discursive, subjective and lived, of the particular problem representations.

## 7.1. Applying a New Political Economy of Youth lense

According to New Political Economy of Youth, one of the most prominent features of the global tendency to focus on youth is the emphasis on age as a key structuring principle when it comes to analyzing and addressing issues of inequality. If one considers past strategic frameworks and how they have to different degrees and in different ways focused on youth, this appears to be a relevant case in point.

Firstly, because of an intensified focus on youth, that silences other categories. When the initiative was first launched in 2005, the aim was to: "support local forces[…]that strives for reforms in the direction of free and more democratic countries" with a special emphasis on women (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005, p. 4). The use of social categories in this framework was thus more subtle, as it was not decisive in the formulation of the target group which remained broad. Gradually, the category of women was more emphasized up until 2017 where the strong focus on youth emerged. Since then, this category has moved rapidly from the fringe to the very core of the program. This, as pointed to in the section on youth as marginalized, has happened at the expense of women which is now subject to the dominating category of youth. In addition, there are a range of other categories that intersect with that of age, that might not have been highlighted earlier, but which surely nor is being so now.

Secondly, there is what Sukarieh and Tannock (2015) characterize as an "extension" of youth to increasingly encompass more and more people (ch. 1, sec. 3, par. 3). In that regard, the definition of youth in the DAPP strategic framework is interesting, as it covers "young women and men from 15 to 35 years" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(d), p. 13). This is a rather expansive inclusion of chronological age compared to other definitions which tend to stop at 30 years, maximum.

Thirdly, and relating to the above, there is the character of the issues that are problematized in relation to youth. Concern has changed from an earlier focus on human rights and today is mostly centered around migration, and therefore employment, a tendency also evident in the budget proposals for the 22-27 program period.

Here, it is noteworthy that the initial budget draft proposed an allocation of 435 million DKK to the Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship Program compared to 351 in the 2017-2021 framework, and 410 million DKK for the program on Human Rights and Inclusion compared to 476 million DKK in 2017-2021 (Hagedorn, 2021). That is, an increase on employment, and a decrease on human rights. However, after protests from Danish civil society organizations and appeals from researchers who have called it "short-term foreign policy" , the final budget has been adjusted so that the program on employment is allocated 435 million DKK and the human rights program 460 million DKK (Hagedorn, 2021; Kofod, 2021; Schade-Poulsen, 2021). Nevertheless, this reveals an original intention to prioritize funds for employment-oriented interventions over those regarding human rights, and the result is still, despite adjustments, a strategic framework that prioritizes investments in small and medium enterprises through a capital investment fund.

More specifically, the program introduces an engagement with the Investment Fund for Developing Countries (IFU) – an independent and Danish government-owned investment fund "offering risk capital to companies in developing countries and emerging markets" (Investment Fund for Developing Countries, n.d.) IFU "is not a provider of aid or business grants [but] works on a commercial basis, because [they] believe that business investment is a good way to create lasting improvements"(ibid.). It is expected that DAPP's contribution of 10 million USD to IFU will generate further investments from additional Development Finance Institutions as well as "other impact investors seeking market conform returns" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(e), p. 22). These funds will be administrated by a regional risk capital fund, that provides loans to small and medium enterprises (ibid.). The estimated objective of creating 30,000 jobs by way of investments is thereby premised by projections regarding additional investments and growth of the lending enterprises.

In that sense, New Political Economy of Youths' observation on the link between cooperate interests, capitalist values – such as the power of the market to solve societal problems – and the mobilization of the category of youth appears to hold true to the case of the DAPP strategic framework.

## 7.2. The role of the four youth representations

The different youth representations, to a varying degree, all play a role in forming a shared logic that justifies this link.

The representation of youth as marginalized functions as a point of departure for the other. It foregrounds the political, social, and economic marginalization of youth and mostly silences all other groups, including their ties to young people. Thereby the situation of young people is stated to be particularly severe. This point might appear simple, yet it is crucial since it is this representation of the problems as specifically youth-related that provides an immediate justification of this rather narrow focus and thus constitute the foundation for the following representations.

Youth as agents of change works to position youth as equivalent to progression. Thereby, investments in youth are represented as truly rewarding given the big potential to create changes found here. The representation demonstrates the maturity and strength of youth and places great emphasis on the possibilities laying ahead of young people if they seize the opportunity to develop, for example through skills training. Thereby the value of personal responsibility is emphasized. This combination of, on the one hand, the representation of youth as marginalized, in which their childlike characteristics are highlighted – vulnerability and innocence – and, on the other, that of youth as agents of change that emphasizes adultlike characteristics – independence and maturity – underscores the ambiguous situation of youth. As such, they are positioned as still being in development. Here, the underlying logic of positive youth development entails a focus on a healthy development of young people in which a high degree of expectations is seen as beneficial for youth. That is, "[f]ar from needing to preserve a space for youth to develop that [is] sheltered from the adult world of work, the lives and learning experiences of youth should be harnessed ever more closely to the needs and interests of employers, the workplace, the market and the economy at large" (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2015, ch. 1, sec. 2, par. 5). The representation thus position youth as suitable subjects of employment – connecting the sphere of youth aspirations and that of business interests. This justifies interventions to nurture and guide these young abilities in what are recognized as "socially, politically and economically effective and desirable ways" (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2015, ch. 1, sec. 2, par. 1) – as hardworking, employed subjects. Consequently, the capitalization of young people that for example follows from the market conform investments proposed by the

framework, where investors are expected to profit from the hiring of more young people, are legitimized.

The representation of youth as workforce specifies this notion by invoking a normative figure based on neoliberal values such as individualism and personal growth and development – all framed as inextricably linked to employment. For example, the (chronological) age range from 15-35 years is justified with reference to the fact that the transition from youth to adulthood is delayed due to lacking employment. This is a phenomenon well-described in research, where empirical findings often point to a prolonged period of youth, mainly in poor countries of the Global South, due to especially young men's inability to become breadwinners and thereby create their own families (see for example Christiansen et al., 2006; Dhillon & Yousef, 2009; Masquelier, 2013). Nevertheless, I argue that the emphasis placed on employment in the strategic framework is remarkable as it comes to represent the one and only key to unlocking a prosperous and desirable future.

The result is an alignment of the interests of youth (employment), and society (stability and production) with that of private-sector enterprises (a productive and skilled workforce). The parties merge and are framed as inextricably linked. Hence, the investment in enterprises comes to be equivalent to investment in the future of youth and vice versa.

Finally, there is the representation of youth as potential migrants. This is an addition compared to the original interpretation of the "global turn to youth" provided by Sukarieh and Tannock. If we are to follow the premise of their theory, this representation can be understood as a way of intensifying the need for actions presented above by extending the problematization to include Danish national interests, i.e. reducing migration from the MENA region. It is a somewhat paradoxical representation considering the focus on individual responsibility and aspirations evident in the other representations. Instead of supporting the attempt to seek a better future by migrating, the strategic framework deems this sort of action illegitimate, even implying notion of threat, by drawing on the logic of the youth bulge theory. Because of the strong assumption on the link between unemployment and migration underpinning it, investing in job creation and skills training initiatives become a matter of security, both for the DAPP countries themselves and for Denmark.

To sum up, this interpretation shows a policy that is highly influenced by neoliberal logics in the following ways: By placing emphasis on the capability and individual life prospects of young people, the effect is the nurturing of an individualistic and aspirational subjectivity. As

noted by Sukarieh (2012)"an important part of the neoliberal project is training youth to act and think as neoliberal, free market, enterprising subjects" (p. 434). This aspirational framework is connected closely to the idea of employment (and hence job creation), which is supported by allocating parts of the aid to an investment fund that operates from a principle of generating profit to the actors investing in it. Clearly then, at least part of the development objective is subject to the idea of "the supremacy of market competition" (Connell & Dados, 2014, p. 132), and consequently youth as legitimate subjects of development are centered around "their potential to contribute to the (capitalist) world of work" (Murphy, 2017, p. 680) at least, in their home countries. A process which could be characterized as one of mobilizing and transforming potential workforce into actual workforce. Thereby, we see the effects both in the subjectivities created as well as discursively with regards to how development is understood.

## 7.3. Understanding development: Employment as a viable strategy?

I argue that these findings give rise to a number of critical questions, regarding the understanding of development, including its objectives and strategies and the consequences following from this. Firstly, what are the implications of the influence of neoliberal logics on development policies? Which understandings and norms are being reproduced in relation to aid-sending and aid-receiving countries? What is it we do not see or understand when focusing solely on youth? And which political and/or economic interests are nurtured by the mobilization of the social category of youth in this specific place and time? I want to emphasize that I do not intend to marginalize the fact that the policy will most likely make a valuable impact for many people when being implemented. But as also discussed in the chapter on methods, such impact assessment is outside the scope of this case study which instead addresses the more overall lines regarding the discourse on development and the way it shapes the configuration of it.

Much has been written on the topic of neoliberalism in development studies. The criticisms raised regards issue such as the priority of economic growth and sustaining business environments at the expense of human and environmental sustainable development (Brohman, 1995), increased unemployment following from cuts in the public sector (Testas, 2004), rollback of rights to welfare benefits (Mellink & Zuidhof, 2019), the altering of social formations

that weakens collective resistance movements (Merz, 2012) and the fact that "neoliberal growth strategies tend to concentrate benefits among those who have access to the formal economy" (Connell & Dados, 2014, p. 133) to name some. Clearly, not all of these apply to the DAPP strategic framework. Seen in that perspective, the neoliberal logic is indeed much more subtle here than compared to more uncompromised and explicit neoliberal rationalities that for example characterized major development projects, such as the Structural Adjustment Programs, in the 1980's (Merz, 2012, p. 52). Yet, despite its more subtle expression, there are issues to be critically questioned.

The first regards the lived effects that might follow from an overemphasis on the capabilities of the individual in the assumptions underpinning the strategic framework, combined with a gap in the contextual understanding of how the local job markets are structured. In general, the labor markets of the Global South are characterized by a high degree of informality (Connell & Dados, 2014; Duman, 2022). In informal sectors, enterprises work at the margins of established orders; not following labor law, paying less taxes, operating on much more fragile terms, and not governed by motivations of accumulation but rather of livelihood (Connell & Dados, 2014, p. 131). The strategic framework recognizes this and – laudably – applies a broad definition of employment while encompassing "initiatives focused on informal economy skills" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(e), p. 28). Yet, it heavily emphasizes entrepreneurship as a viable solution to promote development. The choice of entrepreneurship as a strategy for addressing youth unemployment has been criticized in research on the long-term effects. Some studies demonstrate changes in terms of behavior and knowledge following from skills training courses on entrepreneurship (Cho & Honorati, 2014, p. 110), but the overall conclusion is most often a lack of effect when it comes to increasing employment (Bausch et al., 2017; Cho & Honorati, 2014; Krafft & Rizk, 2021). Additionally, it is found that there is a high degree of risk related to this way of income generation, because it often entails access to less benefits, such as insurance and that most programs do not account for failed start-ups (Krafft & Rizk, 2021, p. 1521) . Thus, in a study on the specific contexts of Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia, the authors conclude that: "At best, youth entrepreneurship promotion appears to be an illmatched and ineffective solution to youth unemployment. At worst, if programs do work, they are potentially pushing youth into worse labor market outcomes" (ibid., p. 1522).

These points indicate that the choice of entrepreneurship as a strategy for development in the program is based on two mistaken assumptions. One regards the efficiency of self-employment, which, I argue, it might be able to trace back to the logics of Positive Youth Development and neoliberalism that both encourage and believe in the power of individual young people to succeed on their own. Another regards the local contexts, as the severe consequences which might follow from failed entrepreneurial projects are not considered. Here it seems as if the choice is based on assumptions about entrepreneurship rooted in a Danish context characterized by a high degree of social security. As noted by Meagher (2016) in a critical response to what she describes as increasing depictions of the informal sector in Africa as "labour markets full of dynamic potential" (p. 483): "the core problem in Africa is not finding work, but the productivity and conditions of work, and the benefits that people derive from their work" (ibid., p. 494). This point cannot seamlessly be transferred to the MENA region, as per the need to pay close attention to context. But it does inspire questions regarding the kind of employment that is pursued through the strategic framework. One of the characteristics of the informal sectors is exactly a high degree of precarious self-employment (Murphy, 2017, p. 679). By focusing large parts of the job creation around entrepreneurship, it seems as if the program intends to kick in a door which is already wide open – and which it turns out might not even be beneficial to enter. Furthermore, and in accordance with Meagher's line of thought, if the objective of the strategic framework includes creating employment of all kinds; not necessarily decent (see quote on page 41), and for a large part of it related with great risks, as the above research indicates, is it then a viable strategy for "[a] better life for young people in the Middle East and North Africa" (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021(d), p. 13) as the vision states? Finally, with the strong link between future prospects and employment, the justification of large parts of the program is based on an assumption that: "[R]ejects notions of adolescents as willfully reluctant to engage in the responsibilities and commitments of work as they explore and develop their own adult identities" (Murphy, 2017, p. 689). It might then be questioned if the heavy emphasis on employment at any cost is really in the best interests of youth, or if it is merely a vehicle used to protect Danish national interests, namely containing potential migrants?

This leads me to my next point regarding the power relations that are being (re)enforced by means of a program like DAPP. This relates to the privilege of some categories at the expense

of others as touched on earlier in the discussion as well. For, what are the effects of the silencing of intergenerational relations and the adoption of a representation of the problem being cut across the axis of inequality? It has been argued that such problem representation, undermines social cohesion and "disrupt[s] the potential for broader class consciousness" (Murphy, 2017, p. 689), thereby silencing problems that cut across generations. This includes what some researchers describe as a failing of capitalist and neoliberal economies characterized by market-led growth to sufficiently address (growing) economic inequalities (Brohman, 1995, p. 299; Murphy, 2017, p. 678). For example, Hickey and du Toit note that: "[I]t is often not people's lack of participation in markets that explains chronic poverty, but also processes of subjugation and exploitation that take place within markets, on the basis of economics as well as local history, politics, culture, gender and identity (Hickey and du Toit, 2017 as cited in Flynn et al., 2017).

Similarly, there is the power differences between Global North and Global South that is both a consequence of, and at the same time sustains these inequalities (Connell & Dados, 2014, p. 133; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2008, pp. 307-308). Development programs have long been criticized for being vehicles for neoliberal and Global North interests; it is one of the fundamental criticisms raised against the project of national development policies that it is embedded in inequal power relations between aid-sending and aid-receiving actors, and that it serves to preserve the existing world order (Brown & Grävingholt, 2016; Kjær, 2022; Lancaster, 2007). In that regard, the issue of migration also comes into play, as it is central for understanding the motivations behind the direction of the DAPP strategic framework. By definition, migration is not encompassed by New Political Economy of Youth, but it does of course become relevant in this context because of the strong representation of youth as those most likely to migrate. I find that this point reveals a fundamental difference in the way that "the turn to youth" unfolds in global development policies compared to national development policies. That is, the triple nexus of youth, unemployment, and migration that is used to encompasses the Danish national interest. These, national interest, comprise an extra dimension added to the tendency seen in global policies, like those presented in the literature review. Here I think that the patchwork of assumptions underlying this policy also come into being. For as opposed to New Political Economy of Youth which finds that it is the positive youth development that underpins the tendency they have termed "a global turn to youth", I have here identified several such underlying discourses, including the youth bulge theory and a security

discourse as well as the positive youth development. This is quite interesting as they are, at their core, containing contradictory notions. Yet, as also illustrated earlier in the discussion, they are configured in a way, so that they come to sustain each other in the following logical conclusion: Youth are marginalized, and it is therefore necessary that this group is addressed. This makes great sense, as youth also hold great potential – both in terms of their own empowerment and as resources for society to be unleashed. In fact, action is imperative as the poor life prospects of this group risk leading to radicalization or even migration.

This, I argue could be characteristic for the way that the mobilization of youth underpinned by neoliberal logics constitute itself in national development policies whereby the link between youth, employment and migration come to sustain not only neoliberal interests but also wider national interests that are framed as matters of security. However, more research on other national development policies is indeed needed before such conclusions can be reached.

# 8. Conclusion

In this thesis, the mobilization of youth in national development policies has been explored through a case study of the Danish Arab Partnership Program. More specifically, it has been investigated if the "global turn to youth", understood by some researchers to be driven by neoliberal logics, can be identified in national development policies, and in that case, how it unfolds in such a national context.

It can be concluded that youth is very present in the strategic framework, and that this presence is centered around four representations, namely youth as marginalized, youth as agents of change, youth as workforce and youth as potential migrants.

The representation of youth as marginalized forms the basis of the other three. By way of silencing almost all other categories, including the multiple intersecting identities of young people, age is highlighted as the main axis of inequality. This problem representation thus provides the justification for focusing the initiatives on youth. Youth as agents of change is strongly saturated with references to the positive youth development that assumes young people to be capable of- and willing to create change in their society. Hereby the rationalization of investing in this target group is further amplified, while at the same time silencing

intergenerational ties. Additionally, the representation of youth as workforce emphasizes the individual life prospects of young people as connected to employment, thereby nurturing an individualistic and aspirational subjectivity. In that sense, the interests of youth and the private sector are aligned, and the investment in private sector growth becomes an investment in youth and vice versa. Finally, the representation of youth as migrants represents migration as a consequence of poor life prospects amongst youth, closely related to the high rates of unemployment, and thereby as a desperate way for youth to fulfill aspirations for a better future. Furthermore, underpinned by the logic of youth bulge theory, migration is represented as a problem of security for Denmark. Investing in job creation and skills training initiatives thus become a matter of security, both for the DAPP countries themselves and for Denmark.

All together, these representations form a shared logic in which employment – and investments in enterprises on market terms – are positioned as important strategies for development, and in which youth as legitimate subjects of development are centered around "their potential to contribute to the (capitalist) world of work" (Murphy, 2017, p. 680). This raises critical questions regarding the effects following from such an understanding of development. The first regards the choice of entrepreneurship as a strategy of development. It is found that it rests on mistaken assumptions regarding local job markets as well as an overemphasis on the ability of individual youth to succeed, and research shows poor prospects for entrepreneurship as a way of countering youth development. Furthermore, the question is raised, if the indispensable focus on employment is in the best interest of youth or in fact a means through which national security interests can be managed. This leaves us at a well-known criticism raised against national development policies, namely its embeddedness in the status quo of unequal power relations between the Global North and the Global South. In that regard, it is carefully suggested, the nexus created through assumptions regarding youth, employment and migration can be understood as new from the perspective of New Political Economy of Youth. However, since this case study has been explorative, and due to limits regarding research design, it is necessary with further research on the field to conclude whether the identified tendencies can be found in other national development policies, and thus whether the context of Denmark can be understood as representative.

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