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**Climbing through the State:
Social Empowerment and Contentious
Actions in the Jordanian Outdoors**

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Abstract

Tourism has been a fief industry for state power in Jordan, used as state-building tool and hard-currency earner. However, the country's socio-economic structure and the current regional conflicts have hindered its development as the expected economic engine to achieve Jordan's independence from foreign aid. This work looks at a collective identity created around outdoors and adventure sports in Jordan that has taken advantage of previously unused natural spaces to develop an adventure tourism industry in the country. Their actions have been capable to directly challenge social and power structures in Jordan. By representing a new option and dissidence from pre-established social norms and developing a profitable economic industry that is able to modernize the stagnant tourism sector in Jordan, they have become an apolitical resistance to the country's socio-economic and power structures. Through a three-month ethnographic fieldwork and semi-structured interviews, this thesis records the daily activities of individuals belonging to the outdoors community in Jordan and the opinions of managers of adventure tourism companies in the country to focus on the empowerment of civil society actors and the challenges to develop an industry without the support of state authorities. The thesis identifies the modernization effects at a social and state level of grassroots initiatives and the ability of the state to adopt them as its own achievements.

Keywords: Jordan, tourism, adventure, outdoors, collective identity, alternative resistance, social empowerment

To Sweden, for your altruism and for being an example in this world

To Isabel, because nothing of this would have been possible without you

To the participants of this study and your courage and will to do things differently

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1. Introduction

After the 2011 popular uprisings in the Middle East and their outcome as civil wars in some occasions or more authoritarian governments in others, Jordan has been experiencing difficult times. Its economy was weakened already by the 2008 financial crisis due to a decrease in the foreign aid and the number of inbound tourist arrivals, both perceived as vital incomes for the country's economy. The violent outcomes of street demonstrations in 2011 worsened the situation, and Jordan started to receive hundreds of thousands of refugees into its borders, especially from Syria, putting a lot of pressure into the country's already weak economic ability to exist. Besides, social issues started to be at stake when the government was not able to provide jobs for its population and popular narratives about Syrians taking over Jordanians' jobs started to arise. The arrivals of numerous NGO's and international organizations as well as the flow of humanitarian money to the country due to its current value as a safe haven in the middle of violent conflicts has released some pressure from its weak economic structure. However, current regional conflicts do not help the country to attract enough investments to create a self-sufficient economy and Jordan is, as it has always been, dependent on foreign aid.

Jordan's geostrategic location has become its most important asset in the last few years (World Bank 2013; Muasher 2011). An artificial nation created after the Sykes-Picot agreement, with very scarce natural resources and a great ethnical diversity, has always been subject of doubts regarding its future existence. However, its current role housing hundreds of thousands of displaced nationals of neighboring countries and its part as regional hub for humanitarian assistance of regional conflicts have given it an important role in the regional political landscape. Hence, Jordan has become a focus of attention in the last few years and has recovered political importance as a home for Arabs with different origins, as well as its socio-economic status where policies of development are constantly carried out.

The 2011 uprisings in Jordan did not have any clear democratic outcomes and the country was not very much affected by this wave of demonstrations. The so called Black September violent civil conflict occurring in 1970 between the PLO and Jordanian national forces still plays a big role in the Jordanian society. The Jordanian-Palestinian dichotomy still exists, and it can be used by the authorities to enforce repressive methods on the civil population when presenting threads as coming from inhabitants with Palestinian origin, which account for about half the population. In this regard, this conflict in the Jordanian society may have played a big role when public demonstrations in Jordan during the 2011 regional uprisings were not as powerful as in neighboring countries. Hence,

Jordan becomes a great example to research alternative ways of resistance under authoritarian regimes. In this regard, my aim with this study is not just to stand by, give examples and build on those theoretical perspectives defending the existence of grassroots movements and daily experiences that are changing the Middle East, but also to extend this theoretical framework by giving an example of how these daily experiences have a direct impact on the state apparatus, motivating and enforcing its modernization.

1.1 Research Purpose

This thesis tries to research on new ways of resistance happening in the Middle East under post development situations, where the context is used by new generations to bring new practices to the region that were previously inexistent. In this sense, they are able to create new fields of knowledge in the country which, while being apolitical, directly challenge the state's authority due to their superior knowledge on the field, thus becoming political. In this case, I am focusing on outdoors activities and their outcome as a profitable economic tourism industry that is able to empower civil society actors in a sector seen as fief for the current political power. Nevertheless, I believe that the region is full of other examples, and through these quiet but powerful actions new generations bring change to the Middle East. Furthermore, I argue that the outcomes are not just the achievement of personal aspirations, but new means to modernize authoritative regimes where classical ways of political opposition are not allowed. Thus, my research question explores how a collective identity created around outdoors activities can potentially empower civil society actors and challenge power and social structures in Jordan by means of its economic output as a tourism industry. It also tries to explore the way in which the state takes over these grassroots initiatives to present them as its own achievement and modernization.

1.2 Disposition

After having introduced the thesis and its purpose, this work resumes by describing relevant academic literature for the aim of the research. I first look at important works that have acted as a reference to explain alternative ways of resistance in the Middle East, followed by writings that describe the creation of Jordan as a modern state, setting an important empirical basis to explain the current socio-economic situation of the country and the appearance of new collective identities. This section of the thesis ends examining relevant literature in the field of tourism development in Jordan and the Middle East.

The next chapter provides a theoretical framework to develop the ideas that I have tried to portray here. The notion of post development and the ideas of Asef Bayat and Alberto Melucci are present throughout the study, always in correlation with Foucault and Gramsci's thoughts.

Chapter 5 describes the methodology used for the accomplishment of this work, describing the materials, the selection of the participants and its reliability and validity.

In the next section I describe the participants and lay out the empirical findings of this study, which are followed in the last chapter by an analysis and a conclusion of the whole research, and a personal reflection considering the directions for further research.

2. Literature Review

This study tries to describe how development policies have created a post-development situation in Jordan where industries risk stagnation and a qualified middle-class population uses innovative ways of resistance to achieve personal aspirations and challenge the current status quo. In this research, I pay particular attention to social identities created around outdoors activities in Jordan and the way in which their actions help to challenge current structures in the tourism industry. Tourism has been one of the most important sectors of the Jordanian economy and an industry where a lot of hopes (and money) were put in order to achieve the ever-pursued aspiration of making Jordan a self-sustainable country.

2.1 Alternative Resistance in the Middle East

It is important for this work to describe new ways in which local populations challenge social and power structures. A lot of ink has been used to describe social movements and political opposition in the Middle East. However, I am trying to describe here a dissidence that avoids main channels of protest and contestation, and instead uses the opportunities created by the existing political system to open new ways of protest that challenge power structures without being a clear opposition to the system but, we could say, a complementary part of it. In this regard, there are interesting works that serve as an important reference for my purpose. Asef Bayats' *Life As Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East* (2010), serves as a theoretical basis for this work and will be farther examined in the next chapter. This work is especially valuable for my study due to its capacity to adapt social movement theory to new fields of action in a region where political authoritarianism hinders classical methods of protest and resistance. Benin and Vairel's *Social Movements, Mobilization and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa* (2013) gives us examples of great importance for this work due to the variety of alternative ways of mobilization we can find in the different articles. However, most of them are examples of clear opposition movements or are inscribed in political activism networks, being a direct form of resistance to the established political power. In Jordan's case I am speaking about resistance to social and power structures, but an "apolitical" way of resistance, not about classical political or activism opposition. Hence, a good example of apolitical resistance or dissidence work of reference for this study is Mark LeVine's *Heavy Metal Islam: Rock, Resistance and the Struggle for the Soul of Islam* (2008), because it opens the scope of how popular culture in the Middle East acts as a way to express individualism, create intercultural bridges and form spaces for democratization in determined social settings. My work describes a po-

litical dissidence through the practice of outdoors sports, and acts as an example of the many subcultures existing in the Middle East that do not feel represented by the current socio-political circumstances. Thus, this work is a great example of the variety of popular movements in a region stereotyped as homogenous and static.

2.2 Socio-Economic Origins of Jordan

The existing literature on this subject shows the social foundations of Jordan. Rogan (2002) tells how Transjordan had not been under actual administration and control of Istanbul until the second half of the 19th century, and through their lines I can interpret that it is a pure product of development policies. These territories were seen as the frontier zone where the pilgrimage caravan departing from Damascus went through every year to reach the holy cities of the Hijaz. After the loss of territories in Europe during the 19th century the Ottoman strategy was the establishment of cultivation and populated territories between those already existent administrative centers.

Rogan and Tariq (1994) explain how Circassian and Chechen refugees coming from Muslim populated territories conquered by the Russian Empire from the Ottomans played a big role and were of great convenience for this purpose. Their settlements perpetuated sedentary life in Transjordan and helped to build an important network of roads that communicated the different localities, paving the way towards economic development. The Ottomans confiscated those terrains that were not under cultivation. Consequently, Bedouins started to accept the Ottoman policies, began to establish title on most of the lands and their former lifestyle tended to transform towards sedentary life in most of the territory. This work explains the social and tribal foundations of Jordan as a nation-state shedding light on the role of the different ethnicities and tribes in the early beginnings of Transjordan as a separate political entity.

Fischback (2000) continues with the beginning of the British Mandate in Transjordan after World War I, a political system that started a new era of state intervention in the daily life of the peasants and citizens of the country. Fischback argues that despite some disputes, the population was quite happy with the intromission of the state in their daily lives and they welcomed the new land settlement. He thought cultivators of *musha*¹ villages were especially happy due to their access to credit from the Agricultural Bank, which had not been accessible until that moment. This policy did not seem to result in an important decrease of the financial dependence of Transjordan on British capital (ibid.; Bein 2001); the new need of liquidity favored by private property kept

¹ Villages where land was commonly shared by the peasants.

Transjordan dependent on foreign banks. In Fischback's eyes, the most important and historical consequences were the destruction of a social conceptualization of land ownership and the eradication of indigenous social aspects of shared agricultural lands. Despite these long-term consequences, the actual and ultimate significance of British land intervention in Transjordan lies in the legitimacy given to the Hashemite monarchy due to the cultivators' early satisfaction regarding land tenure, taxation and state intervention on land affairs. Also, socialistic ideas and nationalization of private properties in neighboring countries (Warriner 1962; Beinin 2001) strengthened this legitimacy. Jordanians were quite happy to maintain their land titles, and it was this almost inexistent intermission of the Hashemite in private affairs the reason that allowed them to stay in power (Tell 2013). This position respecting private property has shaped Jordan's socio-economic situation and explains its current situation. It also shows how policies of development are inherited practices from colonial times.

2.3 Tourism, State Building and Power Relations in Jordan

Waleed Hazbun's PhD thesis *Between Global Flows and Territorial Control* (2002a) sets an important theoretical basis to understand Jordan's tourism industry by looking at land tenure. Jordan's economy has always been dependent of foreign aid and its most important asset has been its geostrategic location (Piro 1998, Greenwood 2003), but the government had to look at new means to improve the economic and social situations, especially from the late 80s, and one of the industries they focused on was tourism (Hazbun 2002a, Knowles 2005).

There is a wide amount of literature exploring the use of touristic assets and archaeological sites as important tools for state building in Jordan. Maffi (2009) during colonial times, Katz (2005) focusing on the Jordanian West Bank until 1967, and Al Mahadin (2007) until the peace treaty in 1994, argue that tourism had been an important tool for state-building rather than a source of foreign currencies. Al Mahadin (ibid.) states that, due to the foreign aid received from the Gulf countries, Jordan did not need tourism for its economic survival, but for its survival as a state. This literature explains how Jordan, as a territory that had never existed as a political entity in itself and home for different ethnic groups, needed to reassert its legitimacy over the territory and defend its Jordanian roots in opposition to a Jordanian-Palestinian identity. In this sense, Al Mahadin (ibid.) argues that the government gave special importance to ancient pre-Islamic and early Islamic archaeological sites as well as to its anti-Ottoman position, avoiding much connection to several centuries of history that could act as a contradictory narrative to the essence of the country as a Hashe-

mite monarchy. Al Mahadin's work is important for this study because he sheds light on tourism as the core of a knowledge-producing machinery that defines and delimits the possibilities of governing in Jordan. Maffi (2009), Katz (2005) and Al Mahadin (2007) explain how the representations of Jordan produced by the authority, enhancing characteristics that link the Hashemites to the territory and try to give a longitudinal historical sense of it, create knowledge about the country's identity and legitimacy, reasserting the monarchy's power over a territory that has been defined by the ruling apparatuses.

In this sense, Al Mahadin (*ibid.*) and Hazbun (2002a) agree when arguing that tourism acquired special economic importance for the country once the 1994 Jordan-Israel peace treaty was signed and the expected economic consequences arrived. Tourists' arrivals from Europe, North America and Israel increased heavily in a short period of time (*ibid.*). Suddenly tourism became an industry of major importance for the Jordanian government, shifting its role as state-building machinery to a currency-earner one (Al Mahadin 2007).

In this sense, several authors have also written about the political significance of tourism to legitimize the peace treaty with Israel due to the supposed economic advantages that it would bring to the country and the role that tourism marketing had in portraying Jordan as a modern state (Yom 2009, Hazbun 2002b, 2004 and 2008, Gelbman 2008). Thus, tourism continued to be an important tool for the government to produce national narratives.

From then on, most of the literature produced around tourism in Jordan focuses on economic aspects and the fact that, since 1994, tourism has been the first industry of Jordan in terms of generated incomes (Kreishan 2011) and whether this would represent development or stability (Kanovsky 1994, Kelly 1998).

However, Hazbun's work (2002a) focuses on the impact of the social structure of Jordan on the economic outcomes of the tourism industry. He sheds light on how the reason why the state has not been the most important developer of the tourism industry in Jordan since the peace agreement is the legacy of land ownership adopted during the British Mandate. Although archaeological sites belong to the state, the lands surrounding these sites are normally privately owned by local tribes or rich merchants (Fischback 2000, Rogan and Tell 1994). This has made things more difficult when creating a national tourism strategy, adjust infrastructure and develop the historic sites in a way that would benefit everyone.

Instead, as several authors argue (Dean 2006, Brand 2001, Shunnaq et al. 2008) local powers have influenced a lot the result of the tourism industry in Jordan and the government has dele-

gated many tasks to foreign agencies and local populations. Tourism and site development have been carried out by agreements between foreign agencies and local populations, without a major implication of governmental agencies. When the government tried to induce development through touristic resources, state authorities never managed tourism spaces nor infrastructure (Abu Al Haija 2011). Members of Jordan's society have been able to assert their influence in the local economy by obstructing authorities' plans, affecting centralized strategies for the development of the country's resources.

In this regard, there is a considerable amount of literature focused on power relations in the tourism field in Jordan (as for example Chatelard 2005 and 2003, Brand 1995, Daher 2005). Political struggles between government agencies, private companies and local populations have been a common trend in tourism development in Jordan and have obstructed the realization of state-led plans. Hazbun (2002a) argues that the fragmented territory and the weakness of state agencies developed a tourism industry that did not reach the goals the government had planned. Instead, a rent-seeking system was established, where rival private interests controlled the touristic assets and did not allow tourism to generate external incomes.

As several authors have argued (Brynen 1992, Beblawi and Luciani 2015, Muasher 2011, Sharabi 1992), and as many other Arab countries at the time, the Jordanian bureaucracy was overstaffed and ruled by patronage systems, lacking professional competence and meritocracy. Thus, land owners near touristic sites joined by private capitals developed an infrastructure network that only provided necessary services demanded by tourists for a short stay and visits to archaeological sites, such as hotels and restaurants. There was a lack of central and professional strategies developed by qualified staff to offer other kind of services or attractions for longer stays at the sites.

Some literature shows how the efforts of state agencies to extend centralized control on touristic assets faced resistance and many challenges by the already locally created elites (Reid and Schwab 2006, Hazbun 2004). Furthermore, this literature shows how private foreign groups have bought lands from local populations at very high costs and how these transnational firms have built luxury touristic resorts and spaces that monopolize most of the rents from tourism flows. Their capacity to gather and offer services gives little room to local entrepreneurs to thrive and take advantage of tourists' expenditures.

Consequently, the Jordanian tourism industry, where a lot of expectations were put after the peace treaty with Israel, hasn't been able to become the imagined powerful engine of the Jordanian

economy with constant growth. This is partly due to the current unstable situation of the region, but mainly because of the socio-economic structure of the country.

2.4 Government's discourse on Tourism Development

As explained by Hazbun (2004), the Jordanian government's initiatives in this sector have been impeded by the current socio-economic circumstances. It was in this sense that the US, Jordan's main donor in the last twenty years (Sharp 2010) tried to readdress and set a plan for a sustainable development of the industry, which is Jordan's largest economic sector, the biggest employer of the country and the second most important foreign hard currency earner (Hamarneh 2015, World Bank 2013). In this regard, USAID has become the policy-maker of the tourism industry, mainly through the Jordan Tourism Board (JTB). Thus, *Economic Growth through Sustainable Tourism Project* (USAID 2014) is an important source of information for this study because it shows the official discourse regarding policies and projects for the development of this industry. Quite clearly, these policies are carried out with the approval and participation of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, but they have been designed by USAID (ibid.), stating the importance of foreign powers and practices of development in the construction of the country.

There is not much innovation from their previous reports and strategies (USAID 2011, 2013) and there is no mention in the whole report of local initiatives in outdoors and adventure travel. The official discourse does not seem to bother much about this sector and even less to include private initiatives in their policies. Consequently, there are no government-led initiatives to make of adventure travel an important branch in this sector, although it is an already growing and existent market in the country².

The existing literature on adventure tourism that may be of relevance for this study are official reports issued by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO 2014) in collaboration with the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA), which praise its resilience and the positive effects on local economies while emphasizing the importance of public-private sector initiatives. At the local level, most of the literature is nature and travel guides for commercial and leisure purposes, one of them written by the Israeli scholar Itai Haviv (Haviv 2000) which sets the basis for

² As expressed by some of the participants in this study. Look at section 5 of this thesis.

commercial activities in the Jordanian wadis,³⁴ as well as pioneers' works in adventure sports in Jordan such as Tony Howard's trekking and climbing descriptions (Howard 1987).

This literature shows us that there is a clear lack of academic and governmental knowledge produced around outdoors sports in Jordan and it reasserts the fact that government institutions are not capable to deal with every aspect of the economy. Furthermore, it confirms the importance of foreign powers in the policy-making process of Jordan and the liberalization strategy that the country has been carrying out in the last twenty years based on development policies (Cammett et al. 2015).

³ Arabic term for what we would know as canyons, is described by Cambridge dictionary as a valley that has a river that is usually dry except when it has rained.

⁴ This information was obtained during my fieldwork. In the words of one of the most important developers of adventure tourism in Jordan, "Itai Haviv walked the canyons from the West, from the Dead Sea. He started in the bottom and walked up the wadi. When that book was published, some Jordanians started to walk them too, and we started to do it the opposite way, bolting them and descending them with canyoneering practices".

3. Theoretical Perspectives

3.1 Collective Action as a Way of Resistance

To understand different forms of responses to the post-modern world's social control, it is interesting to look at Melucci's arguments. He argues that there are new spaces for conflict correlated to everyday life, conflicts such as identity or personal expression. The importance that personal individualism is acquiring in this world is a response to the instrumental rationality of current powers, and the efficacy that new social movements have is their capacity to show the power that resides beyond these rationalities (Buechler 2014). Thus, in this case, Melucci's thoughts are able to explain the empowerment of collective identities that, without having a clear political aim, create a dissidence and an alternative form of resistance through the practice of outdoor sports. Melucci is optimistic about the possibility of new social movements to find new spaces between the political power and everyday life where new expressions of resistance can come to existence. It is in these spaces where collective identities are constructed and collective action is carried out (ibid.).

As Melucci (1995) explains, during the last decades many social conflicts have been expressed in cultural terms challenging the dominant discourse, and not through political movements. He argues that daily life has been part of these conflicts where new roles are demanding independence by giving sense to their own lives. In this regard, Melucci applies the term collective action to a procedure claiming this independence resulting from a purpose formed by social relationships in a system of constraints and opportunities, where individuals acting together build an action that helps to activate their common relationships making sense of a shared belonging and the actions they pursue (ibid.). This is the case of those individuals involved in outdoors sports in Jordan who may not feel represented by the social and power structures of the country and have developed a common space of action where they can freely express their individualism and carry out their daily activities in a collective setting.

Collective action helps actors to claim the effects of their actions to themselves and to feel a sense of duration in their activities, being able to acknowledge the effects that their actions have had. Thus, individuals' common belonging to outdoors sports provides them a sense of alternative ways of living, recognizing their effects as a result of their daily activities and relationships in a common social setting. Due to the identification of collective action in regards of the environment the actors are surrounded by, the unity of this action lies in its own capacity to find itself within that environment. Jordan's social and economic constraints help these collective actors to acknowledge

a common belonging to outdoors sports and open spaces to perform their individualism in a common social sphere. Melucci keeps arguing that their own recognition as a collective group within a culture also reaffirms their self-belonging to that culture. He sees collective action as a process which over time will become a social movement; however, he considers it a good analytical tool because it shifts the focus from the top to the bottom, looking at how individuals are able to create a common identity taking advantage of those spaces left by current structures of power. He sheds light on the importance of collective action as networks of submerged groups where formal organizations may only happen temporarily, in opposition to other conceptions of movements (Buechler 2014). Ultimately, Melucci's understanding of collective actions is not based on goal oriented activities, but in the creation of new spaces for alternative daily experiences and ways of living. This theoretical framework perfectly explains the appearance and interactions of the collective action this thesis is describing due to the individuals' lack of preconceive goals and outcomes.

Melucci's theoretical framework is very important as it explains the appearance of new ways of resistance in situations where the absence of democracy may obstruct formal forms of movement. In this case, collective identity and action may help us to explain one of the ways in which average Jordanians challenge current structures of power.

3.2 New Ways of Resistance: Life as Politics

In this study it is also interesting Asef Bayat's theory (2010) due to the stress he puts in explaining everyday forms of resistance. In my opinion, this is intrinsically interrelated to the previous paragraphs, but it adds clear and explicit examples of new forms of resistance that directly challenge current structures of power. In opposition to Melucci's theory, Bayat's social nonmovements seem to have a clear goal, which is the empowerment of numerous individuals in regards of the existing power structures. Besides, while Melucci pays special attention to the appearance of collective actions, Bayat seems to look at their responses and challenging activities. In this sense, his concept of social nonmovements is helpful to understand the possible outcome of collective actions, due to the independence it shows from typical and formal ways of organization and the common-sense in those actions that do not start as a movement. As he wrote, public spaces are not just a point of friction between politics and citizens, but a space where people form identities and extend their protests. Although he talks of collective actions of non-collective actors, I believe that these will later become collective actors due to their mutual recognition and the existence of a common habitus (Bour-

dieu 1972). What is interesting for this thesis is how he describes them as action-oriented collective activities, where there is a direct practice of the actor's claims without attention to institutions, and how the actions are involved in what is considered everyday life. He also argues that these nonmovements may become actual organizations in time of weakness of regimes or power structures, but they can achieve great transformations if they keep acting within society. At the same time, they may disappear if they become part of the logic of power, but this would mean that it had a positive effect and the state has transformed itself (Bayat 2010). This way of resistance, Bayat defends, should give us hope due to the challenges they represent to surveillance and authoritarian rule, while instigating change and avoiding violence. In most of the cases Bayat shows urban examples that are being affected by globalization and neoliberal policies and whose needs are not provided or tolerated by the state, i.e. water or energy supply, spaces for commerce, housing, ways of clothing, music taste, etc. He also argues that these nonmovements become forms of resistance due to the great amount of people devoted to these collective practices. However, I believe that Bayat's ideas can also be viewed through smaller scopes, and as a way where the population may not challenge the direct rule of authoritarian governments but show them their deficiencies and the many spaces they leave for everyday life resistance. Social nonmovements formed out of collective actions may also refer to practices that start being frequented by people in a smaller scale to become a bigger challenge in the future. In my opinion, many of those examples he displays have already gained an indisputable terrain from the political power and they have conquered the streets of important cities. In our case, I would like to adopt most of Bayat's theoretical ideas to extrapolate them to other examples, in smaller numbers, but in cases whose growth may cause a challenge to power due to the absence of governmental knowledge, or the adoption of these new forms of resistance by the power, leading to the transformation of the state through daily practices. Also, instead of looking at the streets, a focus to the fields can also be adopted, and urban groups affected by those development neoliberal policies in chaotic cities with few future perspectives may turn their actions to conquer those unexplored and uncontrolled spots where there is a lack of clear power. Thus, Bayat's theory may be adopted to explain how young Jordanians, affected by current socio-economic circumstances, use their daily lives to achieve power in an open space where there are not institutions of control, but an enormous playground where a battle for power must be fought.

3.3 Power and Hegemony

The theories of all the previous scholars rest on Foucault's presumptions and I believe it is important to have a short comment on them. Foucault's understanding of *le peuple* is very relevant for this thesis' discussion. In his studies of disciplinary power he describes the attempts by the established political apparatus to control and manage the population. However, he gives place for the appearance of social actors that are not willing to accept the role they should have in society. Instead, he describes the existence of citizens that may use common daily practices that do not adjust to mainstream habits and therefore challenge the established power (Foucault 2004b). These actors that are supposedly part of the population, are the ones that by disregarding the norms and their presupposed role in society manage to disrupt its "correct" functioning, directly challenging the disciplinary power exerted by the authorities.⁵ This theoretical framework is of great relevance for this study, due to its ability to explain new ways of resistance and the appearance of dissident subjects with political challenging practices that scape classic ways of political opposition.

Foucault's ideas are also important to explain the empowerment of this social dissidence in Jordan, due to the importance that the concepts of knowledge and power have in this study. Jordan, as every authoritarian and post-colonial state, created institutions through which it could assert its legitimacy and practice state-building policies omnipresent throughout the whole territory (Alon 2007). Thus, the government discourse tried to show the institutional knowledge on public spheres and socio-economic policies in order to establish its power over the country. As an authoritarian state, it tried to portray a constant power from which decisions emanated and tried to cover all the political and social spectrums (Foucault 2004a, 2004b). However, its weakness as a state dependent on foreign aid may show us that its discourse and therefore its power didn't cover every aspect of the social and economic life. At this point, civil society or social actors may find fissures where governmental knowledge is nonexistent and yet to be developed. It is in these cases when a new discourse may be produced by non-government or institutional actors, accumulating or creating powerful discourses which cannot be challenged by government institutions due to their peaceful nature, taking advantage of the inefficacy or lack of governmental discourse. In those cases, this newly produced knowledge cannot but be accepted by the government, transferring or accepting the

⁵ These actors are *le peuple, a-sha'b*, those who refuse the status-quo. Foucault (2004b,45) says: "Le peuple, c'est celui qui se comporte par rapport à cette gestion de la population, au niveau même de la population, comme s'il ne faisait pas parti de ce sujet-objet collectif qu'est la population, comme s'il se mettait hors d'elle, et par conséquent c'est eux qui, en tant que peuple refusant d'être population, vont dérégler le système."

hegemony of new spheres of knowledge to social and private actors who are, at the same time, complementing and challenging the state.

In this sense, we also rely on Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony. This study shows how hegemony is dependent on powerful discourses, and where there is not governmental discourse and official knowledge, hegemony may rest on social and cultural actions from subaltern actors, challenging the state's authority (Gramsci 1971). While Foucault is able to describe the production of knowledge as a way to attain power, Gramsci explains how the established power has the ability to keep its position by using its apparatus to provide legitimacy to its rule, by means of convincing discourses. However, the lack of knowledge may open new spaces of friction where the state cannot provide legitimacy, strengthening the discourse of subaltern actors. Thus, a political dissidence may be able to hold power due to its ability to produce a hegemonic discourse based on its knowledge in the matter. In this regard, Foucault's and Gramsci's ideas are the ultimate theoretical framework for this study where I try to portray the existence of new challenging methods in the Middle East.

4. Methodology

4.1 Design of the study

This study tries to describe the appearance of a collective identity around adventure sports in Jordan and its output as an industry that challenges current structures of power. With this attempt I decided to use a qualitative methods design where I combine micro-ethnography and semi-structured interviews. The purpose of the study is the understanding of a process through the description and observation of the individuals and professionals' experiences where the main source of information are oral descriptions from the participants, researcher's observations in the social environment and interviews with professionals of adventure tourism. Qualitative research tends to emphasize words rather than quantification in the collection of data (Bryman 2012), and my main pieces of analysis are described and observed individual experiences of young middle-class Jordanians sharing a common passion for outdoors adventure sports, as well as answers given by participants involved in the adventure tourism industry during semi-structured interviews. Thus, a qualitative approach is best suited for the research proposal due to the heavier weight that described and observed personal experiences have in this study when compared to quantitative data. This methods design allows us to interpret the social world from the perspective of the people involved in it and the examination of that world by its participants. Thus, the design of the study also has an interpretivist and inductive approach, due to the emphasis of this work on understanding the actions and social world from the point of view of the individuals involved in this study and the absence of hypothesis from the beginning (Creswell 2007, Bryman 2012).

4.2 Selection of Participants

The individuals included in this study are just a few of the many people involved in the growing-community of adventure sports in Jordan. These participants were selected for this study for several reasons. First of all, all of them have been very active in this social environment for several years. Second, all of them represent a unique and personal perspective whilst being representative of that middle-class young Jordanians affected by the economic and social structures that I have tried to describe in previous sections. Third, during my fieldwork I spent quite a lot of time with them during their social and professional life, which helped me to obtain quality-information and understand their social world from the participant's perspectives. Forth, their personal stories, while being diverse and different from one another, are also of interest for this study due to their common belonging to the social world created around adventure sports in Jordan. And fifth, all of them have a

different background completely unrelated to adventure sports and, while some of them have a permanent job in their field of study, they all happen to meet in the leisure and commercial practices of adventure sports in Jordan.

Regarding the interviews, I have selected three different managers and founder of some the most active adventure tourism companies in Jordan at the moment. The perspectives and opinions of these professionals are of high value to our study due to their experiences in developing the industry in the country. These persons find themselves in a priceless position to describe the circumstances under which they have started and developed their businesses. I purposely selected participants that held the same position within the companies and industry to have a homogeneous sample for my research. Due to the interpretative approach of this study, sample homogeneity works best with the foundations of this kind of analysis and helps to better contextualize the study within a defined setting (Robinson 2014).

During my fieldwork I observed that the companies whose managers I have interviewed are the ones channeling most of the inbound and local adventure tourism, either through their own activities or subcontracting third parties, such as guides, transportation, food or accommodation suppliers. Although this is not the totality of the local actors, this sample size allows us to study locatable and prominent voices in the sector and provides a scope for the understanding of cross-case generalities through defined and valuable identities in the field of study (*ibid.*).

Following Robinson's (*ibid.*) criteria for participant selection, this study had a purposive sample strategy. Due to the inductive qualitative approach of the research, the selection of these representative participants may give us rich-content analysis and a main general view of their social environment and the circumstances under which adventure tourism is developed from a professional point of view (Bryman 2012).

Finally, the source sampling selection for both methods was a snowball sampling occurring during my fieldwork in Jordan. During that time I got to know important local actors in adventure travel and a great amount of people for whom adventure sports played an important role in their social life. It was through my fieldwork and the interaction in the professional environment that I got to know representative individuals for this study.

4.3 Micro-ethnography

Due to the nonexistent official documentation or literature on adventure tourism in Jordan, I acquired a lot of valuable information for this research during my fieldwork. From October to December

2014 I spent three months within one of the most active Jordanian companies in the sector, being very close to the office staff during their daily work. During previous stays in Jordan I also had the possibility to discover part of this social world that was being created back in 2008/2009. I am in continuous touch with most of the participants in this study, whom I visited and met in more occasions after my fieldwork. During that fall I accompanied the guides during their working time, assisting with their tasks in some occasions, and observing their field work very closely. I acted as a participant observer, due to my position in the group's main activities where I was a regular in the social environment and I was involved in some of the principal activities (Bryman 2012). From this form of micro-ethnography I got to know some of the most active developers and companies of the industry in the country. I also visited and explored natural settings where adventure sports are carried out and I discovered a wide range of commercialized adventure activities offered to the public in this country. This micro-ethnography helped me to become part of the social group, and meet most of the participants in this study. This ethnography was basic in order to understand the social world from local and representative perspectives; it was the main tool to really fulfill the interpretivist approach of this study. The methods used were informal conversations and constant field notes that allowed me to be involved in the real environment from where the social conception and links that unite one-another were possible to identify and comprehend.

4.4 Visual material

The images shown in this study are documents taken by the researcher, the participants and a professional photographer that spent some time in the field with me. They all are representative of the activities and the social world of the individual experiences described in this research. They help the study to acquire more transparency and give a closer approach to the social world I am trying to describe, as well as to get closer to the interpretivist condition of this research. Some of the photographs have also been taken as an *aide-mémoire* during my fieldwork while also acting as sources of data for the study. Those participants that were not photographed by me during the micro-ethnography gave me their own-chosen images. My aim with this documentation has been to show a realistic approach to the study, using these data as windows on the reality of the participant's world, and this diversity in the sources helps to avoid a reflexive stand from the part of the researcher (Bryman 2012). Furthermore, this source of data will show us the connection that these middle-class Jordanians have with nature, showing us the role that outdoors play in their common understanding of and links to the social world they live in.

4.5 Semi-structured interviews

The most relevant data about the entrepreneurial environment I obtained for this study was through the semi-structured interviews I did with professionals. While during the micro-ethnography I got very valuable information in the topic, these interviews helped me to attain a broader spectrum of opinions and experiences at the entrepreneurial and management level. The reason why I decided to use this kind of interview is because it allowed me to cover specific topics of importance for the development of this industry in the country. At the same time, it gives the interviewees an important margin to reply to the answers and I could add questions to follow up on some topics that I thought could be relevant for the study (Hermanowicz 2002). Hence, the participants can develop their answers and feel flexibility when describing their own perspectives (Bryman 2012). The interviews took place via Skype due to the impossibility of the researcher to do them during the fieldwork. Their names are fictitious in order to keep the anonymity of the professionals.

The interviews were first transcribed and then analyzed. I pre-established themes of interest for the research based on the literature I did on the topic and then looked at new themes observing repetitions and differences (Brinkmann 2013, Davidson 2009). The results were: society and individuals, official institutions and government, markets and future outcomes.

4.6 Reliability and Validity

Fieldwork and participation certainly helped to recognize a high level of congruence between concepts and observations (ibid.) that affect the common social environment of the participants and were easier to identify at the entrepreneurial level once the interviews were transcribed. It also helped me to understand and visualize some of the cases observed in the field and described during the interviews, resulting in important concepts for the research. My close distance and participation in the world that I am trying to describe may have affected my observations at some point during the fieldwork (Le Compte and Goetz 1982). Nevertheless, the variety of participants and the amount of people involved in this community make it difficult for the research to acquire a unique positionality, resulting in a better understanding of the social world rather than individual personal stances. However, recognizing my positionality and my possible subjectivity at some points during my presence on the ground also helps me to identify these aspects when analyzing the data obtained from the interviews and trying to avoid the “going native” perspective.

A recognized threat for qualitative research is the researcher bias, which should be identified in order to ensure results are not influenced by it (Lewis 2009). As a young scholar who loves outdoors and adventure activities I must recognize my positionality as individual sharing common personal stances with the participants and the support of this kind of activities. Hence, I identify this bias as the most important threat to overcome during this study where I try to describe the situation with the biggest objectivity as possible.

In order to avoid compromising interpretation validity, I have used open-ended questions during my semi-structured interviews that allowed the respondent to elaborate their answers (ibid.). In the case of the interviews I bore always in mind the importance of asking questions that aren't misleading and directional and allow the respondent to give a natural answer (ibid.).

This study does not try to state an ultimate truth about a determinate social world and business environment in Jordan, but to describe individual experiences and make sense of a world in a determined framework. By describing the following experiences and interviewing three of the most important actors in the adventure travel industry in Jordan, this study tries to create an external validity and transferability by portraying the situation affecting most of the cases trying to develop this industry in the country. By doing this, I believe that the appreciations and the results of the study may also be transferable to other individuals, companies and new-born non-government-led industries, restrained to a similar institutional, cultural and social context.

Ultimately, the reliability and validity of this study lies in its transparency. The individual experiences and descriptions in this research show self-described stories of the own participants. Some names are openly shared in this study, are well-known representatives of the social world I am describing and have accepted to be part of this study. Their presence in this social environment is easily founded by their presence on adventure sports-related social networks groups in Jordan. Regarding the interviews, I preserve the anonymity of the participants by providing fake names, but their answers have been recorded with their previous approval.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

While describing the development of an industry based on personal and business experiences in a country where the rule of law may be subject to authoritarian practices, we must be aware that comments or opinions on institutional practices may not be well received by the authorities. In my

research I stressed the role that institutions played in the Jordanian tourism sector, and I addressed some questions on this matter to the interviewees. Hence, although the answers I obtained are not critical with the nature of the institutions but with the professional practices they have towards adventure tourism, I consider the professionals' anonymity one of the main ethical principles to keep throughout this work, therefore I provide fake names in the case of the interviewed managers. Another reason why I consider anonymity a basic ethical principle here is the small amount of entrepreneurs especially devoted to this sector in Jordan. While it seems that the amount of practitioners is increasing, the outdoors community in Jordan is quite small still. The practice of common activities and sports, their concurrence in the same business market, their professional relations or the common belonging to social networks' groups regarding adventure topics in Jordan would make it easy for the people involved to recognize the participants of this study. I doubt whether there would be any particular consequence for them but from the researcher point of view these potential issues should be avoided.

Besides, every participant has been informed about the nature of the research and they have accepted to be recorded during the interviews. Hence, issues such as invasion of privacy and deception are not at stake in this research due to the consent given by the participants to the development of this study through the previously described methodological practices and their voluntary answers to the questions they confronted.

5. Findings

5.1 Profiling the Participants

During my study and fieldwork I met many significant cases of young Jordanians linked by a collective identity created around adventure sports. The amount of people I met that was connected to this world and to its commercial activities was quite numerous, it is growing fast in Jordan and during my micro-ethnography I got to know dozens of cases that could be of interest for this study. However, I decided to limit the number to seven participants, which in my opinion are important local sources to explain the collective identity created around these activities and are good representatives of a new wave of Jordanians challenging governmental and social structures in the tourism sector of the country. All of them have several points in common, which are a trend among most of the people sharing this collective identity in the country. They all are part of the same generation, they have university degrees or some sort of higher education in different fields, they are now involved in adventure sports commercial activities and they all share social circles due to their belonging to a collective identity.

Hakim al-Tamimi is a 30 years old Jordanian with a degree in Management obtained at the University of Jordan. He grew up in an upper-middle class Jordanian-Spanish family. He started climbing when he was a teenager and this sport became one of his passions, thus he got to know international climbers that had started to develop climbing routes in Jordan since the 80s, such as Tony Howard and Wilfrid Colonna. Hakim started to discover the Jordanian countryside, paying special attention to its wadis and canyons. In 2006 he started his own company in Jordan, bolting some of the wadis in order to descend them and bring commercial activities to these remote corners of the country. Hakim has also opened around 150 rock climbing routes throughout the country and obtained sponsorship to equip climbing routes in cooperation with European climbing federations. Besides, he has cooperated with several NGO's training local communities in rock climbing safety techniques, such as young Bedouins in Wadi Rum in order to promote quality tourism services in the area. The lack of governmental institutions in these matters has positioned Hakim as one of the main referents of adventure sports in Jordan, and his activities have helped many other Jordanians to become involved in adventure sports.

Safa Muhi is a 30 years old Iraqi that has lived in Jordan since she was nineteen years old. She is one of the many expats that form the current Jordanian society. She left Iraq in 2004 due to the unstable situation in the country and moved to Jordan with her family, where she started a

degree in Computer Science in 2005 at the University of Jordan, graduating in 2010. She started climbing six years ago and she has not stopped ever since. Safa is currently one of the best female Arab climbers and she has been the first sponsored female climber in the Middle East. She currently works in the Iraqi Embassy in Amman as what she described as “a very boring job”, and acknowledging that it is that boring that she always spends some working hours “watching rock climbing videos on Youtube”. Safa trains several days a week in an indoor climbing in Amman and she also works as a climbing instructor outdoors during the weekends. Since she started climbing she has created a passion and she forms part of new social circles created around adventure sports. Safa has been an example for other women that have started climbing in the last few years in Jordan.

Heba Ali is a Jordanian born in 1986 and she graduated in 2008 in modern languages at the University of Jordan, having Spanish and English as majors. She started working for six months for international education establishments organizing educational exhibitions for international universities in Amman. Then she became a freelance translator and in 2010 she started working in the office of an adventure travel company in Amman. She got involved in this world due to her employer, which also was a university friend. She now organizes the commercial activities of the enterprise, such as hiking trips, rock climbing courses and canyoneering descents. Heba also enjoys outdoors activities, and she has been climbing indoor walls and paragliding in the Jordanian landscapes. Heba realized that she was affected by multiple sclerosis eight years ago, which has affected her physical performance. However, she is very active in the sector and a few companies have named a wadi after her. Her enthusiasm and action have encouraged others to be involved in adventure sports.

Marwan Maayta is a 26 years old Jordanian graduated in Chemical Engineering. He decided not to work in that field and instead he has been devoted to his passion in the last years, which is climbing. Marwan is now the current chief instructor and route setter at the most important indoor climbing wall in Jordan and biggest in the Middle East, where many Jordanians are being introduced to climbing and many actors involved in adventure sports meet regularly. Marwan has been sponsored to participate in climbing trips abroad and has also been invited to join professional climbers in a couple of occasions in Europe. He has also participated in projects involving training local communities in Jordan and cooperating with NGOs. Marwan is probably the best climber in Jordan nowadays, being among the top Middle Eastern climbers. His quality, friendliness and climbing projects in Jordan and abroad are inspiring others to be part of the community as well.

Markus is an expat living in Jordan. He described himself as a person that loves nature and the Jordanian landscapes. He had a background on project management and he associated with a Jordanian that had been involved in the tourism industry previously. Their interest for nature and outdoor activities made them get together to create a new company in Jordan three years ago. This interviewee is one of the many expats settled in Jordan, which account for an important part of the population nowadays and their good economic position regarding national standards is a boost for the economy, especially in leisure activities such as the ones he is carrying out. He is confident about the positive effects that the company's business are doing in local communities, both in the urban population and in the rural areas, where more and more people adhere to outdoors activities and populations notice an economic impact in their daily lives.

Hamza is a Jordanian national that started his commercial activities back in 2006. He has been one of the pioneers in the industry and has described his experience as being difficult, mainly due to the problems posed by the institutions and the little help and efforts received from them when promoting these activities within the country and abroad. As well as the previous interviewee, he is also confident about the positive effects that these practices have in the Jordanian population, both in economic and social terms. When he graduated from university, he decided to do something different and take advantage of the unused Jordanian nature. Since then, he has never stopped promoting hidden spots of the countryside and showing the potential of this industry. His practices have motivated many to be involved in this world and to start professional careers as guides or instructors in several sports such as canyoneering and climbing.

Rami is a middle-age Jordanian man passionate for nature and outdoor activities. He started exploring the Jordanian canyons back in 2004/2005, and he is one of the pioneers of commercial canyoneering in Jordan. He states that when he first discovered some of the canyons he was amazed by the beauty and potential for outdoor adventures. He used to hike through the Jordanian landscapes, but he was fascinated by the canyons when he got in touch with them, and he started accumulating technical knowledge and certifications. Since then, his company has been one of the most actives and representatives in the sector in Jordan. In some occasions, he has also been part of the development of tourism strategies for the Hashemite Kingdom.

5.2 Formation of New Identities

One of the first things I acknowledged during my micro-ethnography and interviews is the creation of new identities around adventure sports. It is very obvious how people with different social and ethnic backgrounds have found something in common that unites them and brings them together, creating important and numerous social groups that keep growing day after day. Most of the individuals belonging to this collective identity are Jordanians between 20 and 35 years old. They have found activities that take them out of previous social circles and connect them with other young people affected by the same social structures where they are able to share new ways of living and passions in common. As explained by Marwan, he enjoys climbing because:

You can focus and forget life stress and because climbing communities are very friendly and you get to meet many people around the world, share ideas and learn from each other. Ideas not only in climbing, but other topics: living habits, beliefs, cultures, etc.



Heba also expresses her feelings when explaining her belonging to this community:

Renaming Wadi el Salayta to Wadi Heba after my name to encourage disabled people to do adventures as their disability should not stop them, that pushed me even more to adventures because I'm not just setting my soul free but I'm helping others to break free from the crippling body we (special-needs people) live in. All this made me see life from a different angle and expanded my horizon, which all made me stronger. An MS patient (second stage secondary progressive), knowing that my health is declining a day after a day and all I think about is when my next adventure will be and how to enjoy the life we have.

Hakim also points out that “everything changed when I got hooked: the circle of friends, the way I see things, my interests, my clothing, my life style, everything...”



In an era where populations may be constantly connected to the outer world, these individuals find in adventure sports another way to get connected to practices that happen all around the planet, and a way to create a collective identity that unites them and allow them to express their individualism within a group setting that offers protection and security for this to happen. Thus, we

find a collective identity that includes both genders and people with different socio-economic backgrounds.

5.3 Social Change and Empowerment

Another important finding of this work is the social change that is happening in the individual perceptions of some of the young population circles of the Jordanian society, which it could also be extrapolated to other countries affected by common socio-economic frameworks. Throughout this study I could perceive how the participants and many other individuals I had the chance to meet during my fieldwork, have different ideas of social relations than the ones inherited from their parents and previous family generations. Their presupposed futures such as getting married at an early age, working and forming a family are obviously being distorted by the contemporary world. All those that have had the chance to grow up in middle or middle-high class families have also had the chance to discover other societies. By means of traveling or simply affected by the outer world through the consumption of audiovisual products, a large number of young individuals is also envisioning new ways of living. Thus, through the description of personal experiences we can see how activities that were not common in the Jordanian society are affecting individuals' perceptions of their lives within a determined social structure. This is the case of Safa, for example, when she explains that she had fear of heights and she wanted to overcome it and climbing did help her but, as she said:

It did more than that, it helped me fight for myself, for what I believe in and for who I really am. It helped me let go off the pain and the war trauma. Each fight felt like a mountain I had to climb and all I have to do is hang on keep believing in myself and be patient in order to reach the top. It helped me accept myself and be proud of myself for being a woman when all the people around me tried to resize me and make me feel small for being a woman, look down on me like I'm not as important as men. It really made me go through that and overcome the feeling of shame that my society made me feel about myself for 25 years. For me climbing is not just a sport, it's my oxygen.



Although the aim of this work is not to explicitly show women's empowerment, this sentences are a clear example of how adventure sports provide strength and capability in individuals to perceive society from a different scope, in a way that their actions contribute to social change and individual's empowerment in an environment where individual experiences are constantly affected by preconceived social and cultural settings. Thus, Safa pursues:

It's very silly how people kept asking me if I'm climbing still after I got married, and if my husband "lets me" climb like I'm his property and it's his decision to allow me or not. I always answer them with a smile and say: if he was against it I would not be his wife.

This study also shows other examples of individuals that change their professional plans to be devoted to adventure sports, avoiding presupposed ideas of pursuing professional careers in their field of studies. Adventure sports have given the possibility to acquire a job and a passion at the same time that is inspiring Jordanians to go abroad, meet new communities and perceiving other ways of living. Marwan explains:

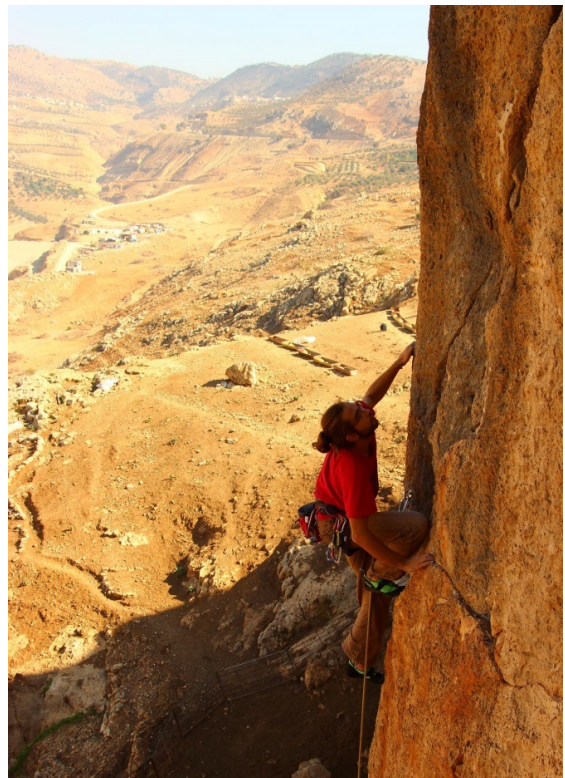
My life changed a lot. I met many people with different lifestyles, inside and outside of Jordan. Some people had a great influence on me, and I got many ideas that helped me develop the lifestyle that best suits me. [People involved] also learn more about society and accept each other, as there are people from different professions and social classes who climb and share the same passion. Adventure sports in general create a nice atmosphere to look at similarities rather than differences. In short, people become more accepting.

Heba also points out how her life changed once she started working in an adventure tourism company:

Actually what made me choose working in an adventure company despite my disability is to challenge myself and prove to myself that nothing is big enough to stand in my way. My disability opened a door for me and made me enter a world of freedom where I jumped off a plane (skydive) and a mountain (paraglide). Dive in the

5.4 Claiming a space

Another feature of this study is the discovering of will that younger generations have to take over spaces that until the moment had been forgotten by the local institutions and economic actors. Most of the people practicing adventure sports are settled and have carried out their lives in Amman, in an urban environment excessively populated and with poor urban planning (Potter et al. 2009). Amman's urban distribution makes it difficult to find public spaces where people could develop their youthfulness and politics of fun, talking in Bayat's terms (Bayat 2010). Those looking for free spaces have it difficult in a city devoted to private housing and streets full of cars. In this sense, the pioneers and the



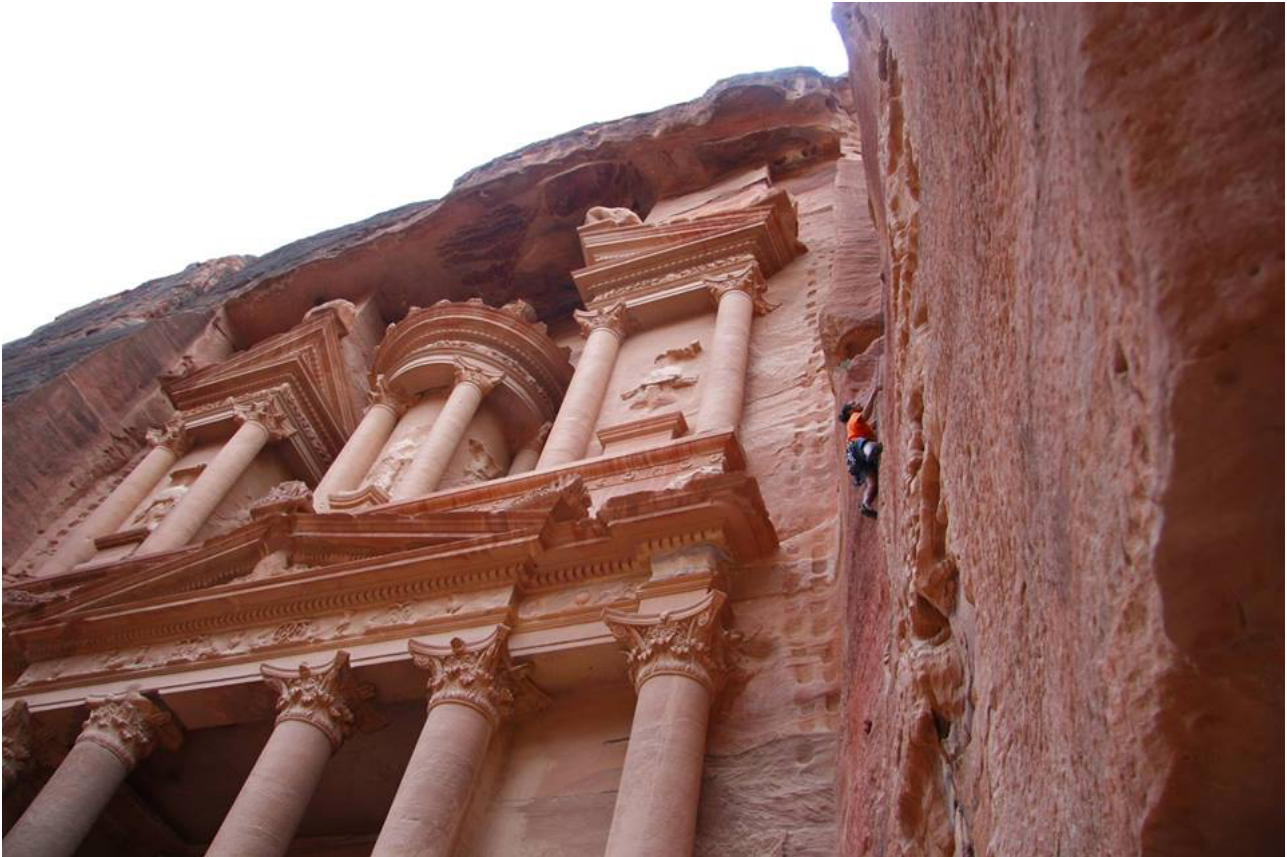
practitioners of these sports have found in the Jordanian outdoors a wonderful playground where they can develop their potential as young people in a modern world. As Marwan explains:

The amount of people who do adventure sports is growing. Climbers' numbers are growing but slower. Some can't commit but the cool thing is that they become hooked to something new; if they are not climbing, they might be canyoning, hiking or doing something out of the usual.

The obstacles and the very few places in the city to develop that youthfulness has pushed young Jordanians to express a collective identity allowing for individualism in the undervalued Jordanian nature, finding free spaces to develop activities that the urban environment of a big Arab city did not offer. Furthermore, a populated city such as Amman where there is a constant traffic of people living within a social framework of a city with deep religious and traditional roots did not offer place for the individualism of those that do not feel attached or connected to those social presumptions. Thus, well-educated young Jordanians with farther sights than spending their time in a city, finding a job and committing to their families went out to the barely-populated rural areas of Jordan where a new world of freedom and possibilities to develop their curiosity and inquisitiveness was awaiting. A good example of it is the constant activity opening and bolting new routes throughout the country, as well as the use for adventure sports and commercial activities in the Jordanian wadis. Other examples are the promotion of hiking and biking routes by several Amman-based companies that were only used by rural populations and now they share with urban individuals, two completely different spectrums of the Jordanian social structure. As Markus explains:

The concept of hiking for leisure I think is growing in popularity in the cities where people want to get out the weekend, stretch the legs and do something different. And I think, so certainly among young Jordanians is growing in popularity as they experience it, they are enjoying it so that's growing [...] Every weekend we are getting new people coming, that have not hiked before and are getting a lot from nature, a lot from the outdoors,

And Hamza acknowledges that “more and more Jordanians are going outdoors, are discovering outdoors, they are getting out of their comfort zone, see something different that they have before”.



5.5 Professionalization and Government's Stand

Once a few individuals started practicing adventure sports in Jordan, they also saw their economic potential, especially related to the tourism industry. Hence, new local actors started to commercialize their practices in areas that hadn't seen much movement until the beginning of these practices. Their main target clientele were Jordanians that could afford this leisure (which were not many at that time) and inbound tourists. Entrepreneurs saw clear positive economic effects in these practices, creating jobs for local guides and hiring services from local communities. Besides, they thought, it would help for the diversification of the industry. However, their relationships with governmental institutions to promote these activities in the country have not been easy, and as stated by the participants who are managing a company, “they haven't been helpful”. They regret that, due to importance of the tourism industry in the country and the amount of money put into its marketing

and development, authorities have omitted any consideration to include these practices in their programs and help entrepreneurs in the construction of a fruitful industry that may be of relevance for the country's economy. As one of the participants expressed:

Referring to Jordan portraying itself as an adventure destination, I think for the main commercialization it just means go on a Jeep tour in Wadi Rum. That's going in an adventure [...] I think they could recognize that adventure, especially hiking and biking trips, is a specialism, and they could definitely focus on that particularly it is acknowledged that it's a different aspect of tourism and there are some companies that are actually specialized on that and they could... You know, sometimes an adventure travel agent is coming to Jordan looking to work with partners and it feels like at tourism boards don't understand that there are specific companies that are actually experts in this. Actually would be worth talking to us directly rather than recommending it to the main stream tour companies.

Hence, despite the little or inexistent effort and attention that institutions have paid to this industry, several companies have managed to overcome these difficulties and portray Jordan as an adventure destination too. The reason for this is not clear, but some of the interviewees fear that the already formed tourism oligarchy has an important weight in the tourism board, and the existent clientelism structures are not very happy about the insertion of newcomers and possible competitors in the profitable tourism industry. When asked about the role of governmental institutions when developing adventure tourism, one of the interviewees answered:

Denial and rejection. Until very shortly they were just like we are outdoors, we don't belong into the system, we should become tour operators and we should become licensed historical guides, and what we are doing is wrong, we shouldn't be doing it, and we have no clue and blah, blah, blah... So it was more of denial and rejection. The government did not want us to exist. Now there is a lot of different bodies trying to push for the regulation of the outdoors. Now they realize that is actually big and moving a lot of money. So the later study, a conservative study from USAID plans [...] was that the outdoor tourism in Jordan is moving around 7 million JD a year.

And when explaining the effort of the professionals to create a legislative frame for their activities he resumes:

It was the first kind of push to develop some kind of legislation and it was turned down, and ever since, every year we would try to put together the companies that work in outdoors or the Facebook groups and whoever, and try to lobby to create a federation and try to make kind of a code of ethics, since there is no law to control us. They all failed, none of them went forward, and we kept developing curriculums and stuff like that and proposed a lot of scenarios to the government, to the secretary general of the Minister of Tourism, and now it seems that is gaining some type of momentum. I hope it doesn't end up in corrupt hands.

The perspectives of another interviewee regarding the governmental participation and support for adventure tourism are quite similar. When asked whether the government is helpful when developing his activities he answers:



No, no, no. I mean, it's always a hazard to register. Every year, just to renew the license you need two-three weeks and dedicate human resource to go out and do all the paper work and so on. So, that's the least of the concerns. [...] Many times is often that the Ministry gives us a, you know, makes it difficult to give us the permission because of the pressure of the licensed tour guides lobby. They try to pressure us to hire assailant tour guide on top of our cycling tour guide and just to make it legal for the trip to run. So it's un unnecessary expense that burdens the competitiveness of the product. And if we were to go with their decision that means that we would be losing the business to Morocco, for example. [...] The understanding of the government of tourism is 5 star resorts and typical sun and beach. So they still don't understand the importance of the adventure tourism and the shared economy it brings. And that is a struggle everywhere else, *yaani*, I'm sure it's not only typical to Jordan, but it's also another one challenge that decreases the competitiveness of our product. [...] You have to hire a bus from the tourist transport companies and those are five companies that have the monopoly of the market and those are the regulations of the Ministry of Tourism that you have to hire a van from them. So together they sort of regulate or set the prices between them.

However, when it comes to agree upon creating a legislation frame for the development of adventure tourism as a separate specialism, as they claim, there are disagreements when it comes to the shape that official entities and legislative bodies should have. Through the interviews we can acknowledge that there are several bodies and entities fighting for the same thing, creating a small chaos in the process. For example, one of the participants said:

I had good contacts in the government and the Ministry of Tourism and I tried to make a solid push for the thing. And shortly after I started my push, my regular meetings for the Royal Court and the Secretary General of the Ministry of Tourism, another entity decided to work unilaterally without anyone else, trying to develop some adventure local guides without cooperating with the existing guides. And it was part of the Jordan Tourism Board, which is a government body that is in charge of promoting, not developing. So they made a push also, not very organized, not very clean, but they had governmental support. And we are making a push, and USAID offered to handle support: we can help you out and organize this. The program of USAID that is in charge of this, when they applied for the money to the State Department, they put in the project that the creation of the federation is one of the main projects. So it's kind of their obli-

So while in this case we see discrepancies in regards of the ways some entities are creating an official body, in the next statement we can see a different opinion from another participant about the same case, in which a JTB employee has worked separately:

Someone in the JTB has been working apart of this, and he has joined the UIAA, he's got the support of the British Mountaineering Council as well, and he is training 19 local guides for the first time, and he is getting them certification from the international federation and from the Ministry of Tourism and the Jordan Tourism Board. Those guys who are involved in the new federation or mountaineering association they know exactly what this guy is doing, they've been invited to join forces with this before, but because of personal issues they didn't want to be part of it. And that guy ended up working alone and supporting local guides like in Wadi Rum, some of the beduins, some of the north.

6. Analysis

6.1 Adventure as Politics

Our participants are just a sample of the many people involved in adventure in Jordan nowadays. Most of them are individuals between 20 and 35 years old whose life has been affected by greater socio-economic circumstances that have shaped their daily lives and the situation in which they live in. They are well educated individuals whose professional possibilities do not match their level of preparation. The local economy has not been able to develop as fast as its young population, which has rapidly acquired a highly-qualified workforce but lacks the economic structure to provide the jobs and possibilities these actors have prepared themselves for. Furthermore, these highly-qualified actors have been exposed to the outer world and they are perfectly aware of how other societies look like, but still they may find themselves restricted by the socio-economic structure of the country they live in, which may not correspond to their profiles anymore. Most of them are part of a common middle-class shaped by policies where foreign aid has tried to redirect the educational systems and opened the market towards liberal economic trends. Thus, they are well educated people whose professional possibilities were restrained by the socio-economic situation of the country, having what they see as poorly interesting outcomes, usually with low salaries, and being quite dependent on family or friendship connections. They were also restrained by the social structures of the country, where a big part of the social life happens in family-related relations and the duties concerning family honor are quite important, putting quite a lot of pressure on the individual's professional and social future. Thus, a big part of the people involved here has found an outcome to the presupposed future circumstances. The presupposed roles they would play in the society, such as studying, finding a job, getting married, form a family and adjust to social norms, just are not enough for the actual possibilities that current times and their preparation offer them. These actors are not satisfied with social norms and current professional outcomes. They have further perspectives and they are aware of their possibilities and the incongruence of their personal circumstances in a scenario that is not suitable for their expectations and the way they want to live their own lives. Furthermore, they are perfectly aware of the political circumstances in the country and the region as a whole, and the violent outcomes that some democratic protests had in neighboring countries. Thus, these actors are not willing to face the same situations; they are not looking for difficult political changes with unclear outcomes that may not offer an improvement in their daily lives. These individuals are mostly seeking to live their own lives in the way they want, not in the way that socio-economic structures force them to live in. It is not through classical political means that they

will find an improvement for their lives, but through their own actions and through their personal experiences and ways of channeling their will, by what could be seen as common daily activities that do not match to their preconceived role in the society, but neither directly confront social structures and political authorities.

As Bayat (2010) expresses, urban subjects lacking institutional power to promote change, adopt the street and daily experiences as the political arena to perform their will for change. In this study, we acknowledge the change that daily experiences of young people using the public arena to challenge the authority bring to the Middle East. What for them only represents a way to enjoy life and use their leisure time, is actually a way to change things, to expose different opinions and ways of acting. It is a form to reject actual stereotypes and authoritarian social and political methods. By doing something different, these actors have also claimed attention and introduced their practices to other individuals, in a way that they have actually formed social networks that are self-identifiable through the common links around adventure sports. These common practices that are now spreading throughout bigger social circles show an intrinsic will to do things that were not previously done, and to use public spaces to perform activities that previous generations had never performed. Bayat uses the term streets to talk about public spaces of movement, which are not only used to express grievances, but also a stage to “forge identities, enlarge solidarities, and *extend* their protest beyond their immediate circles to include the unknown, the strangers” (ibid, 12). This is our case, where those actors doing adventure sports show a way of protest by doing common things. By starting new activities, being involved in social groups that reach out to a broader public and rejecting what could be seen as common job positions and professional careers within their field of study, these actors are using the system itself to reject previous conceptions of social and professional life in Jordan. These actors are *le peuple, a-sha’ab* (Foucault 2004b, 45).

At the same time, it is not just in that direction that changes are being done, but also through the participation of foreigners in adventure activities in Jordanian soil. We also find in the social groups formed by the common belonging to this collective identity expats, foreign students and tourists that share a common passion with Jordanians. This is clearly broadening circles that allow for a constant interaction between individuals with different nationalities, producing a social effect in those involved in the activities, which recognize common trends surpassing national and cultural borders. These activities, interactions and their effects on individual experiences are affecting all those involved in the adventure sports community and therefore their perception of their individual existence within a determined social setting, becoming important actors in the transformation of

previous social and cultural values. As I previously wrote, and perfectly visible in the large number of people connected in the social networks to groups concerning these activities in Jordan, these communities do not stop growing and, although today they may represent a small percentage of the Jordanian population, their impact on the younger generations has a lot of potential. Hence, we see how step by step these activities are empowering younger generations of Jordan to produce social change. This is even more remarkable under the current unstable circumstances of the region, in which these examples may have a special strength in the Middle East due to its complete opposition to violent and extremist ways of protest. Contrary, they align with the expressed will of change in the region but in a fun and active manner that avoids any kind of opposition by the social and political structures of the country.

The same system that makes them grow up in a traditional society such as the Jordanian, while being affected by globalization, foreign audiovisual consumption and being exposed to the outer world by social networks, global media and contact with foreigners, gives them the opportunity to know new practices that were not done before in the country. It gives them the opportunity to open new spaces of action that were not used previously. As Melucci (1995) explains, they create a collective action in that system where the actors are able to define themselves and their common relationships within the environment. Melucci observes that collective action is a constructed process by the constant activity in the relationships binding individuals. It creates therefore a collective identity, a network of active interactions where there is an emotional feeling that allows subjects to feel like being part of a larger community. This collective identity qualifies actors to behave as a delimited subject while giving them the opportunity to act as a collective group due to the creation of a collectivity (*ibid.*). The collective identities and collective action that these youngsters are carrying out are forming an important social group where they can feel free and secure to show their individualism within a group setting, giving them the strength to show their opinions and develop a youthfulness that the social arena did not allow them to do previously. Through the practice of outdoors, these actors are opening new ways of escape from the social and economic system they did not feel represented by and dispossesses them from a voice or opinion. By doing outdoors, they are now able to express themselves, to feel that they are part of something bigger and different at the same time, and being aware of their role as porters of change in the Middle East. These collective actors are using the means that a conservative society exposed to neoliberal ideas offers in order to foster new ways of living and new perspectives within Jordan. The supposedly unchanged and static Jordanian playground with traditional values is now ready to be enjoyed by new generations with

new individual perspectives. It is the same system that has given them a good education and exposed them to foreign practices, the one that has kept Jordan's political establishment untouched due to the authoritative and social structures it also supports. It is that development or post development system that now empowers the younger generations to express their inquisitiveness, opening new untouched fields where they can develop and deploy their knowledge, reject or overcome social structures and avoid political authorities. Adventure sports are themselves a way to express change, and a way to express rejection to previous social settings and ways of living in the same territory. Adventure sports are one of the ways used by Jordanians to escape the pressure of their social surroundings and the authoritarian traditional politics. By practicing them, new generations show the little regards they have towards local politics and conservative social conceptions. It is a way to channel their disconformity with what the society had prepared for them and their future, and it represents a voice to express their disagreements with traditional perspectives present within their own society and the stereotypes coming from outside.

Adventure sports are, for many, just a form of several other ways existing in the Middle East to express discontent. In the case of Jordan, they are capable to create a social setting within which individuals create a collective identity, which through collective actions becomes a form of protest or reaction against current socio-political situations. As a form of reaction, this collective action created around adventure sports also represents a political action that does not use common channels for political activity. Instead, adventure sports give a voice to numerous individuals that were not previously able to express their individualism. They open a space for democratic participation in a new arena that is not subject to political and social restraints due to its disconnection from traditional ways of protests. Instead, it uses the system itself to create something new, and new means of representation that are home to dissidents of the pre-established system they live in. Adventure sports houses a social dissidence that disregards the social and political establishment. They are dissidents of a system that has never represented them, and they are opposing this system through challenging daily practices channeled by fun and attractive means of reaction. While being apolitical, this collective identity opens new spaces to express a collective will for change, disconformity and opposition to a status quo and establishment existing in Jordan, that does not allow new voices to express their opinions regarding new methods in doing politics and changing social trends. It is through new means that new generations find ways to challenge a system by which they were not represented and social norms in which they did not find a place for individualism. Adventure sports represent one of these new methods that escape current social and political structures, giving the

opportunity to create social circles outside current spheres of power. By the creation of these circles and avoiding the socio-political system, they become a new option for those that want to express and take advantage of their youthfulness, making of this option a separate social and equalitarian sphere that avoids established channels to express disconformity, consequently avoiding existing spheres of power, due to the creation of a new one that is not reachable by the previously existing ones. Thus, by avoiding the system and escaping institutional channels and social traditional values, they get to create a new alternative (Bayat 2010, Melucci 1995) that, at the same time, rejects the existing structures of power and, because of the fact of being a new option, becomes an opposition to them. Hence, an apolitical action such as practicing adventure sports becomes in itself a political option: the option to confront authority and social norms by disregarding them.

6.2 New Means of Power

The previous lack of adventure sports practices in Jordan and the institutional disregard of nature for tourism economic purposes, have given the initiative of a new industry to individual actors, changing the trend that tourism development had had so far in Jordan.

As we have seen, tourism was first used by the central government as a means of state-building and identity creation, portraying the Jordanian landscapes and archaeological sites as a lineal history that gives legitimacy to the Hashemite monarchy.⁶ Tourism development policies were always directed and designed from above, normally in a common partnership between foreign aid developers, governmental institutions and transnational private firms in most of the cases. Thus, the knowledge in tourism policies was always imported or established from top to bottom, managing development and national strategies, keeping the *savoir-faire* in the hands of the institutions, resulting in a constant presence of government intervention in tourism infrastructure development in the country. This has given the initiative to the government and its foreign partners to decide what is of touristic interest in the country and what it is not. This way of producing knowledge has helped government institutions to keep the power on the tourism industry, a sector seen as vital for the survival of the monarchy, although it has not achieved the goals it expected in many cases. Its disciplinary power (Foucault 2004b) has allowed the government to monopolize the marketing, the infrastructure and the decision-making in most of the projects funded from abroad, and it has helped the government to portray authority all over the country and its implication in the improvement of the Jordanian economy, while using these strategies as a legitimation tool to reassert its power.

⁶ See section 2.3 of this thesis.

However, individual initiatives in Jordan to use adventure sports as an economic activity is changing the trends in the tourism industry, where grassroots initiatives are the ones developing a new economic sector within tourism, without the involvement of any governmental or foreign aid institutions so far. Individual actors that are now linked by the collective identity created around adventure sports were the ones that started using the Jordanian countryside as a leisure playground, and they were also the ones applying professional adventure techniques to these practices in the country. By going out, opening canyons, bolting climbing routes and using ancient pastoral and communication routes for hiking and biking, individuals have acquired a remarkable expertise in these practices that has allowed them to explode them for personal use and for economic purposes. These initiatives have created a grassroots movement and a collective action that, through practice, have developed knowledge in the area that current spheres of power in the tourism industry cannot achieve. In the last few years, we have seen how this knowledge has been able to challenge pre-established structures, especially in the tourism industry. While the constant presence of governmental authorities and their capability to manage tourism development have helped the government to keep the initiative and the decision-making in the industry, we now witness a new wave of practices that challenge its power, due to the lack of knowledge that the government has in the field. These individual initiatives described above as a product of the current socio-economic circumstances have not just been able to act in the social field, but also in the economic arena, challenging the society and its political system from different positions. As described above, they challenge the social structures of Jordan by becoming a new option for Jordanians whose possibilities and aspirations are not offered by the current system, but they are also able to challenge the regime by creating knowledge in a sector that had always been seen as a fief for monarchic legitimacy and state-building, showing the complete lack of expertise in the field of a monarchic and political establishment that had always held its position to exert power by acclaiming its knowledge and expertise in the sector.

Personal and social activities in the outdoors have created a new field of knowledge in the country that is only possessed in Jordan by those involved in the collective identity created around adventure sports, and especially by those that have made of it an economic industry and are able to use outdoors as their source of income. Without any help from foreign donors, governmental institutions or any kind of political support, these initiatives have been able to create a profitable industry that is capable of renovating and complementing the stagnant tourism sector of Jordan. Grassroots actions have been able to acquire and develop a knowledge that is only possessed by them currently, obtaining a situation of power within tourism due to the lack of expertise in these practices

of those that ran most of the industry until nowadays. We find in the Jordanian case a wide range of economic activities that are able to attract numerous amounts of visitors to the country's borders, without any kind of government involvement, and directly challenging the structures that had been created from above and kept authority over a system produced and controlled by the political institutions. Common acts produced by individuals and its consequent social repercussions, such as claiming a space in the Jordanian outdoors, a space they were deprived of in Amman, a busy city with very few social spaces to develop individualism and scape the constant pressure of the traditional Jordanian society, have taken them to acquire an exclusive expertise in the region. Besides archaeological sites and cultivated lands, most of the areas were not claimed by the government or put under economic processes, offering a chance for the urban population to claim a terrain for their fulfillment as individuals and collective actors where they could apply their own knowledge and exert their own power. Hence, through the fulfillment of these activities, young Jordanians have not only felt free to express their will for new practices that the urban environment did not allow, but they have also deployed their knowledge in practices that had never been done by the authorities, being able to claim those spaces that until the moment had not been used, and government and local powerful families do not know how to take advantage of. Consequently, the claim of a space to develop their youthfulness in a way that urban settings and previous common social activities did not offer, has led them to acquire a deep knowledge in adventure techniques, the Jordanian geography, its use for commercial purposes, establishing a business, acquiring competences and effectiveness in business management in the field of adventure sports, marketing, leading trips and surviving in a challenging environment where local institutional actors and regional conflicts do not offer but difficulties for the development of this kind of industry. These local actors have become very knowledgeable in the field of adventure tourism and therefore are the ones holding the initiative in its development, as well as currently keeping the hegemony thanks to the social role they are playing among young Jordanians and the incapability of the government to portray itself as an alternative for the development of the industry.

Hence, adventure sports in its economic and commercial form, has also been able to challenge the established power and show the incapability in a vital sector of an authoritarian system that has tried to portray itself as the builder of a country and legitimate political power of a nation. This authoritarian form of government tried to cover or be present in every aspect of the economic development in the country to legitimate itself, especially in such an important industry for the country's economy and identity. Nevertheless, these local actors have shown the incapability of the

state to cover every aspect of it, and not only to cover it, but to show its ignorance in the matter. The government has avoided any involvement in the outdoors industry and has mostly tried to readdress it into its own channels of power, into the existing tourism infrastructure, by means of creating difficulties or by the simple lack of institutional support. Furthermore, local actors have created an industry that is worth several JD millions a year⁷, creating jobs and showing a new way to improve the stagnation of the Jordanian tourism model and being a source of income during this period of constant conflicts in the region. Thus, it has been able to offer without any support what the state has portrayed as its tasks in order to legitimate itself, such as jobs and economic outcomes to the young population. Adventure tourism has been able to avoid political and social structures of power, and has instead created its own expertise that seems to have a remarkable potential in the industry in Jordan, especially if the regional situation improves in the next coming years. Hence, what started as leisure activities, has become an expertise that, due to its unique knowledge in the country, is able to exert power without the involvement of political apparatuses or foreign aid agencies, becoming an influential force that challenges official narratives and patronage networks in the tourism industry by offering new economic and social options created by the dispossessed and inquisitive young population of urban areas of Jordan.

Thus, throughout this work we acknowledge the empowerment of a social layer that was not supposed to have much to say in the politico-economic arena of the country, due to the apparently static character of the socio-economic structures of Jordan. However, this static state of affairs and the dynamism of contemporary populations have built the perfect stage for the creation of new means to challenge structures of power that seemed untouchable by common means of protest or actual economic concurrence, due to the existing patronage structures. As I have previously described, development policies have offered a space to challenge the political apparatuses they seem to support through the economic means they also foster.

6.3 State's Adoption of Grassroots Initiatives

The findings of this work offer us an interesting input on the role that foreign agencies play in the tourism industry in Jordan. Especially important in this sector is the presence of USAID, which is the brain behind the scenes of the Jordan Tourism Board and is also funding projects all over the Jordanian territory, as it has done for many years now. While I am writing this work, a series of meetings are taking place in Jordan, discussing the creation of a professional federation or associa-

⁷ As it has been expressed by some participants in this work, see page 36.

tion that sets the basis for safety, environmental and official requirements to perform adventure activities in the country. As expressed by our participants, these initiatives have come from those actors currently involved in adventure tourism in the country but, as described by them, official institutions have always rejected them and tried to direct them towards the current existing tourism structures in the country, which are driven by institutional agencies with patronage networks formed in the last two decades, such as national tour operators and guides' associations. Thus, the outdoors professionals have sought the support of the main American foreign aid agency to help them establish some kind of legislation and lobby in the spheres of tourism political power for this to be possible. Nevertheless, these initiatives may result in the acquisition of institutional power by common actors which have never been part of the political establishment. The government acceptance of a legislation created by social actors may result in an important gain of strength in the decision-making of the future tourism industry for civil society representatives, gaining power in regards of current institutional bodies. This may not be the example that an authoritarian political system would like to show publicly, especially in a vital industry for the politico-social establishment of Jordan such as tourism. This may explain the rejections of these initiatives so far and the disregard of adventure tourism by institutional bodies. However, the current presence of USAID in the sector, and the economic importance that adventure tourism is acquiring, seem to have pushed the government to take a stand in the creation of a legislative framework for these practices. Nevertheless, the JTB, as a government representative, has instead built its own education and official status for adventure tourism practices, completely disregarding the work made by the actors involved in the industry. What we acknowledge here is the rejection of governmental institutions to consent to a legislation designed by civil society actors and its necessary need to accept the latter's superior knowledge in the area. Instead, the official body's will is to show capability to create a framework where civil society representatives may be included, but always accepting the legislation and knowledge of the institutional body, creating again a top to bottom policy legislation where current structures of power keep producing knowledge, and therefore are able to assert authority (Foucault 2004a). Consequently, if this happens to be the case, government institutions will be able to redirect adventure tourism under its own institutional channels, dispossessing the strength to produce knowledge that civil society initiatives have had so far. Thus, there is a current fight for institutional power in the tourism sector going on in Jordan between civil society representatives and government bodies and, interesting enough, is the support of both options by USAID, funding the JTB and supporting civil society initiatives. Hence, we find an example here of contradictory policies of development that

support popular enterprises and, at the same time, try to strengthen the political structures of those regimes whose survival they consider important. In this case, the presence of USAID in both options assures them a key position when producing knowledge in the sector, which automatically translates into institutional power. In the case of tourism, they become a necessary actor for both, institutions and civil society initiatives, giving them the chance to basically rule and run the sector and acquiring a policy-making position to which the government and popular initiatives come for aid and advice. Hence, adventure sports serve as a way to challenge social and political structures, to express individualism and reject the establishment, and a means to channel popular initiatives that empower civil society actors. However, their expectations find a limit when institutional and foreign powers agree in the necessity of institutions to show authority and portray the state as the ultimate legislation-making body, producing knowledge and offering power to the institutions and those who support and advise them. Being very much aware and having clear examples of the repercussions that dismantling a state body may have in the region, foreign development agencies may act in the opposite direction when a state apparatus plays in their side. This is the case of Jordan, a state with a signed peace treaty with Israel and clear ally of western powers; whose army and other institutions are dependent on foreign aid funding. Adventure sports, and its outcome as an industry in Jordan, may just be another example of foreign power's hypocrisy when acting in the region. While bearing the flag to strengthen civil society and civil rights, they don't stop supporting authoritarian political apparatuses such as Jordan, Egypt or Morocco. The intentions of this foreign interferences may not be the fully support of the regimes, but their capability to manage them, to advise them, and consequently exert power at the political and social levels (Escobar 1994). The results are old political regimes complemented by new social trends and civil society initiatives whose participation and creation of new spheres of power help to modernize the state by challenging its lack of knowledge. However, authoritarian regimes and foreign support may present this modernization as part of the official discourse, legitimating the state's power once again.

We may wonder how it is possible for the state to take over this grassroots initiative, or how it is possible for the latter to lose its hegemony in the field. Looking at previous literature, we acknowledge the importance of land tenure and tribe-belonging in Jordan in order to be part of the political power structures (Fischback 2000, Rogan and Tariq 1994, Rogan 2002) This has been especially important in the tourism sector and has hindered state-led tourism development (Chatelard 2003 and 2005, Hazbun 2002a). However, the fact that those individuals involved in adventure tourism nowadays are a completely heterogeneous group of people and the nature of their activities do not re-

quire a specifically fixed land or terrain to carry out their practices, make their collective actions vulnerable. The lack of historical landownership and ethnic belonging makes their current hegemony fragile and easy to contend in a country where power structures are divided by clear division between ethnic and tribal groups with historical roots in the country's soil (Alon 2007, Fischback 2000, Rogan and Tariq 1994). Thus, the state does not necessarily require an important discourse to take over these initiatives. The subalterns' fragile position in the social and power structures of the country gives them no voice at the political level, and heterogeneous groups of young dissident people are not enough to keep a hegemonic discourse in any kind of economic enterprise yet (Gramsci 1971). Hence, we perceive here the capability of the state to take over newly produced knowledge coming from below, and reverse the trend presenting it as its own achievement, creating legislation from top to bottom using the knowledge and expertise produced by civil society actors. Consequently, actions from below have positive modernizing and democratizing repercussions in the society, but the state is able to present it as state-propelled initiatives, stealing the merit and achievements of civil society actors from the official discourse.

7. Conclusion

The aim of this study has been to prove the existence of grassroots initiatives in the Middle East that produce an actual change in the society and the state. This work tries to show how there are important sectors of the population in the Middle East that do not feel represented by the current socio-political power structures and, by expressing individualism, are able to create contentious collective identities in the social arena.

This research shows how the existence of a highly qualified population in a static state gives place to the appearance of a collective identity created around adventure sports in Jordan, and how by creating new identities they become a dissident option in the social arena. Furthermore, the previous lack of outdoors or adventure sports in the country gives them the opportunity to deploy their knowledge, create an economic industry and directly challenge the power of the state in a key industry for the country such as tourism. However, we perceive how the state is not willing to delegate power in civil society actors, and instead it is able to take over grassroots initiatives that are having a modernizing effect in the state. These initiatives are showing authorities the way to overcome the current stagnation of the tourism sector by creating a dynamic and creative industry in the region. Nevertheless, and despite the appropriation of these merits, we now may wonder whether the state will take advantage of these popular initiatives to offer an impulse to its tourism industry, inviting pioneers and civil society actors to participate. Or, on the contrary, will it bring adventure tourism into its existent power and patronage structures, wasting an opportunity to refresh the economy and its relation with new Jordanian generations, reasserting instead its authoritarian character of a static state that will likely create more educated dissidence in next coming years?

In my opinion, young populations are much more contemporary than authoritarian state apparatuses, and their knowledge of the contemporary world give them the possibility to find spaces where they can deploy their youthfulness and individualism. The difficulties to publicly request change and democracy under authoritarian circumstances give populations options to use their knowledge of contemporary practices that are not performed by authorities to open new fields of action where they can develop their individualism in a democratic setting. I believe that the immobility of the state together with the inquisitiveness of young sectors of the population may be a good match to create change and new fields of action that use the stagnation of the system and avoid political confrontation to create civil society empowerment. The doubts are whether grassroots initiatives will have or be allowed to produce hegemonic discourses to attain actual socio-political empowerment or will keep being rejected or appropriated by the state. In this regard, further research

should keep track of these events in Jordan and look at other examples in the Middle East, where sectors of the population use the lack of state knowledge to modernize the society and possibly the state.

Ultimately, I would like to emphasize the contribution of this work to the field of Middle Eastern studies. By taking the theoretical frameworks out of urban contexts and paying special attention to the outdoors and nature landscapes of the Middle East, I show how the public sphere can be redefined and observed whenever individuals form a group setting and decide the way of life they wish to carry out. Furthermore, in this study I try to show the importance of the outdoors and nature as spaces to create collective identities and form new political means of action in the Middle East. While most of the academia had focused on urban contexts when describing alternative ways of resistance and political opposition, I would like to highlight the importance of the outdoors and country side in the Middle East as relevant settings to produce collective identities and political dissidence.

8. Bibliography

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9. Appendix

Interview Guide

- Can you tell me about your business?

- When did you start and why?

- How was the experience?

- What has been the role of government institutions when developing your business?

- How can the government support local adventure tourism companies like yours?

- How does the Jordanian society perceive your activities?

- Have your activities had any impact on Jordanian individuals? Why? / Why not?

- Have your activities affected rural population in Jordan? Why? / Why not?

- Can you tell us about your business market?

- Has your business grown since you started?

- What are your perspectives for the next coming years?