INNOVATIONS IN CIVIC PARTICIPATION

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO
John D. Gerhart Center for Philanthropy and Civic Engagement

Youth Activism and Public Space in Egypt

2011

About the John D. Gerhart Center for Philanthropy and Civic Engagement, the American University in Cairo

Established in 2006 at the American University in Cairo (AUC), the Gerhart Center serves as a leading provider of knowledge and resources for strengthening philanthropic and civic practice in the Arab region. The Center's work is organized around three interrelated goals: to become a leading provider of accessible knowledge for the philanthropic and civic sector; to build capacity for leadership around social responsibility, and to enhance the ability of AUC and Arab universities to become more civically engaged. Those goals are pursued with an array of partners in the academic, civil society and corporate sectors, both within the region and internationally.

About Innovations in Civic Participation

Since 2001, ICP has been a leader in the global movement to promote sustainable development and social change through youth community engagement. ICP works by: incubating innovative ideas and models for scaling up national youth service and service learning; creating and expanding global networks of individuals and organizations committed to developing youth community participation; consulting with governments and international organizations on designing national youth engagement policies and programs; and conducting research and publicizing information on youth community engagement around the world. ICP brings a wealth of expertise in working with various international stakeholders in the field of youth community engagement.

Ben Robinson

Contents

Foreword 5

Susan Stroud and Barbara Ibrahim

Introduction 7

Public Space and Youth Voices in the *Midan*
Sherine El-Taraboulsi

Section 1 10

Spaces of Citizenship: Youth Civic Engagement and Pathways to the January 25 Revolution
Sherine El-Taraboulsi

Section 2 20

Virtual Public Spaces: Social Media and Informal Youth Participation
Colleen Hammelman and Betsy Mesard

Section 3 34

"Proud to be Egyptian": Art as Activism in the Egyptian Revolution
Sherine El-Taraboulsi with photos by
Rania Helmy, Salma Howeedy, Amir Makar and Sherine El-Taraboulsi

Conclusion 41

Barbara Ibrahim and Colleen Hammelman

References 44

Rania Helmy

Foreword

As the world was captivated by Egypt and the unfolding events in Tahrir Square during the January 25 Revolution, we were inspired by the committed young people who took to public spaces, virtual and physical, and became the catalysts for change. They used multiple means -- social media, street protests, neighborhood protection committees, social services for demonstrators, as well as creative forms of artistic expression.

The John D. Gerhart Center for Philanthropy and Civic Engagement at the American University in Cairo and Innovations in Civic Participation (ICP) are proud to present this report: Youth Activism and Public Space in Egypt. It captures some of the precursors to the events of early 2011, including profiles of three youth-led organizations and how they responded, and an analysis of the power and limits of social media to spur civic action. The report concludes with an exploration of the colorful graffiti art through which young Egyptians expressed the culture of the Revolution.

Having worked with young people in the region for many years and recently undertaken a study mapping assets for youth civic engagement in Egypt, we noted over the past decade a growing momentum for youth activism in Egypt. In 2010, we surveyed a number of youth civic engagement organizations in Egypt and held roundtable discussions on the potential and obstacles youth faced in pressing for greater involvement. During one of these events at Cairo University, the spirited, overflowing crowds signaled a growing momentum on the part of young people to overcome stagnation and spark new approaches to reclaim their nation. Yet it was less clear how this momentum might be channeled into substantial societal change.

As the examples in this report demonstrate, young people before, during and after the January 25 Revolution were forging their own space to express citizenship without waiting for older generations to bring reform and development to Egypt. Now that their vision and courage helped to bring down the old order, important work still lies ahead is to translate that political energy into nation-building.

We hope this report can serve as testimony to the capacity and enthusiasm of young people to be effective drivers of that effort. Whatever political and governance structures are established now, they must provide ways for the voices of youth to be meaningfully heard and their needs addressed.

ICP and the Gerhart Center would like to express sincere appreciation to the Rockefeller Brothers Fund for supporting this publication. We also thank the various activists and experts who helped to guide the project, especially Ayman Shehata, Hania Aswad, Ehaab Abdou and all those who shared their stories with us. The report authors and contributors formed a youthful team themselves, who worked under tight time constraints to produce this publication. We also express profound appreciation to young people throughout Egypt who inspired us and the world with their commitment and innovative strategies for change.

Susan Stroud, Executive Director
Innovations in Civic Participation

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Introduction: Public Space and Youth Voices in the *Midan*

Sherine El-Taraboulsi, John D. Gerhart Center for Philanthropy and Civic Engagement[1]

Scenes from the January 25 Egyptian Revolution immediately direct attention to Tahrir Square or the *Midan* as the ultimate public space; a place where hundreds of thousands of Egyptians -- particularly young people[2] from all walks of life -- united to call for "justice, freedom and human dignity". Even five months after the fall of the regime, Tahrir Square remains a place where young Egyptians congregate to voice their grievances and call for change. On another level, it is a microcosm of the revolution that was happening on a larger scale [both temporal and spatial] in the entire country. Tahrir Square's open space and the labyrinthine streets that lead up to it typify a kaleidoscope of public spaces that have their roots in the period prior to the revolution. And yet what this report highlights are the many ways in which a youth generation placed their unique stamp of creativity on public space, both before and during the 18 days of mass uprisings.

Public space can be defined in many ways, from a strictly legal concept that "regulates the property of and rights of access to physical places." (Staiger 310)[3] to the more symbolic Habermasian "public sphere." His is a socio-political term defining the realm between civil society and the State; "which stands for the condition under which public debate might become a legitimizing basis for democratic political action." (Staiger 310) Here, the term "public space" will be used in the broadest most inclusive sense as a space for the people; a physical and ideological space of encounter, one that comprises historical, cultural and social dimensions.

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2 The National Council of Youth in Egypt defines youth within the age bracket of 18-35. This is the definition that will be used when referring to youth in this publication.

3 Staiger, Uta. "Cities, Citizenship, Contested Cultures: Berlin's Palace of the Republic and the Politics of the Public Sphere." Cultural Geographies. 2009 (16): 309-327.

Space, according to Henri Lefebvre, is not a static location where content is poured, but is a production that results from the dynamic interaction of relations spanning both the tangible (i.e. physical dimension of space) and the intangible (ideas and values). Tahrir Square is a tangible space in which a variety of intangible spaces interplayed with one another and in which the tangible and the intangible interfaced. Mona El Ghobashy in "The Praxis of the Egyptian Revolution"[4] identifies three intangible causes of the revolution that were acutely felt on the ground: technology, Tunisia and tribulation. The ousting of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in mid January in Tunisia allowed the Egyptian people to believe that change was possible.

This sense of possibility was galvanized by the power of social media [technology] and the rising discontent within the population as a result of festering economic and social problems such as nepotism, corruption, rising prices - to name but a few.

Communicative action is essential to collective action.

Two incidents brought together social media and rising discontent in a potent moment that triggered an uprising against the Mubarak regime. The first was the death of Khaled Said, a young Alexandrian who was beaten to death by police officers in broad daylight, in apparent revenge for posting a video on Youtube that showed the officers dividing up a drug bust. Public opinion was stirred by Wael Ghonim's fervent Facebook group "We Are All Khaled Said". Ghonim used social media to forge a virtual public space, one where Khaled Said's death was not just one more evidence of police predatory behavior towards the people. More significantly, Khaled Said became symbolic of the myriad forms of oppression that Egyptians experienced on a daily basis.

The second incident was the flagrant rigging of the national legislative elections; not only was the regime using different tools to oppress the people, even worse, they were not doing it subtly enough. While the people were using social media to communicate with one another, the aging regime represented and led by an aging president failed to join in those conversations. Civil society and the opposition in Egypt made attempts to bridge that gap but where systematically and continuously obstructed and impeded by the regime.

Collective action was being practiced by Egyptians in innovative and creative means, long before the revolution took place. This was evident in an interview dated April 2010 with Mohammed Sharkawy, Human Rights Activist, Founder and Owner of Dar Malamih, a publishing house that targets "first-time authors, Egypt-centric works, and works promoting the values of human rights, the civil state, freedom, justice and equality." Sharkawy, who is a member of the April 6 Movement, and who in 2006, in a protest to support the independence of the judiciary, was taken to a police station, tortured then sent to jail for a few more weeks[5] , spoke of a fledgling literary movement in downtown Cairo that was shaped as a result of;

> […] the different forms of corruption that exist in Egypt; there are so many forms of corruption that I can't even categorize them. There's cultural political corruption that has rendered the Egyptian people backward and ignorant and defeatist.

To counter that "defeatist" attitude, young Egyptians negotiated new public spaces in art, writing and social media. Sharkawy underscored how there was a paradigmatic shift from a previous focus on language and print media to an emphasis on the importance of expression as a value in and of itself. He said:

> Blogging created a new opposition, a new literary movement that started discussing the problems that Egyptians face on a daily basis, problems that were silenced. It created a virtual reality, new virtual streets to demonstrate upon. […] This is what became called new writing. Language there doesn't matter, all that matters is the act of expression itself. (My italics)

4 El Ghobashy, Mona. "The Praxis of the Egyptian Revolution." Middle East Research and Information Project, http://www.merip.org/mer/mer258/praxis-egyptian-revolution

5 More information is available at http://www.slate.com/id/2166146

Communication modes were an essential aspect of collective action in Egypt in early 2011. For the young Egyptians who sparked the uprisings --as well as the hundreds of thousands more who joined them over the subsequent 18 days – it was the creative repertoire of messages, banners, and visual images captured on television that ultimately drew all ages and classes of Egyptians into the Square. The aim of this report is to explore those youth-initiated modes of expression as they had been developing in recent years into their ultimate expression in Tahrir Square.

The report explores both tangible and intangible aspects of youthful expression in public space. The first section reflects on the forging of an Egyptian collective consciousness characterized by loneliness, alienation, and exclusion exercised by the regime against its people, primarily youth. The section also looks at three youth-led initiatives prior to 2011 as illustrative examples of the novel ways youth were claiming their own spheres of influence on ideological and professional levels.

The second section takes a closer look at the role of social media and informal modes of youth civic engagement [as intangible public space]. It explores how social media do or do not provide public spaces and tools to foster youth participation, with specific examples from before and during the Revolution and some insights on how these tools might be embraced to further support youth civic participation going forward.

And finally, the third section taps into the creative public space created by the protestors on the Square through the arts. During the 18 days of the Egyptian Revolution, stencils and graffiti were used as a form of political and social expression. Illustrations will be provided in this section to give a flavor of visual representations by professional and amateur artists. All three manifestations of public space are interwoven with one another; the division into sections should not be regarded as indicative of a separation on the ground.

Amir Makar

Section 1: Spaces of Citizenship: Youth Civic Engagement and Pathways to the January 25 Revolution

Sherine El-Taraboulsi, John D. Gerhart Center for Philanthropy and Civic Engagement

Different worlds came together in Tahrir Square; all united by a collective consciousness and a shared vision for change. And yet, the ideological, cultural and historical ferment of the Midan extended far beyond its spatial and temporal boundaries. A comprehensive understanding of how the youth-led revolution was made possible is incomplete if analysis is solely directed to the 18 intense days of protests that culminated in the ousting of President Mubarak. With the benefit of hindsight, one can now see how youth social movements were in the making prior to 2011 and in many ways, directly or indirectly, those movements influenced the course of events of the revolution.

"We are in the age of the simultaneous, of juxtaposition, the near and the far, the side by side and the scattered. A period in which, in my view, the world is putting itself to the test, not so much as a great way of life destined to grow in time, but as a net that links points together and creates its own muddle."

-Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias"

Previous research on youth civic engagement in Egypt and the Middle East had primarily focused on trends of youth exclusion by looking at unemployment, declining health, delayed marriage and labor market segmentation. Those modes of youth exclusion were intensified by Egypt's "youth population bulge" that marked its demographic transition. While the word "bulge" connotes "a place that lies outside all places,"[6] youth were in fact actively exercising and vocalizing their citizenship in a variety of ways: some by forming non-profit organizations, others participating in social media or engaging in the arts. We will show how those spheres point towards the forging of a collective consciousness that later manifested itself in unflinching solidarity in the Square. None of these spheres was isolated from the other: reality seeped into the virtual world and vice versa, and it was the interaction among those spaces that provided an enabling environment for youth to spark the revolution that started on January 25.

6 Foucault, Michel. "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias." University of Colorado Boulder. 1967. 15 June 2011. http://www.colorado.edu/envd/courses/ENVD4114-001/Spring 06/Theory/Foucault.pdf

The first part of this section reflects on the formation of a collective consciousness born of cumulative discontents towards the regime in the period leading up to the Revolution. Testimonials from a focus group of young Tahrir activists, held in April 2011, are used to give a glimpse into that space as closely tied to expressions of citizenship. By focusing on three youth-led organizations, the second part reports on research that was in process prior, during and after January 2011. That project to map youth civic engagement was midway to completion, led by the John D. Gerhart Center for Philanthropy and Civic Engagement at the American University in Cairo in cooperation with Innovations in Civic Participation and supported by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. Through these three organizations we examine the spaces that had been created prior to the revolution that allowed young Egyptians to exercise citizenship in ways that 'flew under the radar' of most observers and the state security apparatus charged with protecting the status quo.

Collective Consciousness and Collective Discontents

Social movements are closely tied to citizenship rights. As mediators of political, social and cultural change and by negotiating new definitions of society and membership, social movements express collective consciousness through collective action. Definitions of citizenship have highlighted this collective consciousness in a variety of ways, but primarily by identifying two major components of the term. The first is that it represents membership in a polity or a collective, becoming involved in dialectics of inclusion and exclusion and determining who is considered eligible to become part of this collective and who is not. The other dimension is that membership brings with it a "reciprocal set of duties and rights," which are context-specific and vary by place and time.[7]

Collective consciousness in Egypt was building up in the period before the Revolution to a great extent as a result of collective discontents. The events that unfolded in Tahrir Square pointed towards many festering economic, social and political issues that go back over twenty years in time. An extended focus group was held by the Gerhart Center in April 2011 with ten young activists who spent the 18 days of the revolution in the Square. They were all under the age of 25, and lived in various parts of Egypt. Interestingly, many of the protestors in Tahrir Square were not originally from Cairo, but came from all over the country to be part of this unique moment in Egyptian history. The majority of the participants stated that they had a sense of duty towards themselves and others to join the protests and to claim their "usurped rights". One of the participants from Cairo said:

> I joined the protests on the 25 of January expecting no change to happen, but I joined because deep down inside I felt that I had a duty towards myself to at least try; because for a very long time, I had seen my rights usurped and I was not standing up for myself. That night, state security, like thugs, used gun shots and tear gas bombs to divide the protestors – the Egyptian people don't like thugs – I decided that if I died, I would have at least died for a cause. I decided I would not leave, until he [President Mubarak] left.

When asked why he had that sense of duty, he responded saying:

> Imagine if every day, somebody comes over to your home and steals something, and you don't do anything about it. You don't even call the police or tell your parents that there was a thief. Everybody, even a mentally-retarded person, could see that we were all getting ripped off every single day. We could all see it happen before our very eyes but we were silent!

"The dimensions of youth exclusion are closely related. Poor learning leads to poor job prospects. The ability to form families and achieve personal independence is closely linked to the ability to find productive employment and earn an adequate income. Civic participation is essential to successfully transitioning to meaningful adult roles in which people can participate fully in society and contribute to community development."

- Ragui Asssaad and Ghada Barsoum, "Youth Exclusion in Egypt: In Search of 'Second Chances' "

7 Kivisto, Peter and Thomas Faist. "Introduction," Citizenship: Discourse, Theory and Transnational Prospects. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. 2007: 1-15.

There was a struggle to be heard and seen; a struggle to reclaim dignity and pride as citizens, not as submissive subjects. A story by one of the participants who was taken into custody by state security on January 26 unveils the harsh treatment of the regime towards protesters. Through brutal tactics, the regime effectively made enemies of its own people. Left for 3 hours in a steel armored vehicle with little air to breathe, he shouted and called for help until he was transferred to a prison cell where he was left without food or water for 12 hours. He was then interrogated by a police officer as he reported in detail:[8]

> I: Do you pray? Are you affiliated with any group? Are you on Facebook?
>
> P: Today is my first day praying. I have never prayed before.
>
> I: Are you a member of the Khaled Said Facebook page?
>
> P: I compose music and so I use Facebook to communicate with people.
>
> I: So, do you compose patriotic songs?
>
> P: No, songs for youth…
>
> I: What does your father do for a living? Do you have siblings? What were you doing in the protests?
>
> P: I had an exam and was passing by the Midan. I didn't know there were protests…

After some time, he was released from prison. The experience made him even more determined to continue protesting. Like many other protestors, he realized that state security was not invincible, that it recognized the power of the people and feared their impact. The barrier of fear was broken.

Another participant highlighted the earlier beating death of Khaled Said as the main reason why he joined the protests; in his mind, the Khaled Said murder symbolized the many evils of the regime -- denial of justice, brutality and assaults on human dignity. He said:

> I had nothing to do with politics. My initial interest into that world was Khaled Said. I was outraged by his murder – Why is it that we are denied all our rights? Why is it that the Egyptian citizen is denied dignity? Why can he be taken away by the police or state security at any time for no reason? So, I started following the Khaled Said Facebook group and the April 6 and Kefaya movements.

Social media was important but the social consciousness that was building up a social movement before the revolution was far more powerful. When the internet was cut, people still flowed into the square. On this issue, a female participant very passionately said:

> There were no means of communication in Egypt. This enraged the people and those who were not in the protests then knew that what we were doing was right. People started coming to the Square because they wanted to know how the protestors were doing. The Egyptian people are smart and when they are given a challenge, they are up to it. This challenge meant that the president underestimated the Egyptian people. Many of the young people who came to the Square were not part of the Khaled Said Facebook group; many were not on Facebook in the first place. Masses of people came because they suffered from the police, the need for bread and gas…

8 I: Interrogator, P: Participant

Reasons to the join the protests were varied, each protestor has his or her very personal story to tell. However, there was a consensus that this was a revolution to reclaim dignity and justice; both of which were denied to the Egyptian people by the regime. A collective consciousness was forged from resisting the day to day degradation that Egyptians had faced for over twenty years. This consciousness manifested itself in the slogans of the Revolution: "Leave, leave, leave, for good, let our country see the light," "Raise, raise the chant / our people are free and not afraid," "The crescent and the cross against murder and torture," "Revolution, revolution everywhere against the traitors and the scoundrels" and "Dignity and freedom is the demand of all Egyptians"- to mention but a few[9].

The exclusion of many groups - especially youth - from public space had contributed to the formation of this collective consciousness and marked one of the definitive features of the period leading to the Revolution. The World Development Report 2007 specifies five life transitions that are pivotal to youth inclusion: education, work, health, forming families and civic participation. Young Egyptians were locked in a "waithood period" and excluded from education, work, health, marriage and forming families. Despite those frustrations, some were using civic participation as a creative safety valve to stay engaged and present in public space.

The following pages will look at the "second chances" towards inclusion provided by three youth-led organizations. The striking aspect of the organizations we include in this analysis is their lack of reliance on adult guidance or support. They are largely youth-run and/or youth targeted and focus on community and civic engagement, even though little encouragement was offered by the wider social environment of the time.

In Search of "Second Chances": Institutionalized Youth Civic Engagement

Youth exclusion in the period before the revolution manifested itself in ways perceived to be located on the margins of public space and yet very central to it. The more visible public space was dominated by social, cultural and political values that belonged to a much older generation that was set in its ways and not ready to empower a younger generation. Young people created their own spaces in creative innovative ways that were embedded at the very heart of public space albeit relatively unperceived by the older generation. Youth exclusion was the result of social, cultural and political gaps that were represented in two different worlds; an old unchanging decaying world [typified by the government and Mubarak's regime] and a vibrant world of young people who were calling for change and exercising their citizenship in their own way. There is a spectrum of other players between both of these poles (for example the increasingly effective labor movement of the past several years), but on the whole, it is the disconnect between those two worlds that eventually proved too contradictory to continue, and led to mass mobilization during the revolution.

In a study on youth exclusion in Egypt, Ragui Assaad and Ghada Barsoum highlight youth civic engagement as "integral" to youth inclusion in society and to their exercising of citizenship: "Evidence suggests that civic participation yields positive developmental outcomes: facilitating collective action, yielding more effective and better targeted services, and reducing corruption by allowing for channels of accountability." (6) Civic participation opened a new space to frustrated youth enabling them to, in the words of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, "develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world ***with which*** and ***in which*** they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality but as a reality in process, in transformation." (Cited in Underwood 5)[10] This acknowledgement of transformation was effective in breaking the "waithood" cycle that young people were stalled within. Prospects of change became a possibility.

9 Cited in The Angry Arab News Service http://angryarab.blogspot.com/2011/01/egyptian-slogans.html

10 Underwood, Carol and Bushra Jabre. "Reflections on Civic Participation and Emerging Leadership in the Arab World." NYU Abu Dhabi Institute. February 2010. 15 June 2011. http://wagner.nyu.edu/leadership/reports/files/CivicParticipationandEmergingLeadership.pdf

Since roughly 2000, a growing number of youth-led and/or youth-targeted organizations emerged in Egypt as an outlet for youthful action; three of those will be highlighted here. They were selected as illustrative of youth initiated, led and targeted organizations with ongoing programs and activities related to youth that played a role on the ground during the revolution and continue to do so in the Post-Mubarak period. Data was collected through interviews prior to and after the revolution with leaders and staff members in the organizations to understand the unique aspects of their approach to youth civic engagement. The profiles are still exploratory, in an attempt to shed light on how those organizations began more or less as 'silo' public spaces that later came together in the Square.

Al Andalus Institute for Tolerance and Anti-Violence Studies

Ripple in Still Waters

Founded in 2004 by two Muslim and two Christian university undergraduates committed to spreading a culture of tolerance around minority issues in Egypt, Al Andalus Institute hearkens back to Spain's Andalusia, a place that historically brought together Islamic and Christian heritage within the same space. The institute's definition of citizenship is based primarily on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The institute defines itself as:

> An independent research institution that relies on the values of tolerance and citizenship, aiming at contributing to human development in Egyptian and Arabic societies and on its way to achieving that, the institute confirms its commitment to "declaration of principles on tolerance, proclaimed and signed by the member states of UNESCO on 16 November 1995," and all international declarations, covenants, treaties and bills pertaining to the subject of human rights issued by the UN or any of its sub-organizations.

With a mission that placed it on the margins of Egypt under Mubarak, Al Andalus' office space is paradoxically located in one of Cairo's historic buildings a short walk from Tahrir Square; it is a space that is physically at the very heart of the busy city and yet ideologically it has been pushed to its fringes by a regime that covered up sectarian strife.

Their radio station Horytna, or Our Freedom, is a portal through which they spread their voice and ideas beyond that office space to the entire country. Launched in 2007, the station has been a success, so much so that within one year, it managed to attract around 80,000 listeners from all over the world[11]. In February 2010, website traffic on Horytna.net reached 3,783,654 and by May 2011, it was up to 5,094,427[12]. The station was created by Ahmed Samih who wanted to create a free space for young people to discuss human rights as well as other social problems that youth face in Egypt. So, in the midst of a culture of exclusion towards youth, young people like Samih through the help of a platform like Al Andalus, were actively carving out space for themselves, creating ripples in still waters.

The institute is run by 40 full-time and six part-time staff members, all within the age bracket of 19-35, and has more than 100 volunteers. To Al Andalus, youth civic engagement is defined as youth contributions to their communities. The institute prides itself on welcoming new innovative ideas by young people and supporting them financially and with planning and outreach.

Al Andalus represents a paradigmatic shift from other institutions and organizations that were locked within limitations enforced by Mubarak's regime. The General Federation of NGOs and Foundations, founded by the Egyptian government in 1969 and led by a board composed of 30 members who were appointed by the President of Egypt, was entrusted with regulating the work of organizations and foundations in Egypt, leaving little freedom for creativity. In order to maneuver around those regulations, some organizations resorted to registering themselves as companies instead or developed new ways to negotiate a space within those boundaries in order to transcend them. Al Andalus is an example; it registered as a non-profit company to allow itself more freedom in securing funding and to facilitate its work.

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11 Abdel-Kader, Ghada. "The New Airwave," Al Ahram Weekly, 12-18 March 2009. http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2009/938/li1.htm

12 Statistics were provided by Horytna.net Manager.

As an institute for studies and research, Al Andalus has offered raising awareness and training sessions within and beyond Cairo. Aided by its radio station, Al Andalus, set into motion a process of "conscientisation" by helping young people to critically analyze their situations in order to realize that "the world is subject to change, and – given sufficient political, economic and social resources – ultimately [they] are empowered to rise to the challenge to change the world in which they live." (Underwood 5) This process of conscientisation marked the birth of a new consciousness and a social movement in the making that believed in the possibility of change.

In the Midan

The fruits of this process of conscientisation were evident during the revolution; the public forum provided by the institute prior to January 25 manifested itself in the Square. The social movements that had existed on the fringes were brought to the center and the institute's definition of citizenship was put to practice on the ground. In addition to collaborating with the Egyptian army to protect civilians against attacks by thugs, and bringing in food and medical supplies to the square, the Al Andalus team developed a series of training sessions after the ousting of Mubarak on the Egyptian constitution, delivered seminars on human rights and transitioning to democracy, and organized campaigns to raise awareness beyond Cairo about the constitutional amendments.

It is significant that the website traffic on Horytna.net rose from 3,897,698 in December 2010 to 7,259,861 in January 2011 and 7,649,331 in February 2011. While the location of visitors is unspecified (whether within or outside Egypt), the substantial rise in numbers is almost certainly a part of Egyptian awakening to the important issues of tolerance and bears witness to a widening reach of Al Andalus' activities during the revolution.

When the deputy director was asked whether there were changes in the institute's strategies in the Post-Mubarak period, his response was that their focus has shifted towards sustaining the spirit of the Midan and using Al Andalus as a forum to raise awareness around maintaining the values of the revolution during a transition to democracy and an Egypt that respects human rights and rejects all forms of violence.

The Andalus office continues to be a popular forum space for youth of both sexes and from all walks of life and disparate interests to get together and discuss the latest political, social and cultural issues affecting Egypt.

Nahdet El Mahrousa: Incubating Social Enterprises

Failing Economy, Failing Social Structure

In the period leading to the revolution, fragmentation in the public space resulted to a great extent from a fragmented economy. By 2010, unemployment had risen to as high as 9.4% with 84% of the unemployed being in the age group 15 to 30; 20.4% of Egyptians aged between 18 and 29 were out of work in 2010[13] and direct foreign investments had fallen by 39%. The Egyptian government resorted to a crisis response plan that resulted in real GDP growth of 5.3% in FY10, up from the 4.7% in FY09 but still below the 7% average of FY06-FY08. However, the recovery failed to reach most of the population who were suffering from dramatic food price increases and stagnant wages; the vast majority felt excluded from the benefits of growth.[14]

Moreover, pressures on public services were severe, with public schools failing to teach and hospitals failing to heal. This created a need for alternative service provisions and a sense among young people in particular that 'no one else was going to solve the society's problems so they might as well pitch in'. Some organizations emerged at the intersection of ideational citizenship (as manifested in Al Andalus Institute's approach) and citizenship as action on the ground.

A Space for Young Professionals

Nahdet El Mahrousa (NM) forged such a space by engaging Egyptian youth in intellectual and entrepreneurial pursuits. Established in November 2003 as a youth-led non-governmental organization, NM targets young Egyptian professionals and empowers them by incubating innovative projects in the areas of "youth development, arts and culture development, health services, the environment, linking education to employment, and promoting the culture of research and development." Hence, NM's vision: "A developed Egypt through the active participation and belonging of its young professionals."

The organization has around 23 full-time staff members, all between 19 and 35 years old. It has around 200 volunteers and many more on its wide mailing list. In addition it has an active internship program, supporting five during the summer break and five during the winter break. Its objectives shed light on the role it has played to address the complex matrix of Egypt's economic and social problems:

- Activating and engaging young Egyptian professionals to become "social entrepreneurs" active in the development of their communities.
- Mobilizing young professionals and spreading the culture of contributing to local communities.
- Addressing Egypt's toughest development problems through innovative approaches.
- Creating a strong community of social entrepreneurs, non-profits, businesses, academia, government and international agencies and donors.

In order to realize its vision, NM nurtures promising social entrepreneurs with a number of services including provision of space, technical support and funding of innovative social enterprises[15]. Those who are supported are defined by NM as "social entrepreneurs who can act as agents of change in their communities, have demonstrated social entrepreneurial and leadership skills, strong passion for building new ventures and an appreciation of Egypt and its diversity." Those same traits were clearly evident on the Square among those who led the protests; NM's vision and objectives are an articulation of effective citizenship which flowered during the Revolution.

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13 Ahram Online, "A Fifth of Egyptian Youth Unemployed in 2010: New Data." August 2011, http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/18653.aspx

14 World Bank Report, March 2011, http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/MENAEXT/EGYPTEXTN/0,,menuPK:287166~pagePK:141132~piPK:141107~theSitePK:256307,00.html

15 Nahdet El Mahrousa Organizational Profile March 2011

The incubation of social enterprises also includes capacity building, technical support, access to resources and a supportive network of like-minded entrepreneurs. Funding is provided to the entrepreneur in the form of a monthly stipend and to the enterprise in the form of a seed grant.

NM has also partnered with several entities to scale up its initiatives. In partnership with Yahoo! Maktoob, it launched the Social Innovation Starts with YOU! (SISWY) Program in April 2010. Hundreds of Egyptians submitted ideas for social enterprises that would benefit their communities and in turn their country. This partnership provided 10 grants and a total of $250,000 to Egyptian youth.

To bridge the gap between the job market and Egyptian education, NM partnered with the International Youth Foundation and USAID to support the creation of six social enterprises: two in Cairo and Ain Shams Universities and four in four youth centers in Cairo, Fayoum and Minya, thereby including marginalized youth.

Last but not least, as part of a partnership with the International Youth Foundation, NM is managing the Champions of Change: Creating Economic Opportunity for Youth (CFC) Program. Again, this project targets marginalized youth and seeks to prepare them for a competitive job market.

In the Midan

NM staff and volunteers were active on the Square in their capacity as individuals. And according to a conversation with NM's Public Relations Officer, the period following the intense 18 days of the revolution witnessed an upsurge of interest by NM members nationally and internationally. There has also been international interest in working with NM in order to capitalize on the unique moment in Egypt's history.

NM has launched a series of discussions at Salon El Mahrousa to explore a variety of topics: civic education, youth participation, civil society capacity building and many more. Those discussions bring together practitioners, policymakers and academics to look in a comprehensive manner at how the spirit of the revolution can be sustained in a strategic manner in the Post-Mubarak period and through youth leadership.

Alashanek ya Balady (For You My Country): Breaking Down the Walls of Separation

Founded in 2002 at the American University in Cairo (AUC) by a group of students and later registered as an NGO in 2005, Alshanek ya Balady is yet another example of a youthful space for citizenship put into action. The inspiration in the life of Raghda El-Ebrashi, then a 12 year old child, sprang out of a chance encounter with a poor elderly woman in a Sharkeya village, whose fortitude and resilience gave Raghda a new perspective on Egyptian social inequalities. Seeing that Um Fathy's home had no ceiling and lacked basic needs, El-Ebrashi was motivated to start campaigns for social development and later to establish Alashanek ya Balady as a student initiative at AUC.

Alashanek ya Balady now has around 50 staff members in the NGO, all between 22 and 35 years old. The organization works with about 500 volunteers annually divided over many projects, each with around 20-50 young volunteers. Through its franchise system (explained later in this section), the organization works with an additional 1,000 volunteers annually at universities around the country. The guiding idea behind Alashanek ya Balady was that hand-outs and pity-driven charity would not eradicate poverty and all the problems associated with deprivation, but sustained civic engagement and strategic social development would. "Development is the solution," reiterated Alashanek ya Balady's Communications Manager, Mariam El Safty, shedding light on the organization's definition of citizenship as oriented toward poverty-alleviation and development.

> "We believe in the power of the civic sector in creating innovative opportunities for the poor to sustain their lives, for the active engagement of youth in solving society's problems, and for involving the private and the public sector in the course of social change."
>
> -Raghda El-Ebrashi, Founder and Chairperson of Alashanek ya Balady

Active Citizenship through Community Empowerment

Alashanek ya Balady's development model seeks to "graduate" communities from poverty. Dispensing with the usual perception of those communities as a "problem", Alashanek ya Balady capitalizes on them as an "asset". To effectively empower those communities, the organization adopts a comprehensive approach that addresses the interconnected causes and manifestations of poverty through the following:

- Learning: Communities receive vocational and other types of training and coaching in order to prepare young people for the job market.
- Entrepreneurship: Through the Loans program, the organization provides needed funding and technical assistance for small entrepreneurs who wish to start businesses in their local communities.
- Employment: The organization has partnered with several private sector companies to help place individuals from unprivileged communities on a career path.
- Activism: The organization leads a franchise system in community development whereby interested university students are encouraged to establish similar community development organizations in their universities. Three to four universities are added every year, and six new universities joined the franchise program in the period between 2010 and 2011. Those student organizations can be regarded as mini-democracies; presidents are elected and university students become fully integrated within the development model. They receive technical support from Alashanek ya Balady, including capacity building, seed funding, networking and access to the organization's resources and development models.

In the Midan

During the Revolution, Alashanek ya Balady staff and volunteers were in the Midan in an individual capacity. During and after the 18 intense days, the organization responded within the structure of its programs, to needs on the Square and beyond. The rapid decline in tourism and the economy precipitated income losses and that, in turn, led to layoffs and increased unemployment. The real estate sector witnessed the sharpest decline of 29% while 67% of companies in the telecommunications sector faced declining incomes; and the Egyptian Company for Mobile Services reported the highest losses of EGP 90 million. In addition, many companies operating within banking, financial services and real estate sectors had assets under investigation for possible corruption by Egyptian authorities[16]. The steep rise in unemployment hit poor communities the hardest and the organization wanted to respond.

Based on an interview with Alashanek ya Balady's communications manager, although they did not start new programs or projects, there has been a concentrated effort to respond within existing micro-enterprise loan programs. To respond to rising job layoffs (including among protestors who were wounded and lost their livelihood as a result), Alashanek ya Balady focused on providing those young people with loans, along with all the coaching and training needed to develop small projects that would generate income and stave off falling into poverty.

16 Shahin, Hassan and Nicolas Zreik. "The Impact of Egypt's Revolution on the Corporate Sector." Zawya Research. July 2011. July 5, 2011. https://www.zawya.com/viewFullPdfStory.cfm/sidpdf_040711073220

Conclusion

As mentioned before, each protestor has his own story to tell. The common motif, however, that most stories have is the unique solidarity born in the Square and through the Revolution. The various trials and tribulations of the Egyptian people were known and present to all; the experience of degradation and denial of dignity was acutely felt, day in day out, on personal and national levels. Collective consciousness was born of collective discontents. It was the January 25 Revolution that helped this collective consciousness become ardent expressions of citizenship. The barrier of fear was broken and the Egyptian people called for change and were determined to make it happen. This determination persists and continues to define the will of the people.

A review of three examples of institutionalized youth civic engagement in the period leading up to the Revolution demonstrates how youth-led organizations provided a space for emergent forms of citizenship on both ideational and practical levels. By avoiding overt politics and scrutiny from the Mubarak regime, these initiatives were allowed to grow unhindered and to build important networks, skills and orientations among the young people who participated. Those became very relevant to the process of social mobilization that was catalyzed in the revolution.

These efforts by young Egyptians succeeded in negotiating a space for youth to voice their Egyptian-ness and put it into action on the ground. They represented a fresh revived understanding of citizenship that was more progressive than that of older NGOs or officialdom. In the aftermath of the revolution, these groups are well-placed to go beyond redundant slogans and to begin rebuilding Egypt. Thus, to sustain the spirit and gains of the Revolution we believe it will be imperative to capitalize on these institutions and young people in general as a force for positive change in the new Egypt.

> "On January 28, we marched out of Shubra. We were very pleased to see that State Security was allowing us out one group after another. We thought they actually understood why we were protesting and that they decided to join our ranks. We were wrong. They surrounded our protest and attacked us. I was hit then fainted. An old man saved me by taking me to his home, a poor shack made of wood. He asked: "Son, why are you fighting with these people?" To which, I responded telling him the whole story. The following day this old man joined the protests."
>
> -Participant in Focus Group Discussion

Amir Makar

SECTION 2: Social Media and Informal Youth Participation

Colleen Hammelman, Innovations in Civic Participation and Betsy Messard, PhD Candidate at the University of Virginia[17]

"Social media or social networking tools are Internet-based applications that focus on building social networks or social relations among people with shared interests and/or activities."

- Arab Social Media Report, Dubai School of Government

When masses of young Egyptians flowed into the streets during the January Revolution, we learned that the "virtual streets" for demonstrating that were percolating on various social media sites were not entirely separated from actual, physical ones. Observers, commentators and participants themselves have pointed to the central role of various forms of social media in tilling the soil of Egypt's revolution. They did so by raising awareness, providing a common vocabulary of resistance, cultivating networks of activists, and serving as models for the proliferation of an ever increasing number of virtual public spaces, at a time when there was limited access to viable, physical ones.

As more young people in the Arab world and Egypt subscribe to social media and new technology, these tools hold the promise of spurring greater youth participation in political and civic public spaces. Some of these tools include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, SMS or text messaging, website discussion boards and blogs, YouTube and various other avenues by which young people are organizing, creating their own media and participating in civic life. According to the Arab Social Media Report, as of January 2011 Egypt had 4.7 million Facebook users, constituting about 22% of total Facebook users in the Arab region[18].

17 Colleen Hammelman is a program associate at Innovations in Civic Participation managing projects relating to capacity building for youth civic engagement organizations in South Asia and the Middle East and North Africa, youth service and environmental sustainability, developing pathways to teaching careers for AmeriCorps members, measuring the impact of youth civic engagement and ICP communications. Betsy Messard is a PhD candidate in Religious Studies at the University of Virginia, living in Cairo. Her work explores the theological, political and literary components of visions of community and social change in contemporary Egypt and America.

18 "Arab Social Media Report." Dubai School of Government. Vol. 1, No. 1, January 2011. P. 4. Web.

And there is no doubt that the numbers have increased since that time. Social media tools such as Facebook are being used in a variety of ways to bring together young people for collective action and to foster youth civic participation.

In this section, we explore how social media do (or do not) provide public spaces and tools to foster youth participation, with specific examples from before and during the Revolution in Egypt. We offer some insights on how these tools might be embraced to further support youth civic participation going forward, in particular ways in which young people are using virtual public spaces in identity formation (an important component of forging collective action). We also note ways in which social media tools can reduce barriers for collective action and support offline participation. This section explores specific examples of social media's efficacy before and during the Revolution using primarily blogs, internet affinity groups, and circulating slogans, images and video clips. Our interest is in the relationship between these tools and other more traditional organizing activities such as the distribution of flyers, public protests and earlier efforts to seize public space. We consider both Arabic and English media, for access to both audiences was critical to the efficacy of these outlets and the movement they ultimately helped to organize. Finally, we offer a caution against overemphasizing the effect of social media tools by addressing their limitations and the tendency of some journalists and others to overlook months and years of labor, campus and political organizing in favor of an overly simple 'Facebook' explanation for Egypt's profound social movement during the January 25 revolution.

Spheres of Identity

The virtual spaces of online communities are key sites of identity formation for the current generation of young users. Identify formation is both a motivation and an effect of participation in social media. Understanding this dimension of social media usage is essential to understanding its mobilizing capacity. Identity formation has always been a fundamental component of youth transitions to adulthood, and therefore a focus on many social activities, including of course those that preceded the Internet age. However, new technologies and the varieties of social media, that they have activated, intensify young users' exposure to the wider world of youth culture and diversity. It stimulates a desire to explore, cultivate, adjust and represent one's identity in new ways. Moreover, the spaces created by social media demand that they do so across multiple spheres.

The generation of youth that now uses social media is uniquely capable of connecting with a global community and is able to identify with ideas, values, styles and desires that are indifferent to geographical location. This sense of identifying with others around the globe enables young people to realize that "there must be something better" than the political and economic constraints under which they suffer, even if they aren't entirely certain of what kind of government or social order they want.[19] As professor and Brookings fellow Ragui Assaad has explained, new technologies that allow young people to see their peers in other parts of the world enjoying rights, freedoms and luxuries that they are denied gives rise to a sense of resentment toward their own governments.[20]

Identifying with the achievements and aspirations of a global community engenders a sense of entitlement to follow through with their demands. Moreover, youth may become empowered by the idea that small, local efforts are at the same time contributions to a global effort to stand up to oppression and expand rights and liberties. The ability of social media tools to help connect young people across distances has contributed to a growing sense of global citizenship, which encourages speaking, acting and volunteering across borders to address injustices wherever they occur. The global sphere of identity is a key component of the relationship between participation through social media and collective action.

19 Sayre, Edward. Interview available at http://www.thetakeaway.org/2011/feb/11/generational-gap-egypt/

20 Schmickle, Sharon. "Behind the Turmoil in Egypt: Angry Young People Who Expected More." Minnesota Post. January 31, 2011. Web.

Nevertheless, longstanding cultural and national identities are enduring. They are also reinforced through the forms of communication and participation made possible by new technologies and social networking applications. The enduring power of Arab identity in the consciousness of young people in the Middle East and North Africa has been evident in recent months. Although national patriotism has been a strong element in the recent political uprisings, there is also a persistent Arab "collective consciousness" that allows citizens of distant Arab nations to identify with the ongoing struggles of the citizens of other Arab countries.

Shared history, faith, and a sense of a collective destiny are part of this identity, with a central role played by a common language. Although regional dialects may differ greatly, young people from Morocco to Bahrain and the many Diasporas around the world easily interact in Arabic through the channels of social media.

Within country borders, Egyptians, for example, also cultivate a distinctive identity through use of shared experience, slang and local idiom as they participate in social media. During the January 25 revolution this emphasis on unity of national identity was an essential ingredient in the movement's ultimate success. Online efforts to shape and reinforce Egyptian identity have also intensified in subsequent months as factionalism and religious conflict reemerged after the unity of the "18 Days".

The ubiquitous presence of the Egyptian flag, repeated displays of iconic images from Tahrir Square, as well as circulation of older sayings and stars of Egyptian culture and history serve as the building blocks of a renewed Egyptian identity. State television is among the most fervent purveyor of this new and 'unified' identity, but so are commercial interests, who sell tissue boxes or cell phone cards using the Egyptian flag motif. In reality, the meaning of Egyptian-ness is deeply contested in this post-revolution period when other spheres of identity such as religion and political ideology wrestle with one another to claim the identity of the nation. Social media spaces are a growing battleground for these debates, although we must always question which groups are reached and which left out of that public space.

Removing Barriers to Collective Action

"Social tools don't create collective action – they merely remove the obstacles to it."

- Clay Shirky

Social media and information technology provide varied opportunities for youth civic participation and can break down barriers associated with geography, limits on free speech, accessing traditional media and logistics. In doing so, they support greater youth civic engagement. Through social media and new technologies, people can connect and communicate about common interests. The first and most fundamental barrier circumvented by social media is geography. Any person with Internet or mobile access in one location can connect with someone with Internet or mobile access who is in the next room, across town or on the other side of the world. It is significant that mobile phone ownership in Egypt exceeded 80% in 2011.[21] Through these tools, young people with access are able to voice their opinions on issues that matter to them, support and join formal and informal civic organizations, communicate about opportunities to be engaged offline, and organize for offline civic activities. An important research question is to know how many, among the youthful mobile phone and internet users in Egypt, engage in civic conversations as opposed to social, personal, or gaming uses of these channels.

As early as 2008 the virtual public witnessed solidarity campaigns that involved the collective changing of Facebook profile pictures to voice an opinion on global affairs. The first major worldwide wave that also swept Egypt was a response to Operation Cast Lead launched by Israel in the Gaza Strip in December 2008. Khaled Said's death in mid-2010 had a huge impact on Facebook users, who responded by joining the group We are All Khaled Said and a profile picture campaign. A horrific church bombing on New Years Eve 2010 in Alexandria sparked a movement among many young Egyptians to post images communicating solidarity between Christians and Muslims. These literal displays of solidarity served to transform the online spaces that users interact in away from purely personal or everyday concerns toward visual representations of collaboration and community.

21 Ahram Online. "Egypt Mobile Phone Ownership Exceeds 80 Per Cent" January 2, 2011. July 11, 2011. http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/3/12/2996/Business/Economy/Egypt-mobile-phone-ownership-exceeds--per-cent.aspx

As continually expanding networks of users and "friends" interact with one another, their pages are canvassed with one message. Changing the profile picture is a way of both expressing outrage, fostering solidarity, communicating messages and cultivating a shared political culture built upon distinctive norms and judgments.

The Egyptian human rights activist Mohammed Sharkawy is quoted in this report's introduction saying that social media creates "new virtual streets" on which young people can demonstrate. This connection across distances also enables young people to communicate with others from different backgrounds and ideologies in public forums that have the potential to foster more tolerance and exchange of ideas.

Social media also provide new resources and tools for young people to create their own media regarding issues that matter to them, as well as avenues for disseminating that media and information to large numbers of people. Limits on Internet freedom exist in all Arab countries, and governments are ready to shut down Internet connections when their interests are threatened, for the most part, user-generated content online can spread more rapidly and more covertly than was possible using traditional media.

Despite the efforts of many countries around the world to control Internet speech, the overall net impact of the Internet and cell phones on free speech has been tremendous. In most if not all countries around the world, the range of speech that can be found on the Internet far exceeds that found in traditional offline sources and the broadcast media.[22] To give an example from Egypt, press journalists could be and in fact were prosecuted for writing about the health of then President Hosni Mubarak, while that topic was fair game on line. However, in the five year period leading up to January 2011, the regime was increasingly willing to arrest bloggers, Facebook organizers and others for dissident political or religious activity.

As social media enable more youth-generated content, they break down barriers to traditional free speech and provide alternatives to traditional media. This is also changing the way in which media are perceived and produced as more people look to blogs, tweets, videos and photos captured on mobile devices (in the heart of Tahrir Square, for example) and the multitude of voices and opinions expands.

Social media also provide low-cost alternatives for effectively motivating, mobilizing and recruiting constituencies for civic activities. They provide easy access to peer-to-peer communication as well as tools for transmitting ideas and information quickly and easily to large numbers of people. The Egyptian uprising opened up another form of participation beyond Egypt for well-wishers around the world. In the first three tense and confusing days, in anticipation of a media blackout, Facebook users around the world were called upon to "share" and "like" and repost as many events, links, comments and notes as possible. The idea was that this form of participation – which could take place anywhere in the world – would serve to protect the safety of youth occupying Egypt's streets. It was hoped that the sheer number of "participants" in this virtual space could impact as well the policies of national governments toward Mubarak as the events unfolded. The rationale was that the more interest and awareness conjured up by online participation, the more likely that the uprising would succeed.[23]

With increased Internet and mobile access in the Arab world over the last 10 years, social media usage has increased public forums in which "many diverse and competing voices representing different political positions and orientations could be heard at the same time, adding to the richness of ongoing political debates and the formation of a wide array of public opinion trends."[24]

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22 Faris, Robert and Etling, Bruce. "Madison and the Smart Mob: The Promise and Limitations of the Internet for Democracy." The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs, Tufts University. Vol.32:2, Summer 2008. P. 73. Web.

23 Anonymous. "History of the Revolution on Facebook." February 2011. Web. Posted available at: http://www.dailykos.com/story/2011/02/17/946150/-History-of-the-Revolution-on-Facebook

24 Khamis, Sahar and Vaughn, Katherine. "Cyberactivism in the Egyptian Revolution: How Civic Engagement and Citizen Journalism Tilted the Balance." Arab Media & Society. Issue 13, Summer 2011. Kamal Adham Center for Journalism Training and Research, the American University in Cairo. P. 1. Web.

"The promise of social media more generally is rooted in a vision of creativity and liberty that requires deeper and more sustained engagement than the political upheaval wrought by the toppling of a regime."

– Ahmed Zidan

Spreading the word about events and civic activities is cheaper and quicker through online technologies than other traditional dissemination tools such as spreading leaflets and posters. (However, both are needed since not everyone is online.) Through low-cost social media tools it is easier to spread the word about civic activities to wide audiences, bring diverse perspectives into the conversation and spur greater engagement in community issues.

Social media support organizing efforts more directly as well, when they can demonstrate that other people share common views and are willing to join in civic activities – a confidence-building function. "Social networking (has) made it easier to let each individual know that his/her views are shared by enough people to make protesting worthwhile and safe."[25, 26] Many people who came onto the Egyptian streets on January 25 said that they did so after knowing that over 70,000 Facebook users had 'accepted' the invitation from protest organizers.

Online Participation Leads to Offline Participation

Young people dominate online spaces in the Arab region, with those between 15 and 29 making up 75% of Facebook users.[27] For many (older) people who aren't online, the time spent engaging in social media is discounted as "wasting time" and participation in online civic activities can be perceived as lazy and shallow. Yet, research shows that spending time in online communities can promote engagement with offline civic activities as well. A study carried out by the University of California Humanities Research Institute following young Americans for 3.5 years found that:

> Youth engagement in interest-driven online communities was associated with increased volunteer and charity work and in increased work with others on community issues. The Internet can serve as a gateway to online and offline civic and political engagement, including volunteerism, community problem-solving, and protest activity."[28]

Young people who participate in online networking regarding issues that matter to them are also likely to support those efforts offline – through raising money, helping to organize, joining groups, etc – and are more likely to be committed to civic participation. Online civic activism, or "cyberactivism", was a trigger for street activism in Egypt. Facebook's largest impact on the Revolution was arguably in the mobilization of early protestors. (Satellite television coverage took over as the most important media channel for mobilizing additional demonstrators as more traditional media placed live coverage in Tahrir, Alexandria and Suez.) Social media clearly served as tools for sparking offline activity. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and text messages were used to get the word out about events, gathering points, and dangerous locations in Tunisia and Egypt, and now in other more protracted democracy struggles in other Arab countries.

> (Wael) Ghonim (creator of the "We Are All Khaled Said" Facebook page in Arabic) implored his Facebook fans to spread word of the protest to people on the ground, and he and other activists constantly coordinated efforts, combining online savvy with street activism long practiced by the country's democracy movements."[29]

Ghonim also used the Facebook page to convey information to protestors such as "Egyptian flags only, no violence, bring water" further supporting the offline civic activities via online tools.

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25 Khamis and Vaughn, 2011. P. 2.

26 Ibid.

27 "Arab Social Media Report." Dubai School of Government. Vol. 1, No. 1, January 2011. P. 4. Web.

28 Kahne, Joseph, Lee, Nam-Jin, Feezell, Jessica Timpany. "The Civic and Political Significant of Online Participatory Cultures among Youth Transitioning to Adulthood." Youth and Participatory Politics and DMLcentral. February 2011. Web.

29 Khamis, Sahar and Vaughn, Katherine. "Cyberactivism in the Egyptian Revolution: How Civic Engagement and Citizen Journalism Tilted the Balance." Arab Media & Society. Issue 13, Summer 2011. Kamal Adham Center for Journalism Training and Research, the American University in Cairo. P. 3. Web.

Social media were also used in several high profile cases of off-line flyer campaigns. Ramy Raouf, a well known activist and affiliate of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, composed a guide for using online tools in peaceful protests which was circulated both on- and offline. It provided detailed suggestions for making use of social media and technology toward more effective (and peaceful) street protesting. The pamphlet includes a wide range of advice from reminders about charging batteries to suggestions for preparing draft text messages in advance of hitting the streets. An additional flyer with instructions for January 28 also circulated widely. It included specific details about how to deal with teargas, what kinds of clothes to wear, and maps for marching and converging on Tahrir square. These pamphlets didn't just give instructions for participation; by spreading the sense that something concrete could be done and would be done, they actually served to encourage it. While there are limitations in how effectively online activism can lead to offline civic participation, it is clear that social media tools played an important role in supporting civic participation both on and offline in Egypt.

Significant Spread of Information via New Technology

Social media provide tools for quickly disseminating information and ideas to large numbers of people. This can serve to inform activists about strategies that have been successful in other environments, protect activists and protestors from violence, and encourage greater government transparency.

Social media and information technology enable activists to learn about, connect with and gather information from other activists around the world. Young people in Egypt had been engaging with each other on ways to spur change for quite some time. But as news of Tunisia's movement to overthrow President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali spread, which it did quickly through new technology, it seemed to galvanize young people in Egypt and give them confidence to act for change. Young organizers were also learning from organizations such as Center for Applied NonViolent Action and Strategies (CANVAS) in Serbia, which is run by young Serbs involved in the student uprising against Slobodan Milosevic. CANVAS supports young activists around the world in efforts to take on dictatorial governments. It provides offline training to youth activists including ideas and mechanisms for using social media tools to support their cause. Leaders of the April 6 Movement in Egypt had previously participated in CANVAS trainings and one leader, Mohamed Adel, conducted versions of CANVAS workshops in Egypt. Tina Rosenberg in Foreign Policy indicated that the Egyptian Revolution "had an authenticity that was uniquely Egyptian, but it was also textbook CANVAS."[30] While connections with organizations in different countries have occurred without access to social media, the prevalence of information now available on the Internet and the ease with which activists can connect with each other facilitates filtering to find the groups with greatest common interests and then fosters greater communication and sharing of stories, strategies and support for new movements.

The multi-cultural nature of social media usage as it connects people throughout the world, enables young people to draw on cultural references or slogans from other environments. For example, in June and July 2010, two videos were uploaded to YouTube with links on the We Are All Khaled Said Facebook page titled "Khaled for Vendetta" and "Khaled Vendetta." These videos drew out the parallels between the totalitarian society in the V for Vendetta[31] comic book series and film and Egypt under Emergency Law. These videos, images and the idea that it was a mirror to the situation in Egypt continued to spread throughout Egypt in the lead-up to the revolution.

Some argue that this signaled that the Egyptian youth on Facebook "were becoming restless. Their strategy of silence, even a deafening silence, was perceived as no longer enough to achieve the kind of political change they anxiously desired."[32]

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30 Rosenberg, Tina. "RevolutionU: What Egypt Learned From the Students Who Overthrew Milosevic." Foreign Policy. February 16, 2011. Web.

31 The story includes an anti-hero, V, who survives captivity and torture to dedicate his life to taking revenge against his tormentors and enlightening fellow citizens about their oppression.

32 Herrera, Linda. "V for Vendetta: The Other Face of Egypt's Youth Movement." Jadaliyya. May 2011. Web.

The rapid and free flow of information via the Internet and mobile phones can also provide some level of protection for activists when participating in protests and other civic activities under repressive regimes. In Egypt, activists used their cell phone cameras to document incidents of arrest or police brutality and immediately uploaded them to the web and sent them to international media and international human rights organizations. In another example, digital images and video of protests by Burmese monks in 2007 and the subsequent violent crackdown were disseminated widely via blogs, television and print media outlets, leading to international condemnation and isolation of the Burmese government.

Finally, the wealth of information available on the Internet can also lead to greater government transparency. "The Internet allows individuals to collect, catalog, and index reams of information in a publicly available and searchable format, as well as to put it into context."[33] In Brazil, a website called Politicos do Brasil makes available the income and asset disclosure forms of more than 25,000 politicians who have run for office in the last three national elections. The website had more than one million unique visitors on its first day and made required government documents easily accessible to the public.

Various social media users in Egypt also used these tools to spread information about government corruption and encourage transparency, sometimes facing grave consequences. The young man who was the inspiration for the "We Are All Khaled Said" Facebook page was reportedly murdered by the police in retaliation for his posting of an undercover video of officers dividing up booty from a drug bust. Furthermore, videos showing ballot boxes being stuffed during the November 2010 election are said to have been a major impetus behind the uprising two months later. The ease with which citizens can widely share information on public officials may support greater government accountability and transparency.

Exemplars of Social Media Efficacy: The April 6 Movement and 'We Are All Khaled Said'

Two prominent examples of virtual public spaces that played an important role in channeling online dialogue and outrage into offline action were the April 6 Movement and the "We Are All Khaled Said" Facebook page. Both of these efforts used social media tools to reach a wide, diverse audience, spread information and instructions for offline action, and provide avenues for documenting and publicizing injustices.

Born in 2008 as a movement in support of organized labor strikes, the April 6 Youth Movement (named for the day of its first major initiative) went on to become a hero of the January uprising. The movement itself was originally comprised of young, educated activists and journalists, a number of whom had some previous experience in activism or politics. But the movement's call for solidarity with the cause of laborers in the historic textile city of Mahalla el-Kubra signaled its interest in uniting a broad cross-section of Egyptian society around basic injustices in the country. The group managed to draw a relatively large movement into the streets in 2008, but far greater numbers joined and participated online over the months and years that were to follow. Although the founders of the movement had previously been involved in forms of activism and political participation, the vast majority of members had no such previous experiences.[34]

Hence April 6 and the debates that it hosted online were at the forefront of trends toward greater participation and political engagement through social media.

The movement developed a focus on concrete matters of training and organizing, drawing (as described above) on the experiences of other successful non-violent movements. April 6 activists used social media as resources for spreading information and cultivating a unified culture of nonviolence and a shared set of tactics of resistance.

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33 Faris, Robert and Etling, Bruce. "Madison and the Smart Mob: The Promise and Limitations of the Internet for Democracy." The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs, Tufts University. Vol.32:2, Summer 2008. P. 78. Web.

34 Shapiro, Samantha M. "Revolution, Facebook-Style." In New York Times Magazine, January 11, 2009. Web. http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/25/magazine/25bloggers-t.html

On January 20, the movement's Facebook group posted instructions for users to take advantage of all social media outlets in order to spread the word about the coming demonstrations.[35] Although activities were largely conducted in virtual spaces, during the 18 days of the revolution, April 6 exerted great efforts at ensuring that participation was not limited to those with access to the web. Leaders of the movement dispatched networks of activists to poor neighborhoods and beyond major cities in order to talk to people who would be unlikely to track the movement online. The goal was to draw them into the mass protests.[36]

On a number of occasions in between the initial 2008 demonstrations and the momentous January uprising, the April 6 Movement was involved in efforts at moving the online engagement into the streets. These efforts, though seen as unsuccessful at the time, served as crucial learning experiences for future efforts. The movement focused on one key message in 2010 around police brutality and torture. They elevated the tragic story of the death of one young man, Khaled Said, as a symbol of a security force that was out of control. The Facebook event,[37] which called for a June 20 demonstration against illegal police activities and "thuggery," received more than eight thousand replies of "attending," but far fewer heeded the call to stand in Tahrir, perhaps because a similar effort the previous week had been successfully squashed by the regime. However, the movement was honing their tactics and learning how to use social media effectively; a new phase in both organized resistance and youth participation was emerging.

A few months later another group used social media tools again to channel outrage about the brutal killing of Khaled Said, into offline civic action. Details of his murder were widely publicized and reports and images of the incident horrified Egyptians young and old. A popular avenue for publicizing this information and the need to stop police brutality was the Facebook page "We Are All Khaled Said." Thanks to the explosive reaction through social media and the viral spread of pamphlets calling for a response, Khaled Said became a powerful symbol around which Egyptians could rally. Within days, the group acquired tens of thousands of supporters. Other groups formed in support of Said and his family, and in opposition to lawless police activities, but none gained or maintained the momentum and interest that this group did. The site's focus was on the issue of police brutality, but it became a forum for broader issues of political rights and abuses by the Mubarak regime, many of which overlapped with those of the April 6 movement (there is also significant overlap in membership).

Until 2010, police brutality was a whispered threat, assumed to affect mostly disempowered classes and political dissidents, not solid middle class families. Khaled Said looked like anyone's cousin or brother, and the details of his death by beating in an Alexandrian street in broad daylight was one that Egyptians could relate to with horror and revulsion. Facebook brought these citizens together under the simple and straightforward power of the "We Are All" prefix – which evokes feelings of solidarity and collaboration – clearly it was the right message at the right time. The "We Are All" prefix of the group expressed a basic fact about shared vulnerability to regime violence in Egypt.

The movement attracted the attention of people who, although they didn't necessarily consider themselves to be "political," sought a medium for supporting change, contributing to save their country and engaging with like-minded compatriots.

35 This was posted in a "note" available here: http://www.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=483554717022

36 Interview on "Egypt: Seeds of Change," on al-Jazeera's People and Power. February 2011. Web. http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/peopleandpower/2011/02/201128145549829916.html

37 "We are all Khaled Said" Facebook page: http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=120785901295838

Part of the strategy developed by those using the group was to make sure that the social media spheres in other parts of the world were also reporting on what was happening in Egypt – it was a way to have control over the version of the story presented to the world, in order ultimately to have some impact on policy formation. This was particularly true in the case of the parallel English language Facebook page, which enabled non-Arabic speakers to share in the sentiments and conversations orbiting around Khaled Said's case.

In a recent open letter,[38] the still anonymous administrator of the English Khaled Said page describes a shift that took place in January, whereby the WAAKS pages outgrew their virtual spaces and took on a call to action. He writes,

> "[in the days and weeks leading up to the revolution] the admin begins to speak a different language. I cannot determine at this moment whether it is simply that the context changed, and the admin described that change… or if the admins found that mere description led them to quiet imperatives: 'we have to stop this. We have to unite against torture and these killings'."

The anonymous administrator goes on recalling the tense atmosphere as the question grew as to whether and how the ambitions circulating on social media would translate into collective action. He or she points to an increasing frequency of references to the need to take risks, to face injury and death, and even the possibility of using force to realize the demands of this ever expanding network of young Egyptians. Using layers of technology and social media to bolster security and support, the admin recounts how the Khaled Said pages advised protesters to bring their cameras, document everything, and – most significantly – spread the word to Egyptians, the security forces, and the world, that injustices would be documented and displayed on the day that they planned to stand up for their rights. Those participating in the Khaled Said pages used the virtual spaces that they had established to prepare for action.in real time and space.

These two examples – the We are All Khaled Said Facebook group and the April 6 Youth Movement – became the virtual 'public squares' of social media during the Revolution. Through them, young Egyptians (and their friends and sympathizers) anywhere in the world were able to participate in the conversation and learn how to participate offline. Yet, as metaphorical centers, these virtual squares witnessed the convergence of a number of online activities.

Bloggers and Other Examples of Engagement through Social Media in Egypt

The popularity and power of the We Are All Khaled Said Facebook group can be seen as part of an evolution of social media usage on the part of Egyptian youth. Starting as early as 2004 Egyptian bloggers began carving out spaces for communication, expression, and sharing of information. While over time Facebook somewhat displaced blogging in terms of prominence and ability to attract large numbers of users to a common set of messages and information, blogs continue to be important centers for the spread of information, analysis and exchange of ideas.

The Egyptian blogosphere has grown into an expansive and extremely diverse virtual space. Arab media expert Courtney Radsch describes that, having begun as a small circle of users:

> "the Egyptian blogosphere is no longer an intimate neighborhood, but a city where enclaves of different types of people connect and comment on each other's blogs, while retaining some contact across circles. These enclaves… include citizen journalists, non-denominational activists, leftists, Muslim Brotherhood and Islamists, culture and art enthusiasts, open source technology activists, English language political commentary, and strictly personal [users]."[39]

38 Anonymous. "History of the Revolution on Facebook." February 2011. Web. Posted available at: http://www.dailykos.com/story/2011/02/17/946150/-History-of-the-Revolution-on-Facebook

39 Radsch, Courtney: "Core to Common Place: The Evolution of Egypt's Blogosphere." Arab Media and Society. September, 2008. Web.

Radsch's city metaphor reinforces the connections between virtual and actual civic engagement. The blogosphere has enabled circles of users representing various minorities, interests, and ideologies to present their ideas, backed by articles, images and video, to connect to a vast community of other people with similar outlooks and concerns, or to debate with those who differ. Furthermore, whereas Facebook enables specific causes and interests to serve as the axes of discourse and interaction, the blogosphere is organized around a more traditional model of community where an individual's ideas and opinions are the central units. Hundreds, thousands or hundreds of thousands of users make a Facebook group, but a single blogger makes a blog.

For young people, the fact that blogging requires neither money nor powerful connections nor mobility in order to have a voice makes it ideal for those we have earlier described as existing in a 'culture of exclusion'. The simple and personal quality of blogging provides a crucial element of familiarity and trust in an otherwise overwhelmingly dynamic virtual space.[40] Individual bloggers develop a particular reputation that enables them to act as alternatives to mainstream journalists or analysts and ultimately as opinion leaders regardless of their economic or social standing.

It is worthwhile to note a few examples that illustrate the important role that blogging and bloggers have played leading up to and during the revolution. The earliest generation of bloggers provided a model of integrating virtual involvement with civil disobedience and resistance, particularly with the Kefaya movement. Kefaya (which means "enough" in Arabic) was a coalition of opposition movements that was in the early vanguard of efforts to topple the Mubarak regime. Upon its formation in 2004, Kefaya displayed what Courtney Radsch has called the "natural symbiosis between Egypt's early core bloggers and the emerging protest movement." In fact, Radsch credits Kefaya's early strength and success with the growth in popularity of blogging as a protest activity.[41] The early bloggers were also instrumental in spreading the use of blogs, helping other users with the technological know-how, and thus encouraging participation in a very concrete manner. Established bloggers have also enabled participation by using their blogs to post and share readers' materials. Wael Abbas, an influential blogger, journalist and human rights activist has said that he started blogging with the explicit purpose of reaching and engaging with the youth of Egypt. He soon began receiving videos and other materials from visitors to his site, which he would subsequently post to considerable impact.[42]

Bloggers have provided central spaces where readers can turn to read articles, see images and watch videos, and often they serve as the point of origin of materials that ultimately explode in popularity on Facebook and other venues.

During the revolution, bloggers traversed the virtual and physical public spaces – marching, observing and documenting in the streets and squares, and then duplicating the scene in virtual space. The well-known blogger and journalist Hossam Hamalawy, whose blog "3arabawy" was among the first generation of opposition blogs, spent the early days of the uprising in his journalistic base in Mahalla el-Kubra. His consistent and in-depth coverage of the workers' movement has ensured that issues of economic justice have a place in the repertoire of demands circulating during the uprising. Furthermore, his blog's documentation of events away from the media attention of Tahrir square served as a crucial reminder of the forms of participation not picked up by other media. Noha Atef, another well-known blogger at "Torture in Egypt" used her blogging status to participate in the events even while outside of Egypt. When communication lines were being disrupted by the regime, she coordinated with activists and people on the ground by relaying information through landlines and through the few channels of Internet access that were rigged in Tahrir square.[43]

40 A recent controversy over a hoax behind a popular blog has introduced a crisis of confidence into the blogosphere. The well-known "Gay Girl in Damascus" blog received widespread support and shows of solidarity in the virtual world. It was recently revealed that a male American student in Scotland was responsible for all posts to the site.

41 Radsch, "Core to Commonplace."

42 Interview with Wael Abbas at http://hub.witness.org/en/WaelAbbas

43 Interview with Noha Atef at https://www.globalroomforwomen.com/global-heart-blog/entry/world-pulse-woman-blogger-uses-social-media-to-relay-egyptian-protesters-message-to-the-world.html

Bloggers provided spaces where readers could turn to read articles, see images and watch videos, and as a result they serve as the point of origin of materials that can ultimately explode in popularity on Facebook and other venues. Such circulation of material is a crucial mode of participation among social media users. A number of popular and highly politically charged videos "went viral" in the months leading up to the revolution, spreading to hundreds of thousands of viewers, either in original form or edited and overlaid with music, images or other video clips, in order to enhance their popular appeal by invoking cultural references and aspects of the aforementioned spheres of identity. Videos of earlier efforts at moving virtual participation into the streets also made their way through Internet channels, serving to inspire and encourage large numbers of viewers who remained either afraid or simply inexperienced in forms of street protest. The most famous such case was the video blog (or "vlog") of Asmaa Mahfouz, whose powerful appeal to deeply entrenched concepts of shame, honor and respect, is credited with drawing viewers into the streets on January 25.

The Mideast Youth website provides another important and influential example of a space for Egyptian youth participation that has been created by social media. The site was formed in 2006 in Bahrain and spread throughout the Middle East region over the following years. The commitment to freedom of expression and protection of minorities is at the heart of the project's founding vision. Mideast Youth's website serves as an all-purpose center where a number of virtual activities are made possible. Young people from all over the Middle East region are invited to post their own essays and articles, as well as personal stories and reflections. Readers are able to post comments and replies. This component of the site combines the more personalized and in-depth qualities of a blog with the interactive, conversational dimensions of the social networking group.

Egyptian editor Ahmed Zidan emphasized that the site's regional reach (from North Africa to South Asia) enables participants in one country to write on behalf of the issues of their peers in other countries: an Egyptian can post a critique of the Bahraini royal family, while a Lebanese user criticizes the Egyptian army, and so forth. Such activities not only foster community, they actually serve to spread information and arguments that might not safely find an outlet in the respective countries.

The site also serves as the incubator of projects and initiatives that focus on more specific issues, such as sexuality and gender, Kurdish rights, Baha'i rights, and various forms of artistic expression. In one particularly prominent project, "Crowd Voice," users are invited to compile and search for "voices of protest" around the world. Although the core administrators of Mideast Youth do not officially promote any particular actions or political alignments, they are committed to providing the space for a wide variety of such calls. When asked whether the tsunami of free expression launched by the Egyptian revolution has altered the site's activities and aims, Zidan explained that in fact, the aims of Mideast Youth are as urgent now as ever. He insists that the commitments of Mideast Youth and the promise of social media more generally is rooted in a vision of creativity and liberty that requires deeper and more sustained engagement than the political upheaval wrought by the toppling of a regime.

As events in Egypt unfolded and street battles loomed or raged, concise, up-to-the minute information was a matter of life or death. During these 18 days there was a marked surge in Twitter users and usage, particularly in Cairo.[44] Similar to Facebook groups, Twitter users may consciously "follow" certain well-known sources of information; anyone can become a hero of information sharing through the #TOPIC function, which enables users to link into specific topics or issues, without having followers. Twitter use continues to grow in Egypt exponentially following the revolution. The short "micro-blogs" of Twitter enable quick sharing of information, online conversations and viral dissemination of information from many-to-many. During renewed protests in Tahrir in June 2011, the rate of Twitter messages using hash tags such as #Jan25 and #Tahrir accumulated at rates of several hundred per minute. To date, Twitter is arguably the most decentralized and free-wheeling social media forum, in terms of both ease of participation and potential impact of sharing.

44 Nevertheless, recent poll studies suggest that the amount of Twitter usage remains quite small as a percentage of the Egyptian population.

Sustaining the Revolution

Social media continue to play a central role in the new Egypt as youth strive to sustain the momentum for change. On Facebook, users can participate and monitor results of informal poles about different political positions: for example, voting YES or NO in the referendum; supporting this or that presidential candidate; retaining the key second amendment articulation of the bond between religion and state; and numerous other issues that are dominate the political scene. Via Facebook and other social media, youth are finding creative ways to engage in political awareness –raising, for example by circulating short educational films about the three types of "Sultat" or powers in the government as well as entertaining skits about possible forms of government.[45] Even though the restrictions on real time engagement are now much less than before, youth still utilize the forums of social media as a public space in pure form: a place for presenting ideas, arguing, persuading and being persuaded.

Even the Egyptian army, in its unprecedented role of shepherding Egypt to a secure civilian future, has opened a Facebook page in order to promote and protect their image, gauge public opinion and adjust their policies accordingly. They have explicitly addressed their online outreach to "the youth who started the January 25 revolution." Without a doubt this is rooted in pragmatic considerations, but it testifies to the power and influence of Egyptian youth and their established domination of virtual public spaces. To date, there are over a million users who have linked into the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces's Facebook page,[46] where they can access the dozens of official statements issued by the military.

Today, social media serve as powerful tools in spreading ideas and moving people to the street, and as a result efforts remain to curtail Internet activities as they relate to civic and political engagement. Protecting free speech and access to social media will be an important task of any new government. Of equal importance is the effort to expand access to the internet and social media for those currently excluded due to poverty or illiteracy. As the previous analysis suggests, many research questions are ripe for exploration both in terms of understanding the impact of social media on recent events in Egypt and tracking future developments in this dynamic arena of public life.

Limitations

In spite of the powerful examples above and the various ways in which social media tools can be used to enable and encourage greater youth civic participation, it is important not to overemphasize the impact of social media. Significant challenges and limitations remain to effectively using social media tools to spur youth civic participation. An obvious limitation to using social media tools in the Arab region is that not everyone – not even a majority -- are online. Forthose without personal computers, public internet access can be expensive and exclusionary. Young girls often report, for example, that commercial internet cafes in low income neighborhoods are unfriendly, male-dominated spaces. As such, it is important that online communication be coupled with off-line efforts to ensure that diverse audiences are reached.

One interesting development is that traditional print and satellite media are increasingly relying on social media to gather information which is then spread through those channels to an audience not yet present on line. "Even in countries with low Internet penetration rates, bloggers and online media serve as the major source of information to radio and other mainstream media, which then reach a wider audience."[47]

45 Examples available from Qabila TV: Youtube: http://www.youtube.com/user/QabilaTV

46 The Facebook page of the Egyptian Armed Forces: http://www.facebook.com/Egyptian.Armed.Forces#!/Egyptian.Armed.Forces?sk=app_4949752878

47 Fari and Etling, 2008. P. 68.

In addition, the Internet and mobile technologies can still be subject to significant governmental control. Prior to the revolution in Egypt, online forums were subject to intense censorship. Bloggers and activists risked arrest, and their online activities were at times used as evidence against them in spurious trials. Several leaders of civic movements in Egypt indicate that they used social media to spread the word about their efforts and organize large amounts of people, but that their primary means of communication for planning and strategizing remained off-line for fear of government surveillance.

Governments are prepared to block Internet and mobile access when their core interests are threatened. On January 28, the Egyptian government blocked Internet and mobile phone services for the entire country for almost a week, despite the extensive collateral damage caused to business and the economy. Syria is resorting to similar tactics. While this is disruptive to the use of social media, activists are finding ways to work around the blockade and utilize international networks and landline communication to spread information. The Obama administration in the US is currently spending millions of dollars on new technologies to circumvent sovereign efforts around the world to prevent their citizens from accessing internet or cell phone networks.

Furthermore, the internet and social media are equally available to counterrevolutionary forces in any society who seek to discourage users from confronting injustices or calling for change. Indeed, during the Egyptian uprising, Facebook pages formed in support of president Mubarak, while rumors spread that fear-mongering and the spread of misinformation were being conducted by partisans of the regime. Hackers can easily distort or compromise dissident media sites. The open access to social media is both a strength and a potential weakness or limitation when it serves to introduce apprehension and mistrust into virtual communities.

The benefits enjoyed by youth activists in their efforts to forge common civil and democratic spaces are also enjoyed by those who would undermine or counter their efforts. "Terrorists and others who want to spread hate and propagate violence are generally just as likely to use networked technologies as democracy activists and at times they are more effective."[48] The virtual space is also a competitive one. In a very recent example, one can watch a video of prominent Muslim Brotherhood member Subhi Saleh appealing to Muslims to reinterpret recent attacks made on him and the Brotherhood as attacks on Islam itself and the spreading of the call to faith. The qualities of social media that enable collective action can also threaten to divide and sow dissention.

Finally, online numbers never were and still today are not a reliable indicator of actual civic participation. Prior to the revolution, online "event" participation far exceeded the numbers who were willing to move into the streets, proving that social media may have been a precipitating ingredient but was not in itself sufficient. While the capacity of social media to bring together diverse individuals with similar interests is clear, those individuals may participate in more shallow relationships than they would offline, simply signing up for a Facebook cause instead of joining a service project, for example.

It is not yet clear how effective social media and technology tools will be at building the sort of social capital Robert Putnam and others argue is essential to sustain democracy. Social media technologies are changing faster than reports like this can be produced and they hold the promise of enabling greater youth civic participation. Moreover, with the more recent uptick in social media use, it is too soon to judge its lasting impact on promoting youth civic participation and democracy.

Concluding Reflections

In the first few days of the Revolution, it was common in the western media to hear events in Egypt characterized as "explosive" – a sudden "release of anger and frustration." Characterizations such as this imply that the Egyptian youth had heretofore simply passively endured the injustices that plagued them. On the contrary, our findings indicate that the uprising was more of a lifting of the fear barrier and shifting of energies from virtual and informal spaces of social media to the more dangerous reality of the public square.

48 Ibid. P. 70.

On the other hand, perhaps it is too simplistic to imagine the virtual space of social media as one realm which individuals move from as they shift into physical forms of collective action. Particularly with respect to recent developments among youth in using social media in Egypt, our findings suggest that these two spaces are becoming increasingly fluid and integrated. In many ways, the communicative activities of social media are forms of collective action – even when they do not immediately translate into observable events in the streets or other tangible spaces. And even as people make use of their newly reclaimed streets and public squares, they remain linked into online networks.

One young person recently pointed out that it is no longer possible to restrict ones audience to a narrow forum. It is no longer possible to address only followers – one never knows who in a gathering has a mobile phone and streams those words (be they wise or misguided) to hundreds of thousands of critical eyes.

As is clear from other segments of this report, the role of social media should not be over-estimated. There is an irreducible and irreplaceable significance to the public square and the willingness of persons to gather in it physically to make history. It was not Facebook but millions of persistent voices in unison in the streets that overthrew the Mubarak regime. Nevertheless, careful attention to the activities and objectives of these forums is critical for understanding how large numbers of otherwise under-represented young people were able to radically change their political and social environments.

Salma Howeedy

SECTION 3: "Proud to be Egyptian": Art as Activism in the Egyptian Revolution

Sherine El-Taraboulsi, John D. Gerhart Center for Philanthropy and Civic Engagement with photos by Rania Helmy, Salma Howeedy, Amir Makar and Sherine El-Taraboulsi.[49]

> "After the first brush-stroke, the canvas assumes a life of its own; at this point, you become both governor and spectator to your own event."
>
> - Anonymous

Art is familiar foreignness. The murals of Diego Rivera and the cartoons of Naji al Ali represent a space located at the crossroads between a painter's mind; his or her ideas and experiences, and creation; an expression of the painter's inner thoughts confined within the boundaries of a canvas, yet reaching far beyond, The murals painted by Rivera at the National Palace in Mexico City depict the history of Mexico with all its conflicts and revolutions from 1521 to 1930. Al Ali's Handala has become emblematic of the Palestinian struggle for autonomy, a symbol of the struggle for self-determination. Irrespective of the differences in style, both used art as a form of expression that was firmly embedded in the history of their nations.

During the 18 days of the history-making Egyptian Revolution, stencils and graffiti were the most common form of visual expression utilized by the protestors. The early street art was done by some of the older calligraphers of downtown Cairo; young painters then joined and started using their art as a mode of expression. Some were graduates of art schools; others were amateurs who used the public space in Tahrir Square and around Cairo to voice their grievances, fears and hopes; but above all, their Egyptian-ness. Two prominent graffiti artists Chico and Temeem, for example, were inspired by the day-to-day events of the Revolution. "We participate in the protests, we talk to the people, we listen to them and use our art to transmit their claims to the public," said Chico. "Every day of the revolution is different and every time we find new ideas for our work," Temeem added.[50]

49 Special thanks to Rania Helmy, founder of Publicist Inc., and Salma Howeedy and Amir Makar, American University in Cairo graduates, for contributing their photos to the publication.

50 Metwaly, Ali. "Has the Egyptian Revolution Given Birth to New Banksys?" Ahram Online, February 12, 2011 http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/5/25/5425/Arts--Culture/Visual-Art/Has-the-Egyptian-revolution-given-birth-to-new-Ban.aspx

Slogans can be grouped under a number of themes, all interconnected: revolution, martyrdom, freedom, peace, dignity, solidarity and change. The political, cultural and social zeitgeist was translated into the colorful representations on the walls of Egyptian streets, confirming solidarity and revolution. The personal was political and vice versa; public space was a space for art and action.

Expressions of Identity and Dignity

"Raise your head up, you are Egyptian;" was an expression of pride in words and in color, and marked not only an acknowledgment of identity and dignity but also a reclamation of them on individual and national scales. The interweaving of the colors of the Egyptian flag; black, white and red dominated the scene as Egyptians expressed their Egyptian identity through art. Cairo's walls mirrored the public space that was claimed by young Egyptians in Tahrir Square; it is significant that unlike other revolutions where flags were burnt and replaced as part of the regime, Egyptians embraced their public symbols while rejecting the regime and calling for change. Egyptian's love for their country as expressed through revolutionary art was echoed on the ground in the Square as hundred of people meticulously cleaned up the streets after the ousting of Mubarak. It was an expression of ownership, new beginnings, and identity.

Raise your head up, You're Egyptian

Salma Howeedy

Salma Howeedy

Salma Howeedy

Sherine El Taraboulsi

Salma Howeedy

Amir Makar

Salma Howeedy

Expressions of Freedom

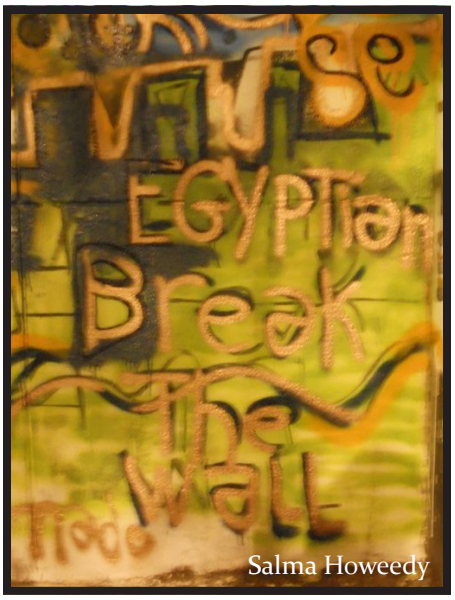
"Wake up Egypt." When people marched to Tahrir on the 25 of January from all over Cairo, they were revolting against the barriers of fear forced upon them by a failing economy, an oppressive police state and usurped dignity and freedom. Their call for change was also a call for freedom, for people to wake up and shake themselves out of the stupor of a voiceless people; together they had a voice. This call for freedom was expressed in art as well as on the ground.

Salma Howeedy

Salma Howeedy

Salma Howeedy

Salma Howeedy



Salma Howeedy

Salma Howeedy

Salma Howeedy

Expressions of Solidarity

The revolution was about the collective will of the people; through their persistence and swelling numbers, change was made possible. In the months following the fall of the regime, that collective will and solidarity became more difficult to maintain, but certain themes persist from the earlier graffiti, signs and chants: "Muslims and Christians are one hand" and "All Egyptians are one" among others. One slogan about the Egyptian martyrs who died in the protests sums up the prevailing sentiment: "They wrote it in their blood; we are writing it in color." The lives that were lost during the protests are an open wound that continuously fed the solidarity of the people and their determination to be free; now the martyrs are a continuing symbol of the need for unity of purpose.

Our martyrs wrote it in blood, we painted it in color

The names of the Revolution's martyrs

List of martyrs names in Tahrir Square

We are all one hand. Together,
we will build our nation. Long live Egypt.

Conclusion

"Again the epicenter is our Tahrir- and again the world will revert its startled gaze on our illuminating presence, a cry that will not accept compromise." Mushira Sabry, "Tahrir Kaman we Kaman."

-Bikya Misr. July 12, 2011

The Egyptian people's revolution continues unabated. The ouster of President Mubarak was the first step towards freedom; now much remains to be done to remove corrupt remnants of the old order and rebuild the country. Young people are struggling to negotiate their place within public space that can accommodate their vision of a new Egypt in which "bread, freedom, dignity" cease to be a slogan and become reality.

The patterns of youthful civic engagement we identified in Egypt are being repeated with variations across the Middle East and North Africa. More and more young people engage in public space through virtual forums, innovative artistic expression and real-time organizing. In each country the regime response is different, and that dynamic is determining whether or not the largely peaceful mass demonstrations that characterized Tunisia and Egypt are replaced by violent protracted conflict. This is a historic narrative of youthful civic engagement across a huge geographic swath of the Middle East that is still being written.

The interwoven spheres for collective action which have resulted in massive civic movements do not appear overnight, as we have seen, because of a few Facebook invitations. The organizations and individuals highlighted in this report make clear that those spaces were being cultivated for at least a decade in the period leading up to early 2011. Uprisings as profound as those sweeping the Arab region now have a long, incremental genesis, even when the initial signs are missed by observers whose gaze is more likely to be focused on overt political developments.

We presented a small snapshot of youth engagement at a pivotal moment in Egypt's history. The report highlights the awakening from a long period of stalemate and birth of an Egyptian collective consciousness.

While youth everywhere negotiate their own unique space and modes of participation, often resulting in something that is labeled 'youth culture', it is rare for their unique perspectives to capture the imagination and forge collective action across large segments of their fellow citizenry. Having played this pivotal role in the early months of 2011, Egyptian youth will expect to have a significant continuing voice in community and national affairs. The challenge for Egypt now, given the uncertain aftermath of the collapse of the old regime and interim military rule, will be to institutionalize youth engagement at all levels of civic affairs. Token gestures to activist youth will backfire, as has already been shown; failure to keep promises regarding justice for those maimed and killed in January, made in meetings with youth of the revolution with interim leaders, resulted in a massive return to the squares of major Egyptian cities in July 2011 as this report goes to press.

This report has traced some of the threads culminating in the dramatic events of the January 25 Revolution. We noted the youthful contribution to an emerging collective consciousness, born of cumulative discontents but primarily galvanized by an urge to reclaim what was best in the Egypt of their imaginations and stories relayed by their elders. Testimonials from young Tahrir activists, gathered in April 2011, offered insights into ways that this consciousness was closely tied to expressions of citizenship and patriotism. Some of the roots of those ideals were explored through the profiles of three youth-led organizations, Al Andalus Institute for Tolerance and Anti-Violence Studies, Nahdet Al Mahrousa and Alashanek ya Balady. These organized forms of public space provided early venues for large numbers of young people to express their Egyptian identity, practice active citizenship, and also address pressing needs in their communities.

Through exploring ways in which social media was used to spur civic engagement, such as the "We are All Khaled Said" Facebook page, the April 6 Movement and prominent bloggers, the report noted both the power and the limits of virtual public space. During and after the January 25 Revolution there was an upsurge in use of mobile phone and internet social media across the country. This suggests a growing role for these tools and more penetration to groups of young people who were not previously connected.

The ease and immediacy of communicative activities on social media both served the aims of a mass mobilization and can be utilized going forward to broaden the base of those engaged in local citizenship and rebuilding efforts. Whereas public squares require physical presence and may compete with other activities such as work or education, social media enable those who support calls for 'getting Egypt open for business again' to still be effectively engaged. The fact that one of the larger gathering places in Tahrir during the July 2011 return to protesting is the Tweets' Tent, testifies to the ongoing power of social media and its integration with street activism. Recently Twitter was utilized by Egypt's most prominent young political tweeters and bloggers to launch a fundraising drive for worthy organizations serving the poor and those displaced by the economic effects of revolution. We expect to see similar creative uses of social media to address ongoing dislocations as well as opportunities for engagement in the months ahead.

The report also highlighted forms of public space embraced by protesters through the arts, particularly street graffiti. A rich collection of the Tahrir graffiti shows how it gave flavor, color and humor to the Revolution. It also served as inspiration to action, and now, will provide a permanent record of the visual expression of revolution. We have tried to show how all of these manifestations of youthful activism were interwoven with and supportive of each another. Our analysis suggests that instead of simply shifting from one public space to another, young activists increasingly partook in integrated forms of expression. The myriad services provided to sustain the protests in Tahrir were devised and maintained by young people already experienced in the provision of social services.[51] Graffiti artists were inspired by their experiences of street protest, and the availability of social media enabled activists to reach out to and draw in those who had been 'readied' by their activities in a social media space to enter the public square.

51 Ibrahim, Barbara and Leah Hunt-Hendrix, "Youth, Service and Pathways to Democracy in Egypt." Voices on Arab Philanthropy and Civic Engagement, Gerhart Center Working Paper Series (June 2011): 4-5, http://www.aucegypt.edu/research/gerhart/Documents/Youth%20and%20Democracy%20working%20paper%20+Cover.pdf

The post-revolutionary challenges facing Egypt are daunting. Every institution, from public education to security forces to local government must be rebuilt in a country of 87 million. It will take the creativity and determination of all citizens to make those efforts succeed. Already there are worrying signs that the interim leadership bodies are uncomfortable sharing decision-making with groups like women and youth, who were traditionally excluded from their ranks. A further problem is the flat leadership structure of the many youth coalitions that have proliferated but which are opposed to appointing leaders or spokespersons. This is both a refreshing rejection of the hierarchical and patriarchal structures of the past, but also a limitation, youth prospectives risk being lost among the many new forces emerging to contest democratic elections.

Some hopeful signs can be seen in the lowering of age limits to contest parliamentary elections to 25, although other suggestions to assure a quota of youth (and women) members were rejected. The ruling military council has made efforts to establish dialogue with revolutionary youth groups with mixed results. These gestures will need to be formalized into legistlation along with other policy formulations that take seriously the role and contribution of young Egyptians.

Meanwhile, laws that restrict voluntary associations must be urgently reformed to remove punitive clauses for rights and citizenship-related activities. The procedures for registering a youth organization and receiving funding through legal channels need to be revised and simplified. In the past, some groups waited years to be formally recognized or were rejected for activities such as human rights advocacy which were considered harmful by the government. A worrying public campaign began in July 2011 trying to discredit youth and other organizations for accepting funds from international sources (including the EU and USAID), even though many of the same agencies are regular funders of the Egyptian government. Those sorts of double standards characterized the tactics of the previous regime and should be actively exposed and discarded in the new Egypt. Freedom of speech and association are democratic cornerstones that the revolution will be called upon to protect.

We hope that the information and insights gathered in this report can serve as both a record of the courage and inventiveness of Egypt's youth and a guidepost to the reforms that will protect their hard-won gains. In the weeks and months to come, decisions will be made about a national constitutional framework, election systems, legislative procedures, institutional revamping, as well as a host of local-level governance reforms. Youth have earned their place at the policy tables when those decisions are taken. The authors of this report look forward to documenting and encouraging youth as they move into that public space, we hope as successfully as they have shaped public space in early 2011.

Amy Rowe

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