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Confronting Gerontocracy

The Youthful Character of the Egyptian Revolution

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Confronting Gerontocracy

The Youthful Character of the Egyptian Revolution

Sina Birkholz

Abstract

From day one, the Egyptian uprising in 2011 has been called a “youth revolution”. While young educated Egyptians indeed were at the forefront of the protests on January 25, an exclusively age-centred perspective is insufficient for grasping the meaning of the events. Rather than focusing purely on a specific age group I conceive of “youthfulness” as a broader social construct. In this paper, I explore in what way we can consider the Egyptian revolution to be a youthful revolution, and argue that a focus on both youth and youthfulness offers an important conceptual access point to understanding the ongoing social, political and cultural transformations in Egypt. In order to make sense of the developments, we need to be aware of the most important youth-related (structural) causes, triggers, and demands. The gerontocratic regime and its symbolism explain why youth advanced to a category of political conflict. Finally, also the largely negative image of youth that prevailed in Egypt, as well as young people‘s role and situation need be taken into account for analysing not only the dynamics of the 18 days in Tahrir but also the ongoing struggle for power and identity in Egypt.

About the author

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1. Two years after the "youth" revolution – the difficulties of writing about a revolution that is "ongoing"

Even though it might be too early to "explain" the Egyptian revolution[1] which is still a moving target (Bayat 2011a; Elyachar 2012), certain narrations have become well-established and find consensus among academics, activists, journalists[2], and my other (young) interlocutors[3]. It is largely undoubted that previous protests, (worker) strikes, and the formation of protest movements provided the grounds for the uprising on January 25. Some attribute major importance to the workers' strikes (since 2006) in Mahalla, an industrial city south of Cairo, and the ensuing foundation of the April 6 Youth Movement; others emphasize the emergence of political protest and the Kefaya Movement in the wake of the Intifada, the Iraq-War and various Israeli offensives; and lastly also the silent protests in the aftermath of Khaled Said's death, called for by the Facebook page "Kullina[4] Khaled Said"[5], are considered a prelude to the uprising. It is also treated as a fait accompli that young (bilingual) people were the ones who "started" the revolution (i.e., who where behind much of the mobilisation efforts and the most numerous group to start the marches on January 25)[6], yet, soon people from all walks of lives and professions joined. Without this broad-based support Mubarak could not have been forced out. There is also consensus that the internet, in particular social media, played a role in the mobilisation and organisation of the protests, and its later dynamics. So did the role of international media and the regime's response.

"The Youth Revolution" – headline of the Egyptian uprising

While these interpretations have been developed and established in the aftermath of the uprising, a narrower reading had been almost hegemonic in the heat of the battle, during the 18 Days in Tahrir[7]: the reading that we were observing a "youth revolution". On the evening of Thursday, February the 10th, 2011, then president Hosni Mubarak and his Vice-President Omar Suleiman spoke to the Egyptian people. Both clearly framed the preceding events as a movement led by the Egyptian youth. On the eve of his resignation, Mubarak opened his speech with the following words: "I am addressing the youth of Egypt today in Tahrir Square and across the country. I am addressing you all from the heart, a father's dialogue with his sons and daughters" (BBC 2011). Suleiman affirmed that "[t]he January 25 youth movement has succeeded in pushing major change toward the path of democracy (...)" and pledged his commitment to "the protection of the revolution of the youth" (Zayed 2011). At the time, many international and national media had adopted a similar reading: "The Generation changing the world" became the face of the Egyptian revolution[8] and "the rebirth of the 'true' ibn al balad Egyptian, trapped for decades by a genie in an old lantern and now finally set free by the country's *youth*, became the headline to the *success story* of the uprising" (Hafez 2012: 40). Various scholars, authors and political commentators soon adopted this narrative. And in most cases, the label "youth revolution" rests on the perception that it was mainly people from a specific age group that instigated the protests on January 25, 2011 and in the following days. In some texts, though, a slightly different notion is indicated - but rarely elaborated in detail. Khamis and Vaughn for example state that "long-time dictator Hosni Mubarak was forced to step down under pressure from a popular, *youthful*, and peaceful revolution" (Khamis/Vaughn 2011: 1, my emphasis; see Rushdy 2011). Yet, it remains unclear: What does this actually mean – a "youthful" revolution?

It is this latter question that I want to address in this paper. I am not primarily concerned with the age-centred perspective, for reasons that will become increasingly clear in the next chapters. Rather than focusing *purely* on a specific age group I want to conceive of "youthfulness" as a broader *social construct*. I explore in what way we can consider the Egyptian revolution to be a youthful revolution, and argue that even though a focus on youth and youthfulness is not the only valid perspective, it offers one important conceptual access point to understanding the events.

The structure of this paper

Any approach to this research question needs to be grounded in some understanding of the local context and in a thorough reflection of analytical concepts in the first place. The next chapter therefore is devoted to some reflections on the category "youth", both in general and in the specific Egyptian context. The purpose is not to find an unambiguous definition of "youth" but to sensitise the reader for the complexity of the concept, and to the interplay of (more or less) material criteria (such as age) and social construction in defining youth. The third chapter aims to explore the relation of "youth" and "youthfulness" with the Egyptian Revolution. It begins with a few theoretical considerations that lay the foundation for structuring the ensuing analysis of the revolution. Goldstone's theory of revolutions provides three focal points for structuring the chapter: the causes (3.1), the dynamics (3.3) and the outcome (3.4). The structural causes and their specific meaning for young people provided not only youth with a frequently employed narrative to explain the uprising. Yet, the triggers, namely the increasing assertiveness of what seemed to become a Mubarak dynasty, the public death of Khaled Said in 2010, and the successful uprising in Tunisia in late 2010, provide important cues to understanding the timing and the character of the Egyptian uprising. In chapter 3.3, various aspects of this youthful character are described and analysed as a reaction to specific circumstances, grievances, and narratives. In addition it shows how "youth" imposes itself as a category for political conflict at the backdrop of the gerontocratic system and its paternalistic symbolism and language. In the last chapter preceding the conclusion, I undertake a short assessment of the revolution's outcome which necessarily remains a tentative and time-bound account, given that the struggles for power and identity that the uprising has ushered in are still in full swing (3.4).

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[1] The critical reader will undoubtedly question whether this use of the term "revolution" for the events and changes in Egypt since January 25, 2011 is justified. See chapter 3 for a discussion.

[2] For an overview and various perspectives see the respective edition of American Ethnologist Vol.39 No.1, 2012, and the preceding "Hotspot" of Cultural Anthropology; the debate in Swiss Political Science Review, Vol. 17 No.4, December 2011; the Carnegie Foundation's special website Guide to Egypt's Transition and in general articles referring to the revolution published on Jadaliyya (http://www.jadaliyya.com/).

[3] This paper draws on two interview series I have conducted in February to April and in December 2011. In spring I have carried out 12 biographical interviews with female students from Egypt's upper middle class for my diploma thesis titled "Identities at crossroads". Later the same year I interviewed 22 women on their role in the revolution. Above that I have spent about one and a half years in Cairo, over the course of the last 4 years, as an intern, student, researcher and participant observer.

[4] For Arabic names and terms I will use Franco-Arab(ic) (also called Chat Arabic) instead of classical transliteration. Franco-Arab is mainly used online by young Egyptians to write Arabic in Latin script. See Wikipedia's article on Franco-Arab for a table of letters (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabic_chat_alphabet).

[5] This translates as "We are all Khaled Said". Today there are an English and an Arabic language page.

[6] This is not to say, however, that it was impossible to talk of the revolution without putting youth centerstage. Stephen Cook, for example, discusses the revolution's similarity to the Free Officer's coup in 1952 without making much reference to "youth". They are only given credit as one amongst a "myriad" of actors: "After all, the players are the same: the military, the Muslim Brotherhood, students or youth activists, and myriad political parties proclaiming the mantle of liberalism" (Cook 2012).

[7] See footnote 2.

[8] Times Cover on February 28th, 2011, headline over a photo of Egyptian upper middle class youth.

2. "Youth is just a word"[9] – explorations of the category youth in general and in the Egyptian context

It is commonly acknowledged that youth is not a purely biological but a socially constructed category (see Bayat 2010; Fuller 2003; Galland 2003; Hegasy 2010; Lesko 2012). Bourdieu provocatively even claimed youth was nothing but "a word" (Bourdieu 1994: 94). My argument in this paper is in line with moderate constructivist thinking on youth and rests on several observations: 1) the concept "youth" refers to much more than an age. Yet, it is usually grounded in biologistic notions of human development; 2) The boundaries between the definition of youth and its attributions are fluid, and 3) youth is usually constructed in relational terms. As a consequence, youth as an age group and youth as a social construct usually have to be thought together. These aspects become highlighted once we analyse how youth came to be defined in the context of the revolution (see ch. 3), when it was mainly defined by opposition to the regime.

The purpose of the following chapter is therefore to sensitise the reader for the complexity and malleability of the multifaceted concept "youth". For this purpose, first various definitions and connotations from different academic contexts and disciplines are depicted. While *age* and notions of a *transitional period* are at the core of many understandings of youth, they vary in regards to the *features* that they attribute to young people as individuals and as to the *potential* that they attribute to youth as a collective social agent. In a second step, I provide some insights into the image of youth in the Egyptian context. Both the conceptual examples and the description of local specificities help to understand young people's participation in the Egyptian uprising and the role that the concept "youth" played, as will become evident in chapter 3.

2.1 Various definitions and connotations of youth

First of all youth is defined by a (not so) certain age. As youth is a socially constructed category, the fixation of the border between childhood, youth, and adulthood is socially constructed, too. Yet "defining the ages that constitute youth has no internationally agreed convention" (Handoussa 2010: XI). The Egyptian National Human Development Report 2010 (ENHDR, Handoussa 2010), focused on youth, defines youth as those aged between 18 and 29. It justifies these borders as follows: "The definition accommodates for the lower age limit of 18 years adopted by Egyptian law as the transition from childhood to adulthood as well as the upper age limit of 29 years when society and most youth themselves expect and hope to have formed a family and acquired a house" (Handoussa 2010: XI). Today, those aged 18 to 29 constitute about one quarter of Egypt's population. These 20 million young people represent a "youth bulge" insofar as their generation outnumbers other ones by far (Fuller 2003: 2)[10].

Different boundaries delineating the period of youth are imaginable - and might within the context of a specific society or time be even more plausible. If we consider variations in characteristics such as child labour, marriage age and life expectancy, the social onset of youth and adulthood might shift considerably. Even in the foreword to the aforementioned report, the ENHDR, youth is defined differently, resulting in an even more impressive demographic figure: "According to the 2006 census, approximately 40 percent of Egyptians are between the ages of 10 and 29" (Handoussa 2010: IX). In the Egyptian case, due to a phenomenon called "waithood" (see chapter 3.3.1), there is reason to extend our definition of youth to include people in their early or even late 30s, as many of my interview partners do. We then can say that today youth constitute even half of Egypt's population.

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[9] Bourdieu 1994: 94.

[10] For the so called youth bulge theory see for example Fuller (2004), Heinsohn (2003), Goldstone (2002; 2010). Amongst others, Hendrixson provides a poignant critique thereof (2002, 2004, 2012).

2.1.1 Youth as a transitional phase

Yet, even though the *exact border* can only be fixed arbitrarily, the *distinction* between childhood, youth, and adulthood does not seem entirely arbitrary. It is associated with the notion that a human life in society can be dissected into different phases, which are *qualitatively* distinct. Implying that (generally speaking) people in the phase of youth are distinct from elders in regards to their experience or properties, their behaviour, their goals or their (developmental) tasks. This notion of life phases is most evident in developmental psychology, but also reflected in many other definitions of youth. The aforementioned definition of the NHDR for example implies that "youth" comes to an end once young people "have formed a family and acquired a house". Such a notion of "completion" or "successful passing" of a phase is reflected in the term "transition".

Even though developmental psychology knows other models of human development, one of the most influential ones (Oerter 2008: 1064), strongly influenced by Eric H. Erikson (1993), rests on a similar *notion of phases*. Erikson distinguishes between different phases of life, each having specific "developmental tasks" (see 1993: 247-274). Childhood comprises four distinct phases. It is followed by adolescence which starts at 12 years, i.e. approximately with the onset of puberty. Young adulthood/late adolescence (18 to 35), middle adulthood and late adulthood follow. Erikson assumes the universality of these phases, even though some (if not all) of them can be seen as socially constructed rather than biologically defined (Wenzler-Cremer 2005: 63-64). Consequentially, also in developmental psychology, different classifications draw different lines or build different sub-distinctions (Wenzler-Cremer 2005: 63; Tawila 2001: 219; see Baddeley/Singer 2007). Irrespective of these differences in detail, en gros, the age groups defined above as youth all comprise the phase of young adulthood and parts of adolescence, and they are attributed roughly similar developmental tasks and psychological features. Drawing on Wenzler-Cremer's useful structure[11], I assume as the main *developmental tasks* specific to the period of young adulthood/late adolescence the following four clusters: 1) development of the self-concept, 2) reshaping of relations to family and peers, 3) development of a vision for the own future, and 4) locating oneself within society and state (Wenzler-Cremer 2005: 64). These are interesting for us insofar as they correspond to the reflections on Egyptian youth that stem from a development policy context, all being largely concerned with the problem of *transition*.

The Population Council's Survey on Young People in Egypt (SYPE) for example "focuses on the five key life transitions for youth: health, education, employment and livelihood, family formation, and civic participation" (Population Council 2010: vi). A similar framework is employed in "A generation in waithood" (Dhillon/Yousef 2009: 3): "we assess three major interdependent transitions: education, employment and family formation."

2.1.2 Youthfulness and a youthful habitus

Also Bayat's reflections on youth focus on the "in-betweenness" of this phase. Other than the previous approaches, however, his elaborations on Middle Eastern youth build on a conceptual distinction between "young" and "youthful". "Young" then refers to the *age* component of youth, "youthful" designates the *attributes and features* that are ascribed to youth and associated with being young. For Bayat "youthfulness signifies a particular habitus, behavioral and cognitive dispositions[12] that are associated with the fact of being 'young' – that is, a distinct social location between childhood and adulthood, where the youngster experiences 'relative autonomy' and is neither totally dependent (on adults) nor independent, and is free from responsibilities for other dependents" (Bayat 2010: 28).

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[11] For a different classification with largely similar content see for example (Essau/Trommsdorff 1995: 211–213).

[12] It is somewhat puzzling how abstract Bayat's description of the habitus, behaviour, and thoughts associated with youthfulness remains (see for example Bayat 2010, compare also Herrera 2009).

Bayat's description of such a youth habitus remains largely on an abstract level. It is defined as "a series of dispositions and ways of being, feeling, and carrying oneself (e.g. a greater tendency for experimentation, adventurism, idealism, autonomy, mobility, and change) that are associated with the sociological fact of 'being young'" (Bayat 2010: 30). In the same text, he later indicates that being young is associated with specific "behaviour, dress, speaking fashions, ways of walking, in private and in public spaces" (Bayat 2010: 31). In addition, youth are attributed a tendency to challenge older generations and subvert their norms, which goes hand in hand with their "aversion (...) from patronizing pedagogy and moral authority" (Bayat 2010: 46). In regards to Bayat's two examples, Iran and Egypt (Bayat 2010: 32-47), the concrete articulations of youthfulness are similar: striving for happiness and fun, expressing one's sexuality, enjoying consumption and the desire for less restricted interaction with people from the opposite gender are major determinants of youthfulness in these contemporary societies. Expressive individuality and non-conformism supplement this picture and provide means of distinction vis-a-vis the elder (parental) generation.

Yet, it is not only Iranian and Egyptian youth that are attributed the desire to have fun and the urge for interaction with the opposite gender. Already one of the first academic contributions on the topic (Galland 2003: 163) highlights these two traits of youth: discussing issues pertaining to youth in the United States, Parsons argues in 1942 that

> "by contrast with the emphasis on responsibility in this role [the male adult role], the orientation of the youth culture is more or less specifically irresponsible. One of its dominant notes is "having a good time" in relation to which there is a particularly strong emphasis on social activities in company with the opposite sex."
>
> (Parsons 1942: 606-607)

At first glance, this seems to indicate a convergence of youth styles and preferences around the world – ultimately the creation of an "increasingly global youth habitus" (Bayat 2010: 47). And indeed, a striking convergence of young people's expectations and experiences in regards to flirting and dating can be observed (Birkholz 2011: 179-180; vgl. Bayat 2010). Some of my interview partners even address such an increasing convergence of norms of youthfulness. They decry, for example, that in Egypt they cannot live their youth in the way that would correspond to their own "westernised" ideals (Birkholz 2011: 284-285, 230-232). Similarly, the frequent reference to "fun" as an essential aspect of youthfulness indicates that not necessarily extended periods of schooling on a mass scale (Bayat 2010: 30, 41; Fuller 2003: 7) alone created "youth" but that economic and cultural globalisation are crucial for the formation of "youth" as a social category (see Werner 1996; Bayat 2010: 31).

Yet, a general conundrum of Social Sciences also comes to play here: these academic observations and descriptions of youth cannot be separated from our common stereotypes and images of youth, i.e. the observations and descriptions of our lifeworlds. First order observations and second order observations interact, with the latter, i.e. the expert view, often feeding back into the "real world" and the first order constructions of individuals (Giddens 1986: 348-372; Esser 1999: 211–213; Bohnsack 2000: 24; Schütz 1964). Thus, there *might* be an increasingly global youth habitus, given that various academics seem to take the "globalisation" of MENA youth for granted (see Bayat 2010; Hegasy 2011; Hegasy 2010; Herrera 2011a). At the same time the perception of the youth' globalization might stem mostly from an (academic) discourse on such an increasingly global youth – or it might be the discourse itself that becomes increasingly global. In the Egyptian case, the complex interrelations of the global and the local, and of the academic and the non-academic description become visible. On the one hand, the idea of irresponsibility plays a pivotal role in defining youth, as in Parson's definition. At the same time, fear *of an increasingly globalised youth habitus* is expressed explicitly and influences heavily the national debate on youth (Bayat 2010:43-46; Abaza 2006: 241). Before I turn the attention to two specific and to a certain extent contradictory stereotypes of youth observed in Egypt (see 2.2), I would like to briefly demonstrate what *potential* is ascribed to youth.

2.1.3 The potential of youth as a collective actor and as a resource

Bayat's elaborations on youthfulness provide him with the foundations for what he is concerned with in the first place: a conception of "youth movements". He argues that "[r]ather than being defined in terms of centrality of the young, youth movements are ultimately about 'claiming or reclaiming youthfulness'" (Bayat 2010:28). For Bayat it is the demands of a movement – not the age of its participants – that defines it as a youth movement. And it is not before "young persons" turn into a collective, the social category "youth", that they become a social actor[13] (Bayat 2010: 30). A movement of young people alone does not constitute a youth movement in his definition. This qualification provides us with a useful perspective to question in what sense the Egyptian revolution was a "youth revolution". This distinction undergirds the shift in attention (see chapter 3) from questions about the participants(' age) on the one hand to the causes, demands and character of the movement on the other hand. In chapter 3.3 I will in addition argue that the "character" of a movement can be caught by the concept of "revolutionary identity".

Beyond that, Bayat's work on youthfulness and youth movements deserves particular attention because he foresaw the recent uprisings in several Arab states in a nearly prophetic manner in one of his last publications prior to January 25. In 2010 he argues for "youth" as a useful analytical category (Bayat 2010: 28-30), points out that Marcuse had already suspected youth to be the new revolutionary class after the proletariat, and claims that "the youth movements have great transformative and democratizing promise" (Bayat 2010: 28-29). According to him, this was true particularly in the Middle East "given the prevalence of the doctrinal religious regimes (...) that are unable to accommodate the youth habitus. (...) If anything, the political or transformative potential of youth movements is relative to the degree of social control their adversaries impose on them."[14]

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[13] In defence of his category "youth", Bayat (2010: 30) engages with a critique of Bourdieu who claimed the term "youth" was "just a word" (Bourdieu 1994: 94) and pointed out that the realities of young persons from different classes where much too distinct to speak of "youth". Bayat claims that Bourdieu's analysis refers to "realities" that preceded the establishment of mass schooling. Mass schooling and urbanisation had a considerable impact on the galvanisation of "youth". In this reading, mass schooling constitutes and prolongs the period of being young, while cities open up opportunities and venues for experimenting with roles, identities, individuality (Bayat 2010: 30-31). Herrera makes a similar argument regarding the inability to complete the transition to adulthood: "The extended period of youth can indeed be viewed as an opportunity (...) [since it] is also a period when the young forge a distinct generational consciousness. (...) [It] translates into more leisure time and provides opportunities (...) to exert themselves as citizens, consumers, and conduits of change through youth cultural political forms" (Herrera 2009: 370).

[14] Based on this argument, Bayat expected Iran to be more prone to developing a powerful youth movement than Egypt. In his eyes, Egypt was marked by a lesser amount of social control. As a consequence, Bayat himself today seems to doubt his hypothesis on the relation of social control and youth movements (2011a). My own research, however, suggests that mainly his assessment of social control in Egypt has to be reconsidered. One of the main findings in my thesis, for example, was that young women from Egypt's (upper) middle class feel heavily restricted by the tight social surveillance and a phenomenon I have termed "judgmentality" (Birkholz 2011). This perception was shared by the young women independently of their self-description as secular or religious.

The potential of youth as consumers and human resources

Also publications like the NHDR emphasize the *potential* of youth to act as a *force for good*. In a developmentalist reading they are however not seen as a transformative actor but rather as "human resources" to fuel (neoliberal) capitalist development. Possibly, most theories emphasizing the transformatory potential of younger generations reveal similarly "modernist" ideological undertones. The NHDR's approach can beyond that also be criticised for its problem solving approach. Rather than critically questioning the current reality, it constructs a subject that can be *managed*, whose problems can be *fixed*, so that it becomes "a body of industrious and resourceful citizens" (Handoussa: 2010 VII). Dependent on whether the management of subjects succeeds, the youth bulge becomes a source for danger (see Fuller 2004; Heinsohn 2003; Goldstone 2002, 2010) or a source for change and productivity. In a critical perspective, the appearance of youth can even be understood as the creation of a new group of consumers (see Werner 1996: 8; Singerman 2007), constructed with the "rise of a liberal, consumerist ideology targeted at youth" (Singerman 2007: 38). Even if the perception of youth as a distinct group in society might not be exclusively the result of such an ideology, it is at least shaped by neo-liberalism "encourage[ing] them to become ardent consumers who will 'live globalization' rather than watch it go by if they make the right investments in their education and the right strategic choices in their careers and become rich" (Singerman 2007: 39-40). The idea of a youth who lives globalisation through (cultural) consumption might be desirable in the eyes of developmental agencies and multinationals – for Egyptian parents on the other hand it is not perceived as potential but as a threat. In Egypt, the construction of youth as a group distinct from older generations relies heavily on the youth's global connections, as will be shown in the next paragraphs.

2.2 Perceptions of youth in Egypt: youth as baltagiyya and victims of globalisation

Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this paper to fully reconstruct youth with all its shades, connotations, and situative variations as an emic concept in Egypt. Instead, I simply want to provide the reader with some categories and concepts usually discussed in regards to Egyptian youth. They will provide us with some conceptual background for looking at the revolution and its relation to youth and youthfulness in the next chapter (3).

In order to understand Egyptian youth, their role in the uprising, and the talk about it, it is helpful to look at the image of youth prior to the revolution. In the view of my interview partners, a largely negative image of youth prevailed and was communicated. This perception is confirmed by various academic sources that originated prior to 2011. "As youth (...) it is not uncommon for us to be perceived as troublemakers and potential sources of disruption, rather than productive and constructive social actors" explains a young woman quoted in the NHDR (Salma in Handoussa 2010: 232). There seem to be at least two variations: the image of youth as "corrupted" by Western influence and youth (in specific young men)[15] as "baltagiyya".

Young Egyptians as victims of a globalisation dominated by the West

Regarding the first stereotype, it is among other things young people's internet use which rendered them the target of mockery and disdain of the older generations: "They thought that a lot of youth don't really care and they don't really care about the future of the country. The whole idea of 'they're just sitting on Facebook and chatting with their friends'" (Nadia[16], a 23-year-old student of Political Science and Law). For the young people themselves, however, Facebook is only one of many tools at their disposal that allow them to widen their horizon and evade social control (Herrera 2011). Young people in Egypt like to describe this widened horizon as "exposure". Part of this exposure results from their higher education and their life in urban centres, but most important is the exposure to a globalised world. Internet use is then at once the symbol and cause of exposure. Many of my interview partners took for granted that due to the huge difference in exposure, the older generations simply could not understand them – considered a very normal effect of a generation gap. Also Bayat illustrates how large the misunderstanding between the generations has become:

> "For more than a decade, young Egyptians were seen in the image of Islamist militants waging guerilla war, penetrating college campuses, or memorizing the Quran in the back street mosques (zawaya) of sprawling slums. Moral authorities, parents and foreign observers expected them to be characteristically pious, strict, and dedicated to the moral discipline of Islam. Yet in their daily lives, the mainstream young defied their constructed image, often shocking moral authorities by expressing defiance openly and directly. (...) 'Our generation is more exposed than yours, and this is a simple fact.'"
>
> (Bayat 2010: 43)

While the young people identify strongly with this increased exposure, for their parents – and interestingly enough: the state – it constitutes a constant source of worry. The discourse on youth in Egypt reveals a "prevailing moral panic over the alleged vulnerability of youths to global culture" (Bayat 2010: 43). Parents display a "deep anxiety over their [own] 'corrupting' influence on their vulnerable children" (Bayat 2007: 165). This pervasive fear that youth might become corrupted (Abaza 2006: 241) finds expression in media debates and even specific conferences (Bayat 2007: 165).

Even the Egyptian state joined the fear mongering which was traditionally the role of Islamist currents: "The (...) [youth's] protection from political and moral ills had become a matter of 'national security'" (Bayat 2010: 42). The state invested money and efforts to prevent youth from being too affected by Western cultural influences or home-grown political Islam (Bayat 2010: 42). Just like the regime's efforts to fuel xenophobia, the Egyptian state's efforts in policing youth could be interpreted as an attempt to divert attention from the real corruption that ruins the country.

A very different stereotype that Egyptian youth – mainly men – have been subjected to is that of the "baltagi"[17]. This term can be translated as "(paid) thug" or "troublemaker". The Egyptian concept however carries much more meaning than these translations can convey (for a thorough discussion of the concept "baltagi" see Ghannam (2012)). For the purpose of this paper a rough description shall suffice. The conflation of young men with baltagiyya rests on the assumption that young men (in particular those from lower classes) are prone to commit violence and thus have to be reigned in (by force). It shows striking similarities with the image of youth which youth bulge theories are built on (Hendrixson 2004: 2, 10). Above that, the stereotyping of young men as baltagiyya ties in with the securitisation and criminalisation of poverty (Singerman and Amar 2006; Harders 1999) and the international discourse on terrorism and Muslim Arabs in the aftermath of 9/11. Mubarak's regime virtuously played on

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[15] Lesko and Hendrixson both show how the stereotypes of male (or: black) youth have a(n implicit) female (or: white) counterpart (Lesko 2012:9-10; Hendrixson 2004:10).

[16] To protect the privacy of my interview partners I am using clear names only for those who have explicitly agreed to be named or have been interviewed as representative of an organisation. For everyone else I picked alternative Egyptian names. This selection was completely random, unless for one exception: if I had to find a substitute for a name that in Egypt can be given to both Muslim and Christian girls, I substituted it correspondingly by a name that is carried by women of both denominations.

[17] "Baltagi" is the singular, "baltagiyya" the plural.

and reproduced these discourses and stereotypes to deepen and render ever more brutal the police state (see also 3.3.4 on police violence).

Political disaffection in face of state terror

At the backdrop of the closure of the political sphere under Mubarak, the lamento of youth's political disaffection, inherent to the image of youth as corrupted and disaffected, and frequently expressed before the revolution, is nothing less than irritating. Very recently, in 2010's SYPE report, young people were portrayed as "socially disengaged" (Population Council 2010: 18), confirming earlier research on youth's exclusion and marginalization (see for example Assaad/Barsoum 2007). Reem, a 21-year-old student of Political Science and Economics and one of the young women I interviewed, even told me she participated in my interview mainly to assert that "Middle Eastern youth (...) are passionate about life and that they want to do so many things with their lives". Her statement implies that such a clarification was necessary, which is hardly surprising in light of the negative image of (Muslim Arab) youth within her own society and abroad. Singerman is one of the few to critically engage with the *origin* of youth's perceived disinvolvement. She points out that "[m]any young people still fear the security services of Middle Eastern governments and intentionally distance themselves from political activism out of fear" (2007: 39).

Also Bayat questions how accurate the generalisations about a socially and politically apathetic youth are. He for example calls attention to the continuous involvement of young people in transformatory movements in the Middle East: "In the meantime, the bulging student population continued to play a key role in the popular movements, either along the secular-nationalist and leftist forces or more recently under the banner of Islamism" (Bayat 2011b: 50-51). The young people themselves have long rejected the "inaccurate portrayals of them in the media and the frequent moralizing about their supposedly hedonistic, selfish, and Westernized ways" (Singerman 2007: 39). Little surprising then it is that the revolution offered youth the opportunity of casting their image in a more positive way, as I will describe in the discussion of the revolution's outcomes (3.4).

3. The Egyptian Revolution – and its relation to youth

The purpose of this chapter is to explore in what sense and to what extent the Egyptian revolution, i.e. the 18 day uprising and the processes that ensued, can be read as a "youth revolution". Regarding the concept "revolution", I will introduce some theoretical considerations that structure the remainder of the discussion. Regarding youth, the preceding chapters provided the conceptual foundations. Usually, when the Egyptian uprising is termed a youth revolution, this designation is mostly owed to the perception that it was mainly *people from a specific age group* that instigated the protests on January 25, 2011 and dominated the protests in the ensuing 18 days. Following Bayat's understanding of *youth movements*, I want to adopt a different perspective. Rather than focusing purely on a specific age group I will try to grasp "youthfulness" as a broader social construct (see 2.1.2). As I have indicated earlier, however, youth and youthfulness tend to go hand in hand, in thinking and discourse as well as action. While my analysis will *focus* on youthfulness and discourses of youth(fulness), it will also pay attention to young people as an age group and to the real consequences that the respective discourses have, for example, for power structures in Egyptian society.

3.1 The question of participation and the question of youthfulness

In order to do justice to such a twofold and biased perspective, a short discussion of the question of (physical) participation in the protests 2011 seems in order. Winegar makes an elaborate (and surprisingly emotional, normative) argument why it was in particular young people (from the cultured classes) that could be seen protesting in the streets (see Winegar 2012). "If not among the eldest males in the household, one generally had to have one's family's permission to go to Tahrir, which was most easily (though not always) given to young men, who - in Egypt as elsewhere - are the ones seen to be responsible for fighting for the nation but whose power is still circumscribed by gerontocratic patriarchy. One had to also have the health and stamina to endure hours in the square and attacks by the regime, which, given the 30-year decimation of the public health care system under Mubarak, often meant the youth or the upper classes who could afford quality health care."(Winegar 2012: 69).

Her argument seems to contradict the idea of a revolution which was mounted by people from all walks of life and ages (see chapter 1). Yet, her overall argument is very much in line with the notion of "a revolution of the people". Only a specific type of people, positioned in a specific place in society could *physically* be in Tahrir. However, also the role and impact of those who stayed at home, their emotional, and what I term "peripheral involvement" needs to be given due consideration, so Winegar (2012) argues. Seen from that angle, the (by now common sense) assertion "it was a popular revolution" also serves to exonerate those who for the lack of resources or due to their position (age, class, gender, etc.) could not be physically present. Most of my interview partners share Winegar's perception that youth were at the forefront of the revolution. Though, other than Winegar, they emphasize that youth provided mainly the *initial spark* and *all segments of society* joined in after few days. This might constitute an ex-post attempt at inclusion – which also counters attempts to disqualify the revolution as a factional protest, staged by the young only. In the end, whoever claims that a certain group of people was or was not "in the square" does so with a (political) agenda.[18] The question of participation is highly interwoven with ongoing struggles for legitimacy and hegemony of interpretation.[19]

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[18] Of course this is not only true for Egyptian activists and military rulers, but also for academics. In their case, the agenda might simply consist of "telling what is true". Winegard for example wants to assure that it was a broad-based revolution (2011 b). That said – what is my agenda? It is a small truth claim, asserting that we do learn more about the revolution if we look at it as a "youthful" revolution, instead of a revolution by a specific demographic segment.

[19] This was also highlighted by the media coverage of the events in Sharia Mohammed Mahmoud in November 2011 and February 2012. Commentators from all sides focused on the question "who was where at what time?" to explain the clashes and trade accusations. At the same time it seems to me that the since the first wave of protests in Janu-

My point here is not to deny such a perception that young people were most visible in the first phase of the uprising. Yet, in line with Bayat's elaborations on youth movements, I argue that the question of participation is not the crucial factor for defining a youth revolution, rather we need to investigate the *youthful character* of the uprising. For approaching the question in how far the Egyptian revolution was youthful, two different ways are at hand: for one, we could ask young people about their stance on and role in the revolution. Alternatively, we could also ask in how far we can relate different aspects of the revolution to what we know about Egyptian youth. There is much overlap between these two perspectives as eventually youth themselves may be the best source for knowledge of youth. Yet, given that I want to focus on the broader concept of youthfulness, both approaches are combined. I relate my observations of the revolution to what is known about (Egyptian) youth and youthfulness, drawing on many interviews and interaction with young Egyptians.

3.2 Talking about a revolution – drawing boundaries and fixing terminology

A revolution is a complex, multi-layered societal phenomenon and does not fit reductionist methodology and ontology or oversimplifying labels (Khamis/Vaughn 2011: 25; Goldstone 2002: 46). Even when looking exclusively at the revolution's causes, similar caveats are in order: "a 'short and consistent' list of the factors leading to revolution appears to be a chimera. In addition to the international military pressures and elite conflicts (...) analysts of revolution have demonstrated that economic downturns, cultures of rebellion, dependent development, population pressures, colonial or personalistic regime structures, cross-class coalitions, loss of national credentials, military defection, the spread of revolutionary ideology and exemplars, and effective leadership are all plausibly linked with multiple cases of revolution, albeit in different ways in different cases" (Goldstone 2002: 46). Moreover, various conditions conducive to mobilisation can be specified, reflecting a combination of structural factors and "leadership, ideology, culture, coalitions", which in more abstratc terms constitutes a combination of structure and agency (Goldstone 2002: 46).

"Was there a January 25 revolution?"[20]

This complexity of the subject notwithstanding, some terminology and necessarily simplifying structure has to be found to observe and describe those events that have been termed Egyptian revolution. Also, when we ask which element of a revolution should be related to "youth" in order to legitimately speak of a youth revolution, the answer depends on our conceptual grasp of "revolution". In regards to the Egyptian revolution, the issue of terminology needs to be rendered problematic in two different ways. First, there is the question whether the January 25 uprising and the events it ushered in 'deserve' the label "revolution". By academic standards, i.e. compared to definitions in political science or history,[21] it might not be justified to call the respective events and their consequences a revolution. This is especially true in light of the high continuity in the practices and personal of the security sector and the unbroken power of the army. Nonetheless, I will throughout this paper employ the term "revolution", in order to reflect the Egyptian discourse and understanding. Everyday usage in Egypt is unambiguous: opponents and supporters call it "al thawra", the revolution. Whenever I heard someone label it in a different way, she did so in order to make a point, not out of habit.

Has the revolution ended?

The second problematic issue refers to the temporal boundaries of the revolution. Has the revolution ended? On the one hand, the trope of "the 18 Days" has become frequent, indicating that the first 18 days of the uprising are of a different quality than the many protests, street battles, and political processes that followed. Yet, the very same people that commemorate "the 18 Days" might well be part of a group called "Al thawra mustamirra" or at least share their battle cry, meaning "the revolution continues/is ongoing". While the first trope draws a clear boundary between a revolutionary event and its aftermath, the second emphasises the procedural character of a revolution. For a very informative discussion of both issues, see the recent article by Joel Beinin (2013). In my opinion, referring to Egypt, both perspectives – revolution as a moment and as a process – are equally justified, and they are not necessarily exclusive. In the reminder of this paper, "revolution" can therefore refer to both, to "the 18 Days" or to a longer struggle for culture and identity that lasts to the date. Whenever I want to refer exclusively to the revolutionary event in January and February 2011, I make this clear by using constructions like "after" and "during the revolution" or by employing the term "uprising".

Structuring observations of a revolution

Goldstone (2001) provides us with a simple but effective structure for analysing revolutions: he distinguishes causes, dynamics, and outcome. Each of these elements has been addressed by various theories on revolutions. In line with the purpose of this paper and the methodological background of the author, the following refinements are of particular interest: structural long-term conditions and more recent structural changes, the resulting grievances, the triggers, and the construction of a collective identity and framing in the process of the revolution.

Both collective identity and framing are combined in Gamson's collective action frames approach. He proposes a concept composed of three elements: 1) injustice, 2) agency and 3) collective identity. What Gamson terms *injustice frames* corresponds to the *structural factors* and the *dynamics of delegitimising* in Goldstone's framework (Gamson 2011: 464; Goldstone 2001: 14-15, 20-25). The agency element "refers to the consciousness that it is possible to alter conditions or policies through collective action" (Gamson 2011: 464). This is similar to what others subsume under political opportunity structures, but shifts the focus from observable "reality" to the *perception of* opportunity by relevant potential actors. The *collective identity* component refers to the construction of the "we" as the group that considers itself capable of introducing change. Such *protest identities* also receive considerable attention by Goldstone: for (risky) collective action "formal organization is neither necessary nor sufficient (...) [i]nstead, the formation of protest identities seems to be critical" (Goldstone 2001: 21). A central mode of (collective) identity formation and affirmation, is distinction from an "other" or an "adversary" (see Simmel 1908: 284-382, amongst many others). Identity formation therefore ties in closely with the framing of the state as unjust and illegitimate. The revolutionary group tries to construct itself as the legitimate and *essentially* different counterpart.

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ary and February 2011, it has become increasingly difficult to answer these questions. This also has to do with the perception that the role of violence – both as an inclusive and exclusive mechanism – has continuously increased, in the eyes of many reaching an entirely different quality in the constitutional protests (November and December 2012) and the events surrounding the second anniversary (January 2013).

[20] Beinin 2013

[21] Compare for example Beinin's definition: "revolutions – the classical cases are France, Russia, China, Cuba, and Iran – are social, political, and economic transformations involving social movements and political mobilizations, one or more moments of popular uprising, and a longer-term process of reconstructing a new socio-political order involving the replacement of the former ruling coalition with new forces of a substantially different social character and interests " (Beinin 2013).

For Goldstone the sources of this “attachment and affection for the group” result from a) validation of the individual’s grievances, b) giving a sense of empowerment by effective protection, and c) by “othering” at the hands of the state, labelling the other group as enemies (Goldstone 2001: 21-22). “The creation and maintenance of protest identities is a substantial task that draws on cultural frameworks, ideologies, and talented leadership” (Goldstone 2001: 22). Identity construction is nothing that *happens*, but something that is *done*. Before addressing the question of identity formation in the Egyptian protests as part of the *dynamics*, I want to look first at the structural *causes* and the respective *grievances* in relation to youth, keeping in line with Goldstone’s basic order.

3.3 The structural causes and their effect on youth

Ethnologist Abu-Lughod emphasizes the local variations of macro-factors: “Affected by the same national policies and state institutions, each region and location [in Egypt] experienced them through the specific problems they created for people locally” (Abu-Lughod 2012: 25). In a similar vein, I argue that also different members of society experience the effect of structural forces in a specific way, mediated by their position. A person’s position is defined by structural categories such as class, gender,[22] and age. The common perspective is to look at the way different genders or classes are affected, while here I am concerned with how *young* people are affected. My assumption reflects the perspective of several interview partners. Rola Tarek, a 23-year-old Egyptian, working with youth, was most outspoken: “Yes, it is the youth who took the first step. Because I believe they were the ones most affected by the corruption and injustices and the dictatorship”. Not only where youth more affected, they were in a position to take a risk, and now emboldened by the successful ouster of Tunisian long-term president Zine Ben Ali: “And at the same time they were the ones who had the guts to do it because they are the ones who can’t lose anything and at the same time they got really encouraged by what happened in Tunisia” (Rola).

Structural changes in Egypt

Bayat outlines several structural forces that have had a lasting impact on Egypt (2011a). While many scholars and journalists point to various economic, social, and political long-term developments that were influential or even causal to the revolution, Bayat’s list is the most comprising and concise at the same time. In the last 30 years, under the reign of Mubarak, Egypt saw various structural changes. The growing urbanisation, the demographic change (youth bulge), the expansion of higher education and the resulting rapid growth in size of educated classes and the neo-liberal policies have changed the face of Egypt considerably. In addition, it was marked by the “increasing footprints of globalization since the 1990s” (Bayat 2011a: 47). Together, the education and neo-liberal economic policies produced educated people who were experiencing a lower-class economic life. These are termed the “middle class poor” by Bayat, and considered a key actor in the recent revolution (Bayat 2011a: 49). Their proletarisation, the discontent of those who were affected by the contracting welfare state, the shrinking public sector as well as decreasing labour protection and rights set the scene for other more short-term developments within the last decade. One of them is the crisis of Islamism, an ideology (or movement) that could no longer absorb this discontent. In addition, Bayat observed the ineffectiveness of Arab nationalist politics and the “sudden emergence of new avenues for political mobilization and expressions – through Al Jazeera, the internet, and social media – since the mid-2000s” (Bayat 2011a: 48). This coincided with “a new kind of politics, with the language of human rights, democracy, dignity, and civility” (Bayat 2011a: 48). All these structural changes ushered in a fundamental transformation: “[a] new Arab public has emerged” (Bayat 2011a: 48).

How have these structural factors played out for young Egyptians and their claims to youthfulness? The main grievances of Egyptian youth linked to the structural changes can be clustered as 1) economic exclusion, 2) the state of the educational system, 3) political exclusion, and 4) the increasing impudence of Mubarak and his family, in face of heightened injustice and violence. Together they constitute a phenomenon of multidimensional exclusion, resulting in a feeling of “being stuck”. To many young Egyptians, the only way out seemed to be migration.

3.3.1 Economic grievances and the phenomenon of waithood

Regarding the economic situation of Egyptian youth, the NHDR paints a bleak picture:

> “One characteristic predominates in the profile of young Egyptians today. Egypt’s youth bulge is at its peak, but opportunities appear much less promising than those for previous generations. The outcome of overly generous job creation in government in the 1970s and 1980s, little or no reform in the education and training systems, and the failure to control population growth has resulted in a serious loss in productivity and an accompanying decline in real wages and stagnation in the standard of living of those employed in the public and private sectors.“
>
> (Handoussa 2010: XI)

At the same time “safety nets were phased out in the last decade to reduce expenditures” (Goldstone 2011).

Even in light of positive economic development, the distribution of the gains and the youth bulge resulted in high youth unemployment: “vocational training, moreover, was weak, and access to public and many private jobs was tightly controlled by those connected to the regime. This led to incredibly high youth unemployment across the Middle East” (Goldstone 2011). While the overall unemployment rate around 10% is comparable to that of many European states[23], unemployment in the 18-24 age group reached 19%, among those aged 15 to 29, 16% were unemployed (Population Council 2010: 13). While general unemployment saw a slight decline, the unemployment rate of university graduates has even increased in the previous years (Herrera 2010: 128; Herrera/Bayat 2010a: 357). Goldstone confirms that judgement, claiming that “in Egypt, college graduates are ten times as likely to have no job as those with only an elementary school education” (Goldstone 2011). According to Assaad, youth make up more than 80 percent of the unemployed (Assaad 2007: 9). Explaining these conditions of the labour market purely with demographic factors (i.e. the youth bulge) fails to incorporate the effects of various institutions such as labor laws, social norms and traditions, and of existing power structures. Eventually also “al wasta”, as Egyptians term a daily form of corruption that benefits those who have the right social capital, i.e. relations, plays an important role.

Waithood – postponing marriage and adulthood

Assaad is therefore right to treat unemployment as a central manifestation of youth exclusion and simultaneously as only one factor in a larger complex of exclusion

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[22] While my interview material by now covers a large range of ages, from 18 to 82 years, it is clearly gender-biased, as I only interviewed women. Yet, over the last years, I have had enough interaction with young men to confidently claim that I have gained insights into their way of thinking and living, too. Indeed, as for youth, we can say that men and women share many grievances and aspirations. Research by Linda Herrera and Diane Singerman (see bibliography) confirms this assumption.

[23] Obviously, this comparison holds less true today than it did before the so called economic crisis hit Europe and in specific the southern European countries. In particular the socio-economic situation of young people on the northern shores of the Mediterranean seems to increasingly approximate that of youth in North Africa.

(Assaad 2007: 9). This multi-dimensional exclusion will be addressed in chapter 3.1.5, in the next paragraphs, only the socio-economic side of exclusion, as well as its effect for marriage and transition to adulthood shall be explored. The economic situation of the young and educated seems to have far-reaching consequences. One effect is their financial dependence on their families, which often lasts even after young Egyptians have graduated and found their first job. Financial dependence has further consequences: Singerman argues convincingly that the unfavourable socio-economic conditions (i.e., limited financial resources) interact with societal norms, which she terms the "imperatives of marriage". Part of these norms for marriage constitute high financial demands[24]. While both parties of the "marriage contract" have (financial) obligations, the perception amongst want-to-be-grooms in Egypt is that tradition forces them to bear the brunt of the costs. In effect, for many young people being unemployed or being paid small wages means that founding their own family "seems hopelessly out of reach" (Herrera 2009: 369). This has dramatic implications, as without marriage, their transition to adulthood cannot be completed. Thus, an *extension of their youth* is forced on many Egyptians by this combination of the socio-economic situation and the local norms for marriage and for the transition to adulthood. Under the described circumstances a statement like "a young man under the age of 30 is still a boy," expressed by a 50-year-old English teacher, acquires new plausibility (quoted by Sharkawy 2011; see also chapter 3.3.3 and 3.3.5 for a general discussion of the *aged* structure of Egyptian society). For many Egyptians the period of (undesired) youth seems to stretch to the age of 30 and even beyond. This unwanted prolongation of the phase of adolescence has been termed "waithood" (see publications by Singerman and Assaad for example). The label wait*hood* clearly reflects how much the diagnosis of the phenomenon is grounded in the notion of *stages* in human development. An idea that prevails in academia and people's self-understanding. The problem has – under different headlines – also been a matter of public debate in Egypt over the last years. Interestingly enough, a very similar discourse about the "marriage crisis" shook the nation already in the first decades of the 20th century (Kholoussy 2010). I cannot tell whether this parralism indicates that waithood is a constant, a recurrent or a fictional problem. For sure the observation points us to the importance of discourses and narratives. Even if the phenomenon of "waithood" could not be grounded in statistical data, the lamento that marked the Egyptian discourse in the recent years provided an important motive and storyline for revolting. And it today provides an important element for narrations on how the youth revolution came about.

3.3.2 A dictator's educational system

The NHDR attributes the massive scale of youth unemployment also to a "mismatch of higher educational and labor market requirements" (Handoussa 2010: VIII). And indeed, the state of the educational system is frequently evoked as an important source of dissatisfaction, one that affects youth the most. Yet, for many youth and scholars the focus slightly differs from that of reports originating in the context of development policy. Egyptian high school and university graduates are less concerned with attuning schools to meet labour market requirements. Rather, they criticise schools and universities for encouraging reproduction of knowledge instead of critical thinking (see also Sayed 2010).[25] They also decry the manipulative and authoritarian style of teaching. "They are torturers, not teachers", Naima, a 23-year-old graduate of Physics, told me. Another point of critique is the lack of committed teachers and their failure to value their students. In Egypt, where the quality of public education is in decline and the parallel private educational sector on the rise, obtaining a degree without private lessons has become nearly impossible (Barsoum 2004: 34–40). In addition, many employers demand forms of cultural capital that can only be acquired by those attending international schools and colleges (see Barsoum 2004). The tuition fees for the private educational sector on the other hand exceed the expenses for education in public schools and universities by far. In public educational institutions, corruption and physical punishment seem to be the norm. The dire state of the educational system was a major criticism already directed against the regimes of Nasser and Sadat. No wonder young Egyptians have the impression that their country and they themselves are "gridlocked" (Suzi, a 29-year-old blogger).

3.3.3 The patriarchal order of society and politics: grievances in a closed system

Yet, there is no legitimate political channel to vent one's frustration[26]. Dissent appears futile at best, and dangerous in the worst case. "You open your mouth to complain to a police man or say something, or protest, and you disappear. You disappear" (Laila, a kindergartener, 24 years of age).

Not only are most channels for political participation blocked, the regime is also marked by a huge gap between rulers and ruled. "Ageism pervades the ideological spectrum of politics and men aged 40 and 50 often represent themselves as 'youth's candidates. The quintessential 'youth' candidate in Egypt is Gamal Mubarak, President Mubarak's younger son, who is 43 and being groomed for succession, despite public denials to the contrary" (Singerman 2007: 39). Such terms as "gerontocracy" (Elyachar/Winegar 2012) and "patriarchal condescension" (Bamyeh 2011: 5) describe not only the difference in age, but also a difference in mentality and a patriarchal relationship. While Mubarak's system did in general not allow for much participation, in this dynastic patriarchy, youth felt particularly ignored, unrepresented and excluded by the political process (Singerman 2007: 40): "They totally ignored us. They thought that a lot of youth don't really care and they don't really care about the future of the country. (...) they didn't understand us" (Nadia).

The logic of patriarchy in the political sphere

At the same time, Mubarak's style of rule added a symbolic dimension to the factual age gap between rulers and ruled. The patriarch himself played on stereotypes of youth and emulated a familial relationship when infantilising his entire people. Mubarak portrayed himself as the benevolent father of the nation and transferred the images of youth to the Egyptian people, treating them as ignorant and in need of tutelage. It is Mubarak's own symbolism that implied youth as a potential category for political conflict and revolutionary identity.

In addition, hope for an opening of the political space dwindled when the length of Mubarak's reign seemed to approach eternity. The longer the existing order had been in place, the less alternatives appeared as realistic options. In the end, they became nearly un-thinkable. Those younger than 40 had spent all their (socially conscious) life under Mubarak, as Eman, a 23-year-old student of Computer Science, illustrates vividly:

> "No one can tell you that we did dream in our far dreams that the regime could fall and Mubarak could go. Ever. The most optimistic one would never tell you this. Because I was born while Mubarak was the president, and everyone, those who initially entered Tahrir, we were all born in the 80s, and Mubarak got the country in 1981. So for all our lives the president is Mohammed Hosni Mubarak. (...) You are born and bred and fed that Mubarak is the president. That's it."

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[24] Another aspect are norms preventing legitimate intimate relationships outside of marriage and therefore increasing the stakes in marrying.

[25] I cannot emphasize enough here *how* common this trope has become.

[26] The comments of then Minister of Economic Development, Osman Mohamed Osman, in the foreword to the NHDR 2010 must appear pure mockery to many young Egyptians: "Youth's modest participation and little civic engagement are being addressed through the creation of clubs, sports and leisure centers, while political parties, the ruling National Democratic Party in particular, are promoting youthful membership and contributions to the political debate" (Handoussa 2010: VII-VIII).

Also Mariam, a journalist, 22 years of age, emphasizes how personalised the reign of Mubarak was:

> "Hosni Mubarak has been in power since 1981 since 30 years. I am 22 years. For 22 years I have been seeing the same person every morning on the streets. You see his photos everywhere, the first news piece is about him, you open the newspaper, the first article is about Hosni Mubarak."

It was this personalisation that made the demand to take down Mubarak a ready focus of the protests. With preparations under way to install Gamal Mubarak as Hosni's successor, the rule of a Mubarak seemed to extend into the far future without an end in sight. Suzi, a 29-year-old blogger from Alexandria, told me she was one of "those born in the 80s and 90s, the Mubarak Babies (...) I never thought I'd see another president other than Mubarak. Mubarak junior, Mubarak junior junior, you know, it was gonna go on for a while."

Not only had Mubarak solidified his grip on power and prepared for dynastic succession, his family treated the country like their personal possession, conjuring up images of monarchical rule and serfdom. It has become a frequent trope that "Suzi", Mubarak's wife had treated the country like "her farm". Naima, who came to political consciousness through her indignation about "the Palestinian case", finds an even more drastic expression. She tells me that at some point she had realised that in her voluntary work she should focus on Egypt instead of Palestine: "I can't say 'We need to free Palestine' and I have Egypt under occupation but it has the name government." The same image is also used by a woman quoted by Hamdy: "It wasn't that a foreign country had come to invade or occupy it – No! Our own leaders were doing this to our own people! To kill and torture our youth just because they were asking for freedom?! This was too much! I found myself going to the square . . ." (in Hamdy 2012: 44).

Young people's position in a kin-based patriarchy

Youth are also lacking channels for legitimate participation in other arenas of society. The patriarchal order attributes specific positions to the young which are defined by little freedom and little responsibility at the same time. Tawila et al. express this in drastic words: "Young people are rarely able to live and function independently. They need the social, economic and emotional support of the family and their parents (...)" (Tawila et al. 2001: 215). In this regards, academics speak of Egypt as a kin-based patriarchy (Singerman 2009; Joseph 2008). Grossly simplifying, this means the family is at the heart of the Egyptian social and political order. A special relation, a kin to kin-contract (including rights and duties), binds family members to each other, and young and female members occupy the bottom of the societal and familial hierarchy. Of course, the waves of globalisation have not left this institution of Egyptian society untouched. Different ideals and norms travel and become appropriated in the Egyptian context (Thornton 2001: 457–458; Cuno 2008: 207).

Also, the expanding education among younger generations seems to have an impact on the "aged" distribution of authority in families (Tawila et al. 2001: 216–217). Yet, these changes play out as a *transformation* of kin-patriarchy and the corresponding gendered/aged structures of power. They do not result in the complete trumping of the given patriarchal relations. The privileging of "the initiative of males and elders in directing the life of others" (Joseph 2000: 24) remains largely unchallenged.[27] In this respect, regarding age and gender, power structures of the political and the societal are similar. Both favour males and elders, with the superiority of elder males being most pronounced in the political sphere.

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[27] Another limitation on young people's marriage choices pervades: as religion is passed on to children in a patrilineal system from the father to the children, religious communities in the Middle East have restricted women's choices for marriage. Effectively, a Muslim girl in Egypt would not be allowed to marry a Coptic Egyptian (Joseph 2000: 30).

3.3.4 Indignation in face of injustice and disrespect for human dignity

As the rulers' display of their wealth and power became increasingly blazen, they appeared more unjust and illegitimate. Egyptians have decried the regime's blunt disregard for human dignity and the complete lack of respect vis-a-vis the people, manifest in various forms of injustices. The police abuse, the growing socio-economic disparities, corruption, and the daily loss of lives due to insufficient infrastructure[28] can be subsumed under this label.

One of the major grievances refers to the widespread systematic police brutality (see also 3.4.2 for a concrete example), and there is reason to assume that young men were the prime target of this regime tactic. One indication is the regime's discourse which conflates the term "baltagiyya" with young men (Ghannam 2012; see also 2.2). Also Hafez confirms state discrimination of (young) men: "Young men, in particular, and males, in general, became the targets of random state violence, torture, and humiliation. At the same time that young men were being pulled off the street simply for the act of walking, they were also being denied the various resources their parents might have enjoyed – education, health care, and government jobs" (Hafez 2012: 39). As mentioned above nearly every Egyptian can tell stories of humiliation and of people being left at the mercy of hierarchical, corrupt decision-making bodies or administration. The higher one's position in society and the larger one's material, cultural, social resources (the latter is termed "al-wasta"), the easier it becomes to circumvent the daily hardship. Referring to the large majority of Egyptian society, however, Reem finds drastic words: "they have been treated like animals".

At the same time, in the last decades, the discrepancy between rich and poor, the "social cleavage" has taken dimensions which were "unseen in Egypt's post-colonial history" (Bayat 2007: 165). According to World Bank data from 2005, 18,46% of the Egyptian population live of less than two US-Dollars a day (in purchasing power parity), if the national poverty line is taken as measure, in 2008, 22% of Egyptians were poor (World Bank 2011). The large poor sector is matched by a tiny elite of 1% (Schneider and Silverman 2006: 223). The surreal wealth of the ruling elite highlights these gross social inequalities: "Although economies across the region have grown in recent years, the gains have bypassed the majority of the population, being amassed instead by a wealthy few. Mubarak and his family reportedly built up a fortune of between $40 billion and $70 billion, and 39 officials and businessmen close to Mubarak's son Gamal are alleged to have made fortunes averaging more than $1 billion each" (Goldstone 2011).

Combined with the aforementioned "[h]igh youth unemployment and economic pressures [this contrast] exacerbates perceptions of economic injustice in society" (Singerman 2007: 40). Goldstone emphasizes that "it is the persistence of widespread and unrelieved poverty amid increasingly extravagant wealth (...) that fuels revolutions" (2011). In addition, poverty becomes worse when public services are cut back and access to basic goods as health care and education have to be bought, as happened in Egypt. In the last years, at several occasions, indignation about the life-threatening lack of infrastructure flared up. Certain events or circumstances are inferred to symbolise the government's failure to provide: the annually high numbers of deaths in traffic, some large-scale train accidents (2002, 2006) that produced dramatic pictures of burned corpses (2002), a major ship accident (2006), and the disastrous failure of rescue operations after an earthquake (1992) and rockslide (2008) had struck informal settlements in Cairo.

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[28] Examples are the lacking hygiene in hospitals, the insecurity of public transports and roads, the lack of a sewage system in many informal communities. All these grievances or deficiencies of the state have to a greater or lesser extent been subject to public debate.

3.3.5 Young in Egypt – being stuck without a future

Taken together, the aforementioned conditions that young Egyptians are subjected to, result in a phenomenon of *multi-dimensional* exclusion. The occurrence of "waithood" – as addressed in a previous chapter – is usually taken as the starting point to explain the process of exclusion, because "social norms in the Middle East make the transition to family formation critical to full social inclusion" (Dhillon/Yousef 2009: 3). Also Assaad/Barsoum (2007: 8) emphasize how the blocking of the transition to adulthood constitutes overall social exclusion. Note that not only is youth considered "a crucial stage in a person's life", its successful transition is perceived as "pivotal for including youths in society" (2007: 8). In other words: *only adults obtain the status of a full member of society*. For the transition, and thereby inclusion, Assaad/Barsoum define "four [interrelated] important dimensions: education and learning; work opportunities; potentials for forming families; and channels for exercising citizenship" (2007: 8).[29] As we have seen in the preceding chapters, in all of these four fields the opportunities for Egyptian youth are restricted. For many of them, the various grievances add up to a feeling of "being stuck". Assaad/Barsoum (2007) capture this with their concept of exclusion as a cumulative, multi-dimensional, multi-layered phenomenon. The idea of exclusion as a complex emphasizes how different problems not only relate to each other but tie in with each other to keep youth stuck in the period of waithood and hinder their transition to "full" life.

Also Goldstone's (2002) notion of upward mobility being "clogged" resonates with this, highlighting in particular the discrepancy of expectations and opportunities:

> "Political upheaval has been preceded by a surge in the production of youth with advanced education in the context of a relatively limited, semi-closed structure of elite positions. The central authorities, who guarded the gates of social and economic advancement, drew elite discontent for a situation in which social mobility was increasingly sought but the paths of mobility were increasingly clogged."
>
> (Goldstone 2002: 10)

In Goldstone's reading the potential for conflict results not from a dire situation per se, but from the inability to see a way out. This qualifies Goldstone as (together with Fuller, see 2003) one of the more thoughtful proponents of the youth bulge theory.

These notions of "blockade" and "exclusion" are not merely academic creations but find expression in the self-description of young Egyptians. My interview partners repeatedly voiced their respective feelings, at times in drastic ways: "I didn't even live my youth" and "I'm not living ... my life to the fullest and time goes by so slowly when you're not living the way you want" (Yasmine).[30] Naima tells me she always had "believed in hope (...) and a lot of people were saying 'what hope? What are you talking about? The country is dead. We are dead. We are dead people".

Karim, one of Herrera's interview partners, "suffers from a sometimes incapacitating feeling of 'being stuck' (...) although he is alive, he does not feel he is living" (in Herrera 2010: 141-142). Another young Egyptian she quotes, Ahmed, is desperately looking for the entry point to 'real' life, vividly illustrating above notions of a hindered transition: "Where is the starting point, the beginning? If only I could start I could continue my life? But where is the starting point? Tell me, where can I begin?" (in Herrera 2006). Youth's dependent social status contributes to a feeling of being "gridlocked" (Suzi). One of the future visions my interview partners shared with me was "Respect of choices should be there in every house!" (Reem), indicating how much this respect was lacking at present. This amalgamation of no choice, no opportunities, no future marks the experience of youth across gender and class.

Migration as the only way out

For many, the answer is migration. Naima's previously mentioned quote continues: "We are dead. We are dead people. I'm going to leave the country. Enough, I am not going to stay anymore". This has led to a blood-letting of youth – both through real migration and internal migration, i.e., dissociation from the country's woes. The latter is evident in the many cases that are (for various reasons) not in a position to migrate, but still speak of migration as a potential way out or refer to all those friends who intend to migrate. The quantitative aspect of migration is taken into account in the SYPE report:

> "One in three young men in the age group 15-29 in Egypt expressed willingness/intention to migrate. More than 28% of male youth expressed an intention to migrate. The intention to migrate is skewed by gender, as only 5.9% of females expressed their intention to migrate. This yields a total of 17% of youth of both genders having the intention to migrate."
>
> (Population Council 2010: 14)

The personal side of migration is addressed by Noor (an undergraduate in construction engineering, 22): "the only way before the revolution to be a civilised citizen and to be well-educated and have a decent future is to go out of Egypt. (...) whenever you get a chance, use it because it's better."

Long-standing grievances and the revolutionary moment

In the protests that started on January 25, 2011, individual and common grievances merged. More than once I heard from wealthy revolutionaries that they were defending other people's right to a decent standard of living. Following Goldstone's argument, I assume that validating individual grievances was an important aspect of forming a collective identity. We must not expect, though, that all these grievances would be directly translated into demands. Instead, the formulation of demands is more dependent on the actual dynamics of the revolutionary process. Also in another sense the grievances, or more general, the causes of the Egyptian uprising alone do not suffice to explain or understand the *timing* and the *occurence* of the event. In particular what has been described in chapter 3.1 as the structural factors have been in the picture for several years or even decades. Some events or observations have to *actualise* the long-term grievances or induce a *change of perception*, especially a changed perception of the opportunity structures. These *triggers* constitute the link between constant grievances and current action. According to my own observations, in the Egyptian case three triggers were particularly relevant: the perception of an increasing boldness of the Mubarak regime, the narratives built around the brutal death of Khaled Said, and the Tunisian uprising.

3.4 The triggers of January 25 – Gamal Mubarak, Khaled Said, and Tunisia

In theories of social movements, concepts of "cognitive liberation" assume that a cognitive shift is necessary, which suddenly strips the regime of legitimacy (Dupont/Passy 2011: 449; Gamson 2011: 463). In line with Goldstone and Gamson, however, I argue that "delegetimation and injustice frames" (Dupont/Passy 2011: 449) were already present, fed by the grievances elaborated in the previous chapters. While some of the structural factors had been at work for decades, the year 2010 saw an increase in public indignation and dissatisfaction. I could discern two major reasons, the ever more bold reassertion of the Mubarak dynasty (highlighted by the issue of ascension), and the publicity of police brutality (symbolised in the death of Khaled Said). Thus, in January 2011, the "regime had long since lost its legitimacy" (Gamson 2011: 463). New, however, "was the sense that, by acting together, it was possible to do something about it" (Gamson 2011: 463); this change in *agency*, i.e. the (perceived) capacity to act on the circumstances, can largely be attributed to the stunning success of the Tunisian uprising. It thus seems justified to consider the ascension issue, the death of Khaled Said, and the Tunisian example as triggers. In order to understand how they relate to long-standing structural causes, and build a bridge between grievances and action, I would like to look at them in more detail. Given that the Tunisian uprising's connection to the protests in Egypt is largely self-evident, I will not address this trigger separately but rather highlight its effect when dealing with the other two triggers.

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[29] One remarkable aspect of Assaad's definition is the inclusion of "exercising citizenship", reminiscent of the developmental task locating oneself within society and state (Wenzler-Cremer 2005: 64).

[30] In this case, the interviewee felt limited in particular by societal norms and patriarchal hierarchies, which – her being economically, socially and emotionally dependent on her family – did not leave Yasmine the "space" she wanted.

3.4.1 Gamal's inheritance, the 2010 electoral fraud and Mubarak's immortality

Both, the looming succession to the throne by Hosni Mubarak's son Gamal, and the brazen rigging of the elections of 2010 had the potential to destroy hopes for reform. To many people they signalled just how small the chance for change within the system Mubarak had become – with Gamal's prepared succession there was no end of the Mubarak rule in sight. Abu-Lughod describes this as an "enervating sense of helplessness that had pervaded society for the previous five or even ten years, as people waited to find out which of two bad options to replace Mubarak would be imposed on them and as they lived increasingly desperate economic lives" (Abu-Lughod 2012: 21).

Also the boldness Mubarak portrayed in asserting his power *insulted* many Egyptians. The parliamentary elections in November and December 2011 "were widely condemned as the most fraudulent polls in Mubarak's long rule" (El Sharkawy 2011). More than one of my interview partners referred to them as a sign of ostentatious disrespect for the rights of the Egyptian people. Laila expressed her indignation forcefully:

> "And then the elections. What the hell was that? What the hell was that? And the videos that were online with the people putting all the ballots, and signing and giving...it was clear. *Everybody* knew it was a fake thing. That was it. That was what triggered everybody. Not just our age."

While Mubarak strengthened his grip on power, his continuing rule had already entered the age of grotesque. As usual, Egyptians took it with humour, as the popular analyst, blogger and journalist Issandr El Amrani vividly describes:

> "Hosni Mubarak, their octogenarian president, is entering his fourth decade of rule, holding on to power and to life through sheer force of will. Egyptian jokers, who initially caricatured their uncharismatic leader as a greedy bumpkin, have spent the last 10 years nervously cracking wise about his tenacious grasp on the throne.[31] Now, with the regime holding its breath as everyone waits for the ailing 82-year-old Mubarak to die, the economy suffering, and people feeling deeply pessimistic about the future, the humor is starting to feel a little old. But Mubarak jokes really settled into their current groove in the early 2000s, when Mubarak entered his mid-70s and a nationwide deathwatch began. (...) the bulk of today's jokes simply stress the tenacity with which Mubarak has held onto life and power."
>
> (El Amrani 2011)

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[31] See El Amrani's contribution in Foreign Policy Online for a selection of Mubarak jokes (El Amrani 2011).

And while the nation was waiting for Mubarak's death, he was killing its children. One of them, Khaled Said, has made it to sad fame in 2010 and more so in the revolution.

3.4.2 The death of Khaled Said – busting the myth of the baltagi

Khaled Said was only one of many victims of the Egyptian security apparatus. The horrible pictures of his distorted body, smuggled out of the morgue by his brother, mirrored the experience of many Egyptians and gave fodder as well as expression to their grievance about police brutality. Whael Ghonim built on this relation between the structural causes and the specific incident when he founded the Facebook page "Kullina Khaled Said".

Khaled Said was a 28-year-old blogger from Alexandria.[32] On June 6, 2010 he got pulled out of a cybercafe and beaten to death by police in the street in broad daylight. Apparently the officials tried to cover up the crime by issuing faked autopsy reports that claimed Khaled got suffocated when he swallowed a pack of hash in an attempt to hide it from the police. Allegedly the police killed Khaled because he was in possession of an incriminating video showing a police officer dealing with drugs that he had confiscated from a criminal.

Khaled Said is only one of many victims of the Egyptian security apparatus. What was different in his case? First, disturbing pictures of his battered, distorted face, shot after his death, went viral online.[33] The family of Khaled Said made a deliberate effort to circulate these pictures on- and offline. They posted them on Facebook and distributed them to international human rights groups (interview with Zahraa Kazem, Khaled's sister and their mother). Others, like Wael Ghonim, picked up on that story and started building a movement around Khaled's case.

In the response by the online community, Khaled Said was portrayed as an entirely *normal young man*, a blogger critical of the regime, maybe a hash smoker, but definitely not a *baltagi*. This ran counter to the governments typical line of defense that both the emergency law and the police violence were targeting terrorists and baltagiyya only. A portray of the late Khaled,[34] held in light colours, airing nothing but peacefulness, went a long way to discredit any attempt at making Khaled Said a dangerous, violent, self-serving baltagi. Many Egyptian internet users could associate with Khaled Said. The well-known Egyptian blogger Zeinobia apologises for posting the graphic pictures of Khaled's corpse but justifies their reproduction by saying "I am trying along with my Egyptian co-bloggers to stop this abuse of power and this fear, this is for Egypt, this if for Khalid whom could be me or could be my younger cousin[35]" (Zeinobia 2010). Yet, this case of abuse resonated with people's experience beyond the confines of the internet:

> "If the youth who filled Tahrir Square were galvanized by the publicity on Facebook about police brutality against one young man in Alexandria named Khalid Sa'id – yanked out of a cybercafe and beaten to death – many more could connect this 'martyrdom' to personal experience."
>
> (Abu-Lughod 2012: 23)

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[32] There are different accounts as to what Khaled Said actually was – an activist, a blogger, a lazy hashsmoker or a drug dealer. I myself have heard and read myriad of contradictory accounts of Khaled's story. These stories are well-known in Egypt and among those familiar with the revolution, I will thus keep it short here. For those interested in learning more, Wikipedia offers a good introduction (http: //en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_of_Khaled_Mohamed_Saeed), and Issandr El Amrani's blog "The Arabist" provides some background information (http: //www.arabist.net/blog/2010/6/14/the-murder-of-khaled-said.html).

[33] For the graphic pictures see for example the respective blog post by Zeinobia on "Egyptian Chronicles" (2010), (http: //egyptianchronicles.blogspot.com/2010/06/for-khalid-for-his-family-and-for-egypt.html).

[34] See the Wikipedia article on the "Death of Khaled Mohamed Saeed" (http: //en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_of_Khaled_Mohamed_Saeed). Or simply type "Khaled Said" in the google picture search.

[35] Zeinobia is a woman, which is why she might invoke her cousin here.

Abu-Lughod describes how the villagers in Upper Egypt – like the subaltern across all Egypt – have been subject to surveillance, arbitrary violence, and humiliation by police, who not seldom fabricate charges against innocent people, appearing as an almighty power (de)terminating people's lives. Khaled Said was different, because his death carried the reality of violence into middle class families who had so far (felt) spared by the worst regime practices. His death shook a segment of society crucial for societal transformation (interview with Nehad Abu Al-Komsan, head of the ECWR). The case of Khaled Said also supports Gamson's argument that indignation about "injustice" is a "hot" cognition, meaning that it carries a strong emotional component (Gamson 2011: 466). Eman, a near-graduate of computer science in her early twenties, emphasizes that the story of "this boy" only brings to the open what a lot of Egyptians had learnt since the emergence of citizen journalism, given that it followed several other prominent incidents in which police abuse was uncovered (Ismail 2011):

> "It's a really corrupt system, it [police dealing with drugs they confiscated] happens a lot in police stations, this is what we know but we are not able to prove. So since like a year ago we were entering a kind of a stage that you see everything bad happening inside police stations because of the cameras in the mobile phones. Basically we didn't have this before."
>
> (Eman)

Whael Ghonim, a google marketing executive, built on the relation between the structural causes and the specific incident when he founded the Facebook page "Kullina Khaled Said". This page attracted a huge amount of followers (500.000 prior to the revolution, nearly 2 million to date) and is cited as one of the major organizing platforms of the protests on January 25, 2011 (Carnegie 2012, Khamis 2011). And as the rest of Egypt, also its moderators got incited by the events in Tunisia: "Only a few hours after the announcement that Ben Ali had fled, the first call to demonstrate in Egypt appeared on the Facebook page 'Kullina Khaled Said'" (Saad 2012: 64). The events in the North African, Arab country changed the agency of many Egyptians, the unthinkable suddenly seemed possible: "I don't know what you know about the revolution but it basically began as an idea after we saw what happened in Tunisia, that they were able to make the whole system down in 25 days" (Eman). It nearly sounds as if Egyptians were determined to prove the world that they could do it in less than 25 days. Even though the talk of a "a new force in the Arab world – a pan-Arab youth movement dedicated to spreading democracy in a region without it" (Kirkpatrick/Sanger 2011) seems hugely exaggerated, the influence of the Tunisian events on the developments in Egypt was everything but small. Yet, other than Kirkpatrick/Sanger I want to emphasize less the organisational cooperation[36] than the *ideational effect* of Zine Ben Ali's ouster. The triumph of the Tunisian people's cry for freedom inspired Egyptians and maybe even made them ashamed that they had not gone first (interview with Egyptian-German blogger and activist Philip Rizk).

My theoretical argument here is that we must contextualise[37] what is considered as "trigger" by participants and media. In the Egyptian case, the planned inthronisation of Gamal, the murder of Khaled Said, and the Tunisian revolution became *triggers* only because they actualised existing *structural* causes, and because various *actors* capitalised on the events' potential to become triggers. As we will see, both the structural causes and the immediate triggers are then also reflected in the process of identity construction, central to the dynamics of the revolution.

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[36] According to them, "young Egyptian and Tunisian activists brainstormed on the use of technology to evade surveillance, commiserated about torture and traded practical tips on how to stand up to rubber bullets and organize barricades" (Kirkpatrick/Sanger 2011).

[37] Also Boazizi, considered the trigger of the Tunisian uprising, is a case in point. As Goldstone shows, Boazizi's self-immolation in protest to police confiscating his fruits and humiliating him publicly must be contextualised. In Tunisia as in Egypt many well-educated young people have to resort to unskilled labour in the informal (and per definition unregulated/illegal) sector. "Yet the sultans in the Middle East made even those activities difficult" (Goldstone 2011).

3.5 The youthful character of the Egyptian revolution: united, spontaneous, creative and ethical

On the next pages, I want to explore the youthful character of the revolution. I am here referring in particular to what has become termed "The 18 Days", i.e. the revolutionary moment in which public attention focused mainly on the events in Midan Tahrir, and in other squares of the country. Both youthfulness as a style and youth as a category for delineating (identity) boundaries in conflict are a reaction to what has been described in the previous chapters. The strategies applied in Tahrir, the deliberate attempts at constructing a revolutionary identity and at influencing the outward perception of the revolutionaries need to be read at the backdrop of their context. Central aspects of the revolutionary identity and of the values consciously cultivated in Tahrir can be understood as a way of talking back to stereotypes about youth. They also respond to narratives and to perceptions of socio-political and economic circumstances. Furthermore, the triggers provided revolutionaries with a certain rationale for their action and thereby conditioned certain behaviour and rendered certain actions inappropriate. At the same time, the choice of youth as a reference point for identification is a reaction to the power structures and symbolism of the gerontocratic Mubarak regime. It is in distinction to the old and the usual that the new and young defines its form.

The goal of this chapter cannot be to fully reconstruct the shaping of a collective revolutionary identity or the collective action. Yet, both concepts have provided me with a useful guideline for how to observe and describe the Egyptian protests. In addition, I expand the focus to include what Rushdy terms "the new" (see Rushdy 2011). In his perspective the revolution has "three new faces" – it is peaceful, a revolution that belongs to everyone, and "it is clear that this revolution was a handing over from the old to the new" (Rushdy 2011: 29-30). As major elements of youthfulness or "the new", I consider the use of new media and the emergence of new protest forms (3.5.1). Furthermore, the vindication of idealism and hope (3.5.2), and the cultivation of a different set of values (unity, creativity, responsibility, see 3.5.3) provide a means of distinction from the old regime. Another feature of the protests was the application of marketing strategies, which is one way of tapping a huge *global* cultural repertoire in order to shape the local protest identities, practices and styles (3.5.4 and 3.5.5). Finally, looking at the ideational frontline between youth and regime will help to understand why "youth" might have become such a central category.

3.5.1 New Protest strategies and new media

The new protest strategies were one frequently noticed feature of the Egyptian Revolution. Saad describes the appeal of the protest tactics proposed by the Facebook page "Kullina Khaled Said": "The creators of the page were particularly successful in channelling the emotions of sympathy for Khaled Said into political action whose discourse and practice were *novel, refreshing, and inclusive*" (Saad 2012: 64, emphasis SB). She refers to the silent stand as its "signature tactic" and claims that the page achieved to mobilise in particular youth who had never been involved in any political activity before. Also Eman remembers these precedents of the revolution:

> "This group [Kullina Khaled Said] is the one who took the initiative (...) it made a *new idea* which is standing in black clothes in a non-violent stand on the Corniche [the seaside promenade], the main street, in Alexandria, in front of the sea. It was exactly this idea, giving your face to the sea your back to the people, the street and the cars, and standing in black and simply making the people wonder why you are standing in this way (...) it was a *different kind of thing*, it was a *new culture* somehow" (emphasis SB).

For the spreading of this "new culture" in Egypt, social media played an important role: "(...) the new technologies, like social media and blogs, have offered the technologically savvy generation remarkable organizational possibilities. So they get involved in often diffuse, decentralized, ad-hoc coordination that can enjoy effective transnational linkages (....)" (Bayat 2011a: 51).

Yet, social media and the internet had an effect beyond functioning as a tool for coordination. It allowed those youths who could not be present at Tahrir to still *feel* as a part of it. Speaking about youth in an Upper-Egyptian village close to Luxor, Abu-Lughod shows how their relation to Tahrir was much more immediate than that of older generations: "In the first days, they felt intimately connected to Tahrir. The older generation watched on television but the young people who had friends there were especially traumatized because they had access to the Internet and watched the violence on YouTube" (Abu Lughod 2012: 24).[38]

Also, certain cooperation styles associated with the internet provided themselves for emulation in the real world: protesters engaged in co-creation by collective "design and planning" (Khamis/Vaughn 2011: 13), allowing for a democratic and egalitarian style of interaction. The internet had also provided youth with a space less subject to social and political control, where dissent could be practised (Singerman 2007: 39). Herrera argues these new (virtual?) practices have caused a generation's consciousness and culture to change: "Facebook was turning into a kind of virtual public square where they were experimenting with deliberative democracy. (...) Facebook became a very plural and dynamic space. (...) I think this revolution would have been impossible (...) without the change of consciousness and political behaviour of a whole generation of young people (...) Facebook and social media (...) have changed the political culture of a generation" (Herrera 2011c). In the 18 Days, this new culture could be practised and enacted in public[39].

3.5.2 New dreams and visions

The aforementioned is also related to the protesters' attempts to confront the societal and political stalemate with a new mentality. Central to this new mentality were "enthusiasm, innovation and excitement" (Nadia), generally ascribed to youth more than to older generations. It was also associated with idealism and euphoria, and with "having all these aspirations and dreams" (Reem). Saad shows, how this alternative to thinking in a beaten track was already constructed in the first days after the flight of Tunisian president Zine Ben Ali (see Saad 2012). She claims that after the Tunisian revolution the Egyptian discourse was divided in two camps. One emphasized the differences between the two countries, and claimed a similar revolution would not happen in Egypt. The other side was less concerned with the analysis of structural political, economic, and societal conditions. Instead they developed the vision and potentiality of an Egyptian revolution with reference to revolutionary poetry. Saad states "Yet the divide [in Egyptian discourse] can be more accurately described as one between 'experts' and 'dreamers'" (Saad 2012: 64).

Saad's further description of the discursive battle hints at the age-component: "The former dismissed the call as 'child's play.' The idea of making an appointment to start a revolution was especially ridiculed. The dreamers responded with great enthusiasm and endorsed the call wholeheartedly" (Saad 2012: 64-65). By the "expert" camp, the vision of those who applied "novel, refreshing and inclusive" approaches to activism and hoped for an Egyptian emulation of the Tunisian experience, is clearly associated with the naivety and lacking seriousness of youth. In this regards it is important to recall that in Egypt's aged and gendered society the voice and opinion of young people per se is often not valued. An expert is most likely old. Nadia expresses this poignantly: "We have this thing in Egypt where the old people know and young people shut up." Thus, young people dreaming of a different future and articulating their visions openly were clearly something *new*.

These new mentalities and values could materialise in Tahrir: "[T]hey develop art, imagery, and music as tools for mobilization and dissent, in the public sphere – in the media, and through social media – as well as in public space, notably the streets" (Bayat 2011a : 51). The often noted focus on creativity and art, culture and style is in line with Bayat's assumptions about youth movements: "With their central preoccupation with 'cultural production' or lifestyles, the young may fashion new social norms, religious practices, cultural codes, and values, without needing structured organization, leadership, or ideologies" (Bayat 2010: 31).

The lack (or rather: intentional rejection) of leadership and the spontaneity of the protests was upheld as one of the main features of the Tahrir protests (Bamyeh 2011). "One of the most striking aspects of the Egyptian uprising was its loose structure and lack of identifiable leaders. It was largely a grassroots, across the board, horizontal movement that had a bottom-up, rather than a top-down, structure" (Khamis/Vaughn 2011: 22). Diversity and flexibility, a focus on process instead of persons were attributed to the revolution (Khamis/Vaughn 2011: 22). These features of the revolution were essential to its character:

> "Spontaneity played a therapeutic and not simply organizational or ideological role. (...) The revolution was psychologically liberating , because all the repression that they had internalised as self-criticism and perception of inborn weakness, was in the revolutionary climate turned outwards as positive energy and a discovery of self-worth."
>
> (Bamyeh 2011: 3)

It is one of many examples where the self-attribution of the revolutionary collective contrasted the attributes of the regime. And while Bayat argued youth movements would not need outright political activity but could effect change by their mere presence, in the revolution we saw an amalgamation of both: common identity forged through cultural production, a shared lifestyle, and revolutionary protest activity.

3.5.3 New values and regained dignity

For many, Tahrir was a utopia turned reality for a short period of time. This is well-reflected in the trope of "The 18 Days" and the talk of "the iconic square". An important element of this utopia was to counter the perceived moral decay and decline in community values which the regime had supposedly inflicted upon society (see Singerman 2007). Hamdy argues "Mubarak's biggest crime was not the billions that he stole. (...) It was robbing us of our ideals, our morals. This was his biggest crime" (Hamdy 2012: 46). He even asks: "Is there enough moral integrity left, after the decades-long assault against basic human dignity, to rebuild a socially just country?" (Hamdy 2012: 44).

Tahrir was an attempt to respond to this question with a "yes" by enacting and discursively reproducing values such as unity, responsibility, and mutual respect, what Bamyeh calls "civic ethics" and "a collective moral earthquake" (Bamyeh 2011: 4). Advocates[40] of the revolution do not get tired of mentioning that protesters cleaned up after the 18 Days, that they remained non-violent, and upheld standards of politeness in Tahrir, no matter how threatening the situation became. Rosenberg's description of Tahrir illustrates this narrative quite well:

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[38] This also reminds us of the fact that the use of internet and social media – and thus what we have termed "exposure" above – is not limited to Cairo's urban bilingual youth.

[39] Making a distinction between virtuality and reality misses the point as the two spheres in my opinion overlap to such an extent that they cannot be separated. An example from the revolution: on the Facebook page "Kullina Khaled Said" the users where asked to poll on the shirt-colour for another silent stand. Thus, while the polling used informations and communications technology as a medium, the process and the consequences were no less "real" than if the people were signing a piece of paper and putting it into a ballot box.

[40] National and international commentators fall into two camps, those who think the revolution has or might still succeed, those who think it has failed or will fail. Yet, all of these tend to be in favour of the values and goals claimed

> "The protests were a model of unity, tolerance, and nonviolent discipline. The different groups put aside their individual flags and symbols to show only the Egyptian flag and to speak, as much as possible, with one voice. Protesters swept the square clean and protected shops, detaining looters and making them give back the stolen goods. Coptic Christians in Tahrir Square formed ranks to protect the Muslims while they prayed; when the Christians celebrated Mass, the Muslims formed a ring around them. Together they embraced soldiers and faced the police with roses. They sang songs and wore silly hats. It had an authenticity that was uniquely Egyptian (...)."
>
> (Rosenberg 2011)

To many observers in particular the cultivated *unity* of the Tahrir movement was striking, insofar as it overcame or suspended the divisions around the issue of secularism and religion that otherwise are so omnipresent in Egyptian politics and society. Agrama speaks of the revolution as an "asecular moment" (2012). My impression that unity between Christians and Muslim was celebrated time and again is confirmed by Hamdy: "The narrative of 'complete harmony' between Muslim and Christian, man and woman, in the initial days of resistance at Tahrir was one I heard again and again, a narrative that, in its hyperbole, belies the delicacy of and surprise at the degree of national solidarity that was sensed and practised by the demonstrators" (Hamdy 2012: 26). Sexual harassment was another issue inferred by protesters and observers to prove the moral superiority of Tahrir. Revolutionaries claimed that no sexual harassment took place in Tahrir (Winegar 2012: 69; Hafez 2012; Hamdy 2012), in contrast to it otherwise being a daily occurrence in Downtown Cairo.

While the ethics, creativity, and idealism celebrated in Tahrir were expression of the movement's youthful character, it inspired not only young people. Hoda Badran, the 82-year-old head of the Arab Alliance for Women and the Egyptian Feminist Union told me after she had spent a day in Tahrir, she "felt 20 years younger". In the narratives of many Egyptians who experienced Tahrir, the story of the revolution sounds like a fairytale, close to a miracle handed down from heaven. Yet, it might rather be a carefully engineered product, handed down by the Serbian "revolution makers" CANVAS, the Center for Applied NonViolent Action and Strategies[41].

3.5.4 Was "Tahrir" nothing but a huge marketing success?

There is indication that members of the April 6 Youth Movement drew on the experience and symbols of the Serbian resistance movement (Rosenberg 2011; Robelli 2011). Not only did the April 6 Youth Movement adopt the logo of the Serbian Movement Otpor! ("Resistance!")[42], even personal links between Egyptian activists and revolutionary entrepreneurs such as CANVAS are reported. "In Belgrade, Adel [a member of April 6] took a week-long course in the strategies of nonviolent revolution. He learned how to organize people – not on a computer, but in the streets. (...) The tactics were straight out of CANVAS's training curriculum" (Rosenberg 2011).

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by the revolution. Being against the revolution per se is currently a non-position to have.

[41] In their own words, CANVAS, the Centre for Applied Non-Violent Action and Strategies, "is a non-profit, non-governmental, international network, oriented to educational work related to strategic nonviolent conflict" (http://www.canvasopedia.org/who-we-are).

[42] A stylised, clenched fist, an "expropriation" (Rosenberg 2011) from communist movements.

Rosenberg claims that the 18 Days in Tahrir "had an authenticity that was uniquely Egyptian but it was also textbook CANVAS" (2011). According to Rosenberg, the unity that was so essential to the character of the revolution and the collective identity of the protesters is a core principle of a CANVAS-revolution. Then, what about the spontaneity and creativeness, two other features of the Egyptian Revolution? "[Otpor's] daily work consisted of street theatre and pranks that made the government look silly and won coverage from opposition media. Wit was perhaps not always achieved, but it was always the aim" (Rosenberg 2011). Also the ubiquitous humour that protesters and supporters tried to claim as typically Egyptian is one of CANVAS' most effective tools for delegitimising a regime.

Already the reports of April 6 receiving CANVAS training contradict the assumption that the revolution was all that spontaneous. And indeed, Ivan Marovic, a former CANVAS trainer, explains that revolutions are not always what they seem:

> "Revolutions are often seen as spontaneous (...) it looks like people just went into the street. But it's the result of months or years of preparation. It is very boring until you reach a certain point, where you can organize mass demonstrations or strikes. If it is carefully planned, by the time they start, everything is over in a matter of weeks."
>
> (Rosenberg 2011)

A closer look at the origins of Egypt's protest movement also clearly reveals that the roots of the uprising in 2011 reach deep, to the Mahalla workers strikes, to movements like Kefaya, and to protests in support of the second Palestinian Intifada.

Rosenberg also points to similarities with the Georgian revolution, which was helped by CANVAS. The Egyptian instructions "to carry roses, chant positive slogans, gather in their own neighbourhoods, and persuade policemen to change sides by reminding them their own families could be among the protesters " (Rosenberg 2011) could be seen as a local appropriation of tactics to win over police, capitalising on the family as an important reference point in Egypt. Another aspect resonates with the Egyptian experience: "If wearing Otpor's signature fist-emblazoned black T-shirt made you an insider in the revolution, getting arrested made you a rock star. People who once thought of themselves as victims learned to think of themselves as heroes" (Rosenberg 2011). In Egypt during and after the 18 days, scars and other signs of physical injury, such as week-long coughing from teargas, fulfilled this function of marking insiders or "heroes". Mariam, a young journalist told me she envied her female friends for having scars from shotgun ammunition. Many young *and* old Egyptians showed me their scars and injuries with pride, while some young men who had not been injured instantly started justifying themselves, emphasizing how often they, too, had stood in the line of fire.

CANVAS, founded by several Otpor members, has a distinct approach to revolution, closer to a clever marketing strategy than to classic ideologies:

> "Otpor's founders realized that young people would participate in politics – if it made them feel heroic and cool, part of something big. It was postmodern revolution. 'Our product is a lifestyle,' Marovic explained to me. 'The movement isn't about the issues. It's about my identity. We're trying to make politics sexy.'"
>
> (Rosenberg 2011)

This support for Goldstone's reading that revolutionaries have to engage and win battles of *intentional framing and identity construction* comes from an unexpected side.[43] The youthful character of the revolution could be entirely fabricated, the outcome of smart and successful attempts at identity construction on the side of the revolutionaries. I can neither prove nor disprove this claim, but want to put forward two alternative readings. On the one hand, the appropriation of ideas from CANVAS can be seen as *only one of many* instances of what could be called the "globalisation of protest culture". In addition, it can be considered an example where the logic of marketing seeps into the political sphere (Crouch 2004). I would like to engage with the first reading a bit more extensively, as in my opinion it constitutes an essential feature of the Tahrir protests, and has its roots in the *exposure* (see 2.2) of the younger generations.

3.5.5 The global cultural repertoire of contemporary revolution making

Both the Tunisia connection and the Serbian influence have been mentioned. In particular the Tunisia connection provided the grounds for some scholarly reflection. Howard (2011: 20-21, cited in Khamis/Vaughn 2011: 27) for example

> „Noted that nations with significant Muslim populations show ‚modular political phenomena‘, i.e., ‚political action based in significant part on the emulation of successful examples from others,‘ that ‚successful democratization strategies in particular countries are transported into the collective action strategies of movements in other countries,‘ and that ‚democratization movements appear to be learning to use information technologies from each other, linking up to share experiences and transporting successful organizational strategies.‘"
>
> (Khamis/Vaughn 2011: 27)

Other than Howard, Bayat does not focus on the common Muslim identity but on cross-Arab linkages based on shared language: "The common language and proximate political culture make possible an unfettered travel of ideas, codes, and modes of struggle across national borders, especially in this age of electronic communication, and cross-border Arab activist links" (Bayat 2011a: 48). Of course there is the risk of exaggerating the similarity between countries and their populations as diverse as Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and Yemen. Already the expressions of protest have taken very different forms. Nonetheless, it is important to point to the degree of identification that might happen between members of different Arab nations (in this specific context!), and the potential for *ideas* to travel. Bayat has a point emphasizing the common language for the cross-Arab linkage: "Such slogans, anecdotes, or revolutionary songs are all understood and internalized by Arabs, but they stop when they reach, say Turkish borders, because Turks do not speak Arabic" (Bayat 2011a: 48). The slogan "el sha3b yorid esqat al nizam" (The people want to bring down the regime), that travelled from Tunisia to Egypt, was powerful. Yet, ideas *do* cross language borders and thus other links and flows of inspiration might be just as important: those between young people from different countries, and between non-violent, anti-capitalist, or democratic movements. Khamis and Vaughn emphasize these *global* connections[44]:

> "Social media also empowered activists to associate and share ideas with others globally, enabling collaboration between activists in Egypt and Tunisia, as well as between protesters and Arabs in the diaspora; democracy activists in other countries; and Internet activists, who assisted them in their struggles. Thus, new media not only energised political activism inside Egypt, they also created a 'virtual global public sphere' (el-Nawawy/Khamis 2009), where acts of political resistance could be proliferated and supported internationally."
>
> (Khamis/Vaughn 2011: 25)

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[43] See Barnett for an analysis treating identity construction as an action, done by rational, strategic actors (Barnett 1999).

[44] To be fair, Bayat emphasises the effects of global connectedness in many of his works. And in the same interview as cited above, he recognises how access to the new media exacerbates feelings of deprivation among Egypt's middle-class poor: "So while these middle class continue to get proletarized the expansion of the new media makes them doubly aware of their own deprivation" (Bayat 2011a: 48).

In particular exposed Egyptian protesters appropriated different ideas and images that originated in other contexts, and often spread them online. We have already mentioned April 6's clenched fist, an "expropriation" from communist imagery.[45] Another famous example is Che Guevara, whose counterfeit was frequently seen in the revolution. Mina Daniel, a famous Christian martyr[46] who lost his life in the Maspero Massacre on October 9, 2011, was even portrayed as Che Guevara,[47] because both men had died on the same date. Another interesting example is the appropriation of the slogan "Walk like an Egyptian"[48]. It was often used as capture for a widely circulated photography showing one protester in a defiant posture, alone, in the middle of a street, facing a row of security personnel[49].

Here the creative (or distorting) potential of appropriation (see Bayart 2000) is visible. The black-and-white Palestinian scarf became a popular accessory of protesters in Egypt and was sold at a large number of stalls on Midan Tahrir. Even though this resembles protest outfits in Europe, we must not forget that it is originally a Palestinian (or Arab) tribal pattern that got popular in Europe (assumable in relation to the First or Second Intifada). Also Western, or if you want: global art forms were appropriated in the revolution such as street theatre, political comedy (*Kabarett*), and most important graffiti and other forms of street art. Also, internationally publicised movies provided the revolutionaries with (narrative) material for identity formation and impression management. The movie "V for Vendetta" was a constant source of inspiration (Herrera 2011b). These examples show what a wide array of images and styles are imported and appropriated.

Cultural phenomena attributed to the increased speed and intensity of globalisation through modern communication technology affect the imagery of the revolution (see Appadurai 1997). Today's young connected revolutionaries are what they call *exposed* and they can thus draw on a huge global cultural repertoire for constructing a revolutionary identity. According to Goldstone, Foran claims that the mobilisation for a revolution is necessarily "drawing on a 'culture of rebellion' from widely remembered prior conflicts" (referenced in Goldstone 2001: 239). I argue that today, the exposed in search of models look beyond the nation state in the "(virtual) global public sphere" (el-Nawawy/Khamis 2009). The many cross-references between the Occupy Movement and the Arab Spring are indications thereof. While the new media are not necessary for the diffusion of ideas, they definitely help. And the resulting dynamic mash-up culture clearly distinguishes the young and new from the old.

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[45] April 6's logo: http://6april.org/modules/news/images/storys/000000000.jpg.

[46] It might be worth mentioning that even though of similarly religious origin, the way the term "martyr" is used in Egypt and other Muslim Arab societies differs from the use in Germany, for example. The books on "martyrdom" can probably fill libraries.

[47] Mina Daniel as Che Guevara: "Tribute to Mina Daniel" by Latouffe, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tribute_to_Mina_Daniels.gif, and "Che Mina – Mina Daniel", by The Cat Who Design, http://www.flickr.com/photos/thecatwhodesign/6235025252/.

[48] This line is derived from a Bangles song, if I am not mistaken. Yet, I doubt many Egyptians of my generation could actually state the slogan's origin without the help of Google search.

[49] "Walk like an Egyptian ", at Zeinobia, Egyptian Chronicles http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-DWjZubtNtOE/TcAze57SUlI/AAAAAAAAPlY/lmSlY95Gv64/s1600/walk-like-an-egyptian-7545-1296264418-60.jpeg

3.5.6 The (younger) people demand the fall of the (old) regime – political categories in an autocratic gerontocracy

In the previous chapters, I have tried to analyse which aspects of the revolution have been or could be associated with youth and youthfulness. Yet, I would also like to ask, why youth became an important category and focal point for collective identity formation. I assume that it is the patriarchal political system and its rhetoric that pit regime and youth against each other. The distribution of power and the structure of relationship made youth a plausible category around which the fight for the future of the country could revolve. Why so?

Hosni Mubarak - father of the nation

As shown above (ch. 3.3.3), in Egypt, patriarchy is not only the main ordering principle of the social sphere but also the ideational model for politics. "In his role as president, Mubarak adopted the father idiom" (Hafez 2012: 39), meaning that he presented himself as the father of the nation, striking what Hafez (in reference to Deniz Kandiyoti) calls the "patriarchal bargain":

> "In classic Middle Eastern patriarchy, the older patriarch presides over and assumes responsibility for members of the extended family. The honour, prestige, and power of the patriarch thus derive from his abilities to provide for as well as to control and ensure the obedience of the members of the group. In this regard, a bargain is struck – not simply one of reciprocal exchange (one of allegiance in return for sustenance) but also one in which inequality is maintained, internalized, and ensured through methods of control."
>
> (Hafez 2012: 39)

Mubarak emulated this hierarchical relation based on gender and age to shape his relationship with the Egyptian people. This finds expression and is enacted in political rhetoric and in the distribution of power. In Egypt's gerontocracy, political influence is strongly biased in favour of older generations, while the share of young in the population is constantly increasing. With a very high likeliness those who demand the end of their near total exclusion from political processes are younger than the rulers. In addition, Mubarak rhetorically made all the Egyptian people "his children". In the patriarchal political system the entire population is put under tutelage of the benevolent patriarch (or "father") – seen from this vantage point, the two categories, the Egyptian people (il sha3b) and the youth (il sha3bab) become conflated. This is essential to understanding why "youth" was chosen by different actors as an element of self- (and other-)description and attribution.

Even (or in particular?) in his last speeches, "Mubarak addressed the protesters as his 'children,' saying that he would 'listen' to their demands" (Hafez 2012: 39). In his last three speeches, delivered during the 18 days, Mubarak clearly tried to capitalise on the paternalistic notion of politics, and worked the people's emotions. Even though being partially successful, overall, his attempts to exploit his role as the revered patriarch failed. Hafez describes this in a very vivid way. I will cite her in length to do justice to the spirit of her account:

> "The dismantling of the myth of the benevolent, omnipotent father as state leader in Tahrir was momentous. But the day before Mubarak stepped down, an equally profound event took place in Tahrir that shook the very core of the patriarchal myth. Thousands had congregated in the square, anticipating that Mubarak would resign from his presidency. His face appeared on the giant video screens set up to broadcast his speech to the awaiting crowd, but, instead of resigning, Mubarak addressed the protesters as his 'children', saying that he would 'listen' to their demands. In silence, every person in the square solemnly held his or her shoe toward the screens. Some quietly wept, and others yelled, but aiming the soles of their shoes directly at Mubarak's face marked a turning point. It was the ultimate gesture of insult toward the elder patriarch."
>
> (Hafez 2012: 39-40)

Breakdown of a patriarchal bargain?

What had caused this breakdown of patriarchal authority? In the 18 Days, both Mubarak and then vice-president Suleiman were trying to capitalize on the family-analogy in politics which they had helped to reproduce over the years. Yet, what they had missed out on: in the view of many people, this analogy had already been stripped of its appeal and force. This only underlined the widespread perception that "they had completely lost track of who their people were" (Bamyeh 2011: 5). One of the reactions to Mubarak's three speeches was the mushrooming of jokes that depicted Mubarak as an alien or in other ways made clear how "out of touch" he is. One of them goes: "President Obama gives a call to Mubarak and tells him: 'Hosni, I think it is time for you to say goodbye to your people.' Mubarak responds: 'Why, where are my people going?'"[50] Mostly however, the rulers' attempts to infantilise their people only further infuriated them.

> "According to Adel Iskander (...) the Egyptian people felt insulted by the government's blockage of the Internet and cell phones: 'their reaction to this was strong…they became more resilient and more determined, because they refused the government's attempt to 'infantilize' them. Their message to the regime was 'Egypt can't be blocked and its people can't be unplugged'."
>
> (cited in Khamis/Vaughn 2011: 16)

Similarly, many people were outraged (Hajjar 2011) about an interview Omar Suleiman gave to ABC's Christiane Amanpour, conducted on February 3, 2011: "As huge demonstrations engulfed the country, Mr Mubarak's short-termed vice-president, the dour ex-head of intelligence, Omar Suleiman, had infuriated young Egyptians by suggesting that the protesters' parents should tell them to go home" (The Economist 2011). The anger was further fuelled by another member of the *old* regime: "His prime minister, Ahmed Shafik, when pressed to apologise for a murderous attack on unarmed protesters by paid pro-Mubarak thugs, promised sarcastically to send the victims chocolates and sweets" (The Economist 2011).

While the "infantilising" might seem very out of place to the reader, it still remains within the realms of the patriarchal political discourse. From an inside perspective the public rage about the elders' comments is only plausible when the patriarchal bargain has already broken down. And this is exactly what, according to Hafez, has happened as a result of neo-liberal reforms. She argues that due to the patriarchal bargain youth are affected in a specific way by the effects of the economic developments:

> "Patriarchal households, in which the male head of the family was systemically disempowered through increased costs of living and lack of employment opportunities, were no longer capable of supporting or

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[50] I heard this joke for the first time in the revolution, but later figured out, that this joke was a recycled version of an older one, where the first sentence was: "Mubarak is lying on deathbed, and the doctor tells him "Mr President, I think it is time…".

> providing for their youth, who were, in turn, disenfranchised both by economic challenges and repressive measures of the state. It is therefore not a coincidence that the youth in Egypt ignited the sparks of the revolution and that women (who head 22 percent of Egypt's families, according to the World Bank [2002]) flocked to Tahrir from all over the country in such high numbers."
>
> (Hafez 2012: 39)

Hafez' argument suggests that people denied their obedience because the patriarchs had not lived up to their duties. Dissolving the contract does then not necessarily imply that patriarchy itself has lost legitimacy.

Reconfiguring notions of the political

Yet, my own observations support a different narrative: patriarchy as a model for the political order has come under scrutiny. My interviews indicate a change in the notion of politics. Some young Egyptians have started to reject the personalised notion of politics resting on the family analogy. Instead, they adopted a different conception: "The whole idea Hosni Mubarak is like my father...No he's not. He's a civil servant, it's a job" (Nadia). This idea of a politician as representative or servant of the people was also vocally purported by the Facebook Page "Kullina Khaled Said": "Ghonim used the site to educate and inspire Egyptians about democracy, driving home the message that 'This is your country; a government official is your employee who gets his salary from your tax money, and you have your rights'"(Kirkpatrick/Sanger 2011). Regarding the distribution of power: the youth's claim to change is also a claim for more inter-generational justice. The continuation of Nadia's statement cited above resonates with demands usually expressed in the discourse on sustainable development and the (ecological) rights of future generations:

> "So but we have this thing in Egypt where the old people know and young people shut up a little bit. Now, I think: 'now you listen to us. Since you're gonna die soon and I'm gonna live in this country. So let's do it our way cause we don't wanna deal with the shitty consequences of your choices.'"
>
> (Nadia)

Deconstructing the authority of expertise

An important cornerstone of this claim to participation and representation is to deconstruct the authority of expertise. Young people feel compelled to convincingly argue that they do not only have a right to participate but that they also have the ability to contribute in a beneficial way:

> "Yes, we don't understand things the same way you do, but maybe our way fits the current world more than yours. It's not just about experience, it's about the people living in the moment and who are gonna deal with the country later on."
>
> (Nadia)

For claiming that the way of the youth "fits the current world" better, and that the elders' way of governing is not efficient, the narrative of a "Facebook Revolution" is of great help. The extreme emphasis on new media was welcomed by the media because it bolsters the narrative of a youth revolution and makes for a new and exciting topic. At the same time it was welcomed by activists because it made the rulers look even more out of touch and antiquated. Rushdy's description of the revolution is only one example: "It is clear that this revolution was a handing over from the old to the new. The use of social media on the Internet (...) made this a revolution of the new against a regime in which the average age of leaders was over 70" (Rushdy 2011: 29-30).

In the 18 Days, the youth's claim of being more attuned to the current world gained increasing legitimacy in face of "anachronistic" moves by the regime. The government-produced internet blackout (and people's reaction) has already been mentioned. The "Battle of the Camels" was another key event in this struggle for "modern" legitimacy.

> "That on 2 February some of Mubarak's supporters found nothing better to do than send thugs on camels and horses to disperse the crowd at Tahrir, seemed to reflect the regime's antiquated character: a regime from a bygone era, with no relationship to the moment at hand. It was as if a rupture in time had occurred and we were witnessing a battle from the twelfth century."
>
> (Bamyeh 2011: 5)

An article in The Economist illustrates how successful the youth's impression management and their strategy to present themselves as the "modern" alternative, was:

> "As much as anything, the collapse of the regimes in Egypt and Tunisia was a product of the growing gap between their antiquated world views and the increasingly sophisticated outlook of their people. In Egypt, at every stage, the protesters proved more agile, more resourceful, more imaginative and more determined than what one of them, in a breathless television interview, dismissed as 'those stone-age men sitting in chairs'."
>
> (The Economist 2011)

Yet this battle for legitimacy is everything but over. And the ruling elite has understood that being "modern" is a crucial battleground. The military, or the SCAF (Supreme Council of the Armed Forces) respectively, adopts social media and has repeatedly sent out mass-text messages to inform people of its opinion (Khamis/Vaughn 2011).

> "They also lately created their own Facebook page, which was seen as 'an attempt on their part to catch up with the wave of technological advancement that is sweeping the country', as Egyptian activist Mohamed Mustafa puts it. He also indicated that the new Egyptian prime minister, who was nominated by the popular revolution, has set up a Facebook page for his government 'in an effort to modernize its means of communication'."
>
> (Khamis/Vaughn 2011)

In fact – even though some claim it is obviously lacking the technical skills to effectively co-opt social media as its propaganda tool - ever since its take-over of power, the SCAF has published most of its communiqués on its Facebook page.

3.6 The Revolution two years after – some tentative hypotheses on the outcome

As mentioned above, in Goldstones's review of theories on revolution, the *outcome* of a revolution constitutes the third important element for analysis besides the causes and the processes. In fact, the social scientific classification "revolution" is *itself dependent* on the outcome of the revolutionary process. And so it is for the people's lay definition: if nothing changes, it was not a revolution. To a certain degree, it is still too early to assess the outcomes of the Egyptian revolution. The narrations as much as the distribution of power are still very much in flux (Elyachar 2012). Many of the "effects" that I could observe in April 2011 had evaporated by the end of the same year. Some "achievements" had even been turned into their opposite in the course of 2012. As much as the 18 Days had become the symbol of change and hope, for revolutionaries, the second round of the presidential elections and the closed process of constitution making had become symbols of disappointment and despair. The violent clashes between various factions during what has become termed the "constitution protests" (December 2012) and at the occasion of the uprising's second anniversary (January 2013) appeared to many observers as qualitatively distinct from previous events. It might well be that at the time of writing, exactly two years after the revolutionary moment in January 2011, the revolution is entering a new phase – one marked by more violence and destructive potential.

Even though the attempt to completely account for the revolution's goal is therefore bound to fail, I would like to put forward some hypotheses, as to what has been set in motion – and what has not. On the one hand, I argue, the picture of youth and with it the norms regulating inter-generational relations have been upset after the uprising. A more general change of mind, namely the decreasing acceptance of authoritarianism combined with an increased sense of agency as citizens, seemed to be another "ideational" effect of the uprising. On the other hand, however, the political representation of youth and youthfulness (both as an age group and as a mentality or habitus) does so far not match the cognitive transformations that were initiated by the events in Spring 2011.

3.6.1 More respect for youth? Changing inter-generational relationships?

Right after the fall of Mubarak, young people were optimistic that they had gained more clout in society: "This barrier of not listening to us, the older generation, is broken" (Nadia). In countless anecdotes, young Egyptians recall the moment after Mubarak's resignation, when their parents or other elder relatives apologised to them. Nadia tells me a story similar to many others I have heard since the revolution:

> "Even my dad on the 25th was like 'nothing will happen...a couple of kids going to the streets' and things like that (...) and afterwards my mum called me when Mubarak left and said 'I'm sorry. I underestimated you guys. I am sorry that I said that it's not gonna happen and that you don't have the power. I'm very proud of you guys'".

These stories are quite often staged in a way similar to Nadia's account: as the young revolutionaries are still out in the streets, where their protest had led to the ouster of Mubarak, their parents have to call them on their mobile phones to deliver their apologies and recognition.

The 18 Days uprooted convictions about the youth's disaffection and in the eyes of many young changed the way elders looked at them. When I asked about the definition of "shabab" (youth) in spring 2011, people often asked back: "Before or after the revolution?" Noor, one of my interview partners, expressed what many fellow Egyptians had told me in similar ways. I will share her quote at length, so the reader can get an impression of what the sudden change felt like for a young Egyptian:

> "Before or after revolution? It's so different. (laughs) Shabab is – it depends on the context (...) before the revolution they were thought of as the arrogant ones, who never accept any kind of advise, the ones that are arrogant and ignorant, (...) they think they are the only ones who are right and they all think in the same way, they are the ones who want to leave Egypt as much as they can, they want to be more liberal and they never understand the meaning of a deep culture or how it affects in the long term, they just want to do what they want, what is popular in their age range, no matter how it affects the children, the next generation, your family. But after revolution it was the way of saying: (...) the new abilities and skills that have been born or found. As if you found a new oil sea under your country, you found a big amount – 20 million young people between 18 to 30 or 40 and it's not that small! And everyone is working to make his country better. So whenever you hear shabab you see young people that are doing a big thing, like the ants that are so small when you see them but finally they make a difference. It's like once you hear the word [shabab] you feel like people are planting or building or are celebrating. After the revolution you found young boys and girls cleaning, young boys and girls making debates, making lectures and discussing and debating and it was weird to see young boys and girls in talkshows, always ministers and journalists and all above 40, it was weird getting these young people to talk and discuss with the bigger ones. It was shocking in the beginning because people were used to young people have to respect totally, totally the old ones.(…) Shabab is now really having a different look. There's a huge gap between the younger and the older ones. But the older ones started to trust the younger ones, even if they don't understand. (...) but now we are waiting for the younger ones to start have trust again for the older ones. But it's hard. Because what we see: our country is quite destroyed".

Noor's metaphor of finding an oilsea and the emphasis that it actually is 20 million people illustrates *to what extent* youth were not taken into consideration, even disregarded prior to the events in 2011. The quote points to certain changes the revolution had ushered in: first, the stereotype of the corrupted, useless youth had been upset, and youth have acquired a more positive connotation. After the revolution, young people appeared as a force for good, engaged, active in society, and ethical – very much in contrast to their prior image. Along with the image of youth also activities and values that were usually attributed to young people acquired a different meaning. The story of a Facebook revolution for example implied a re-evaluation of "modern" skills and pass-times. These changing perceptions find expression in the way the generations interact: after the uprising, young people and their opinions were heard and respected differently than before. For some young people this new style of interaction was visible in the media, others highlighted the changes that happened in their own families (Birkholz 2011: 161–68, 286–290). Young people's satisfaction about their improved position fitted well with a general sense of euphoria and brotherly equality that swept the country at the time.

As already indicated, these positive sentiments have soon given way to feelings of disappointment. Similarly, the changed image of youth might not have been of much durability. Before addressing the question of sustainability, I would lke to point to a second sense in which the ideational fabric of Egyptian society might have changed: The revolutionary events did not only affect inter-generational relations, they also empowered the people at large vis-à-vis their (political) patriarchs and autocrats and bestowed them with a new sense of agency and a new sense of their rights.

3.6.2 An overall sense of empowerment and ownership

When I critically ask about the political effects of the revolution, people tend to defer to the ideational, cognitive changes it brought about. Rola counters my scepticism about the political effectiveness of the revolution saying: "I don't know. But generally I think the most thing that is fruitful from revolution is that we, the youth felt that 'Ok, now the future is ours and they cannot really take the revolution from us'. And each time we feel this, then again we go to the streets". Hafez is convinced that the people's self-empowerment signalled the overturn of the patriarchal order.

> "What the events of this uprising have revealed is that notions of masculinity undermined by a repressive regime have observably shifted the terms of the patriarchal bargain between genders and ages and between the state and its people. (...) we were witnessing an undeniable reversal

> in the social consciousness of a people. What immediately followed this stunning victory of collective action was a dismantling of a myth, that of the patriarchal bargain."
>
> (Hafez 2012: 39-40)

If Hafez is right, then the demand for increased inclusion of youth in decision making and the inclusion of the people in political processes might not be a democratic *moment* but the result of a long-lasting process of a more sustainable nature.

As Abu-Lughod shows, this sense of empowerment is not limited to urban youth who experienced the protests in Tahrir. She describes the effects the revolution had on youth in an Upper-Egyptian village: "The bigger gift, I was to discover when I exchanged emails (for the first time) with some of the young men in the village whom I knew well, is that the events in Cairo had emboldened the village youth to take new responsibility for their local situation" (Abu-Lughos 2012: 24). After these youth defended their village in popular committees ("legan sha'beyya") during the heydays of the uprising, they organized themselves via Facebook to "discuss the issues and try to decide how best to serve their community's needs" (Abu-Lughod 2012: 24). Their concerns are of limited scope and of a very immediate and local nature. Most of the problems addressed by the group which called itself "The Good Youth of Village X" related to the provision of daily goods and public services. "Their first initiative was to solve the crisis of the distribution of bread, then the shortage of bottled cooking gas, then the high price of meat, and then garbage collection in the neglected public areas of the village" (Abu-Lughod 2012: 24). This example points out, that in order to assess the effect of a revolution, we should not limit our view to the central political institutions. A new sense of shared responsibility for the community and the common good can have local effects and might eventually transform a society and its order *incrementally* and *bottom-up*. In the months after the uprising, Egyptians observed an increasing numbers of strikes and many stories about disobedience at the workplace circulated. This was often interpreted as indicator for a new, *less autocratic mentality*.

That said, the central political institutions still constitute the main hallmark for measuring an uprising's success respectively for defining it as a revolution. Since 2011, statements like Reem's have become more frequent in Egypt: "(...) with the uprising – so it's not a revolution, if you wanna call it that way. For me, I don't call it that way because a revolution has to be something that causes complete change".

3.6.3 The revolution failed to bring about youth's inclusion in the political process

If we look to the more manifest political processes then, the picture is nothing less than bleak. For the first year after the uprising, many youth groups (such as April 6, the larger Revolutionary Youth Coalition and the One Demand Initative[51]) had demanded a swift handover of power from the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) to civilian forces (Carnegie 2012). Not only did they fail to have their core demand satisfied, it also seems that youth got increasingly sidelined in the political process. For a variety of reasons, the youth's and the revolutionaries' representation in parliament (upper and lower house), elected at the end of 2011 and in early 2012, was weak. In the presidential elections 2012, they also failed to lift one of the revolutionary candidates to the presidential seat.[52] With the sole exceptions of the Islamists, the old opposition was also the new opposition. No wonder then, that "(...) the festival atmosphere in Tahrir has dissipated and a 'politics of disappointment' has emerged" (Winegar 2012: 69). This sense of *restored exclusion* was only heightened by the performance of president Mohammed Morsi, who has shattered any hopes for real dialogue, given himself quasi-dictatorial powers and pushed through a hastily drafted constitution in late 2012. The partial reinstatement of emergency law is only one indication of many for the return, or rather: the persistence of autocratic, heavy handed methods in Egyptian politics (Daragahi 2013).

These days, Mohamed El Baradei mainly speaks for the National Salvation Front, the largest opposition group. But he used to be maybe the most distinguished advocate for Egypt's revolutionary youth. In this capacity he lamented in December 2011 in response to the first round of parliamentary elections: "'The youth feel let down. They don't feel that any of the revolution's goals have been achieved. (...) They got decimated,' he said, adding the youth failed to unify and form 'one essential critical mass.'" (The Telegraph 2011). Like the demand for more equal representation of women, the youth's aspirations were not realized in face of a resilient patriarchal system. Even though Mubarak was ousted from office, the SCAF and the Muslim Brothers (MB) represent and reassert the dominance of old men and reproduce the norms supporting the patriarchal order. Many of my older female interview partners pointed out that the military is *the* epitome of patriarchy. As for the MB, while their depiction as misogynist is grossly distorting their self-perception, it is no secret that they champion a conservative, patriarchal model for family and society. In addition, a fight between younger generation of the MB and the organisations' leaders in 2010 is often incurred to highlight that the MB's internal governance style is undemocratic, conservative and unlikely to integrate alternative voices.

How come youth and youthfulness remain excluded from the official political process and the power sharing deals that take place behind closed doors? Various factors add to an understanding of the revolution's failure to result in more inclusive politics. Organisational and financial disadvantages, the lack of understanding and trust between generations, SCAF's successful campaigning against the movements and eventually the "youthful" character of the revolution might all contribute. The most salient aspects will be discussed briefly here.

Organizational disadvantages and inter-generational differences

First, the revolutionaries' failure to secure a larger amount of seats in parliament can be attributed to their lack of funding, organisational capacity, and experience, especially if compared to the best established opposition party, the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party, and the highly funded Salafist Al-Noor Party. Both these Islamist parties enjoyed a considerable head start vis-a-vis revolutionary coalitions. Second, the generational gap and persistent stereotypes hinder the inclusion of youth and youthfulness. In Egypt, there remains a strong tendency to "trust in the power of white hair", as El Sharkawy (2011) puts it. This might constitute the most decisive impediment to youth's inclusion in the political process.

Yet, other forces are at play as well. Besides a mutual lack of trust, different tolerance and willingness to bear the economic and emotional consequences of continuous revolutionary action separates the generations:

> "I believe the main problem now is not with the SCAF or the state generally. It's in the people. Especially the elders. Because mostly they want things to be more stable, they just want to have the political transition, they just

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[51] The One Demand initiative was launched in late January 2012. It was supported by a large variety of parties and groups, amongst them all major youth coalitions. According to Al Ahram Online, members are the "Coalition of Revolutionary Forces, the April 6 Youth Movement (Democratic Front), the Revolutionary Youth Coalition, the Revolution Youth Union, the Kazaboon ("Liars") Campaign, the Maspero Youth Union, the Popular Movement for the Independence of Al-Azhar, the Maspero Media Revolutionaries, and the Revolutionary Socialists" (Shukralla 2012). However, its one demand remained unsatisfied, and with the shifting scene after the presidential elections like many others, this initiative has somewhat lost its purpose. However, numerous member groups are still active and some have reinvented and adjusted their raison d'etre. Kazaboon for example no longer tries to uncover the SCAF's lies but instead targets what they consider dishonesties or crimes by the Muslim Brotherhood and the Freedom and Justice Party.

[52] It remains to be seen whether revolutionary parties can gain ground in the upcoming parliamentary elections in 2013.

> keep talking about economics, and all of this, and they want things to be stable again, that's what they are used to."
>
> (Rola)

Various interpretations are at hand: given that many youth are financially supported by their parents, they might underestimate the danger of prolonged political and economic instability, in that sense being as naive and lacking experience as their most ardent critics have been claiming for months. Also, due to their "in-betweenness" most of the young do not carry (financial) responsibility for others – they have "nothing to lose" as Rola put it (see also Winegar 2012). A quote by Laila – referring to the situation prior to the revolution – reminds of the urgency felt by some young people:

> "Everybody was just furious about how it was going. The older generations were less furious than we were. 'We know this system, it's not gonna change, we just want to be in peace and have our jobs', this is what we all felt. But for us? We have nothing to lose. If we don't change this now, we're dead. We're dead. You open your mouth to complain to a police man or say something, or protest and you disappear. You disappear. What?".

Another explanation for different generations' stances on an ongoing revolution might be that the younger generations represent a less materialistic orientation than their parents, something akin to Inglehart's famous notion of post-materialism, thus being more willing to take the economic risk. Lastly the stakes for them might simply appear higher, given that young people realise that their rulers "[a]re gonna die soon and I'm gonna live in this country. So let's do it our way cause we don't wanna deal with the shitty consequences of [elders'] choices" (Nadia). For the young it is a struggle about their future the immediate importance of which they have realised in the last years:

> "And at the same time the last couple of years in Egypt a lot of things happened that actually made us feel 'Ok, now we have to do something. We don't really know what's happening in the future, which is our future.' And at the same time things keep happening like the Khaled Said thing, the last parliamentary elections, all this made us feel we are not really there, they don't really see us, they don't feel that this is our future. And we really have to do something to protect this future."
>
> (Rola)

A campaign to delegitimise youth and the return of old stereotypes

In contrast to such an immediate need "to protect this future", the role of young people in the political process after Mubarak's resignation "was cosmetic, and done purely to sort of appease the young people while simultaneously the consistent campaign of the SCAF was to wear this revolutionary forces down and turn public opinion against them" (Suzi). Suzi is not alone with the perception, that she observed a *campaign by SCAF* and the MB to coopt the revolution while at the same time *delegitimizing revolutionaries* of the first moment. In contrast to Rola's reading of a quasi natural generational cleavage, many activists attributed a loss of popular support to intentional campaigning of the SCAF against the revolutionary youth, in particular with the help of the still unreformed state media apparatus (Boston Globe 2012). The media's attempts at discrediting among others the April 6 movement relied heavily on arguments that seemed to have lost their force in the 18 Days (Ghannam 2012; Hajjar 2011): they were branded as foreign agents and baltagiyya, and were accused of irresponsibly halting the "wheel of production".

Consequentially, two initiatives focusing solely on the "media war" had formed (Carnegie 2012a). One is the "Kazeboon Campaign" ("kazeboon" translates as "liars") which originally screened videos of police and military violence in public, on squares, and streets to reach out to the wider population, which to a large extent is consuming state media only. Today Kazeboon is focusing its effort on unveiling what they perceive to be the truth about the MB and the Freedom and Justice Party. The "Media Revolutionaries Front" on the other hand advocates for a complete overhaul of the Egyptian media system, in particular the state media.

Also Rola attributes the discrediting of the revolutionary youth to the SCAF's efforts. In addition though, she qualifies that some of the *stereotypes* held about youth are *true*. One of these stereotypes is:

> "That we are actually living in a bubble. Which is somehow true. That we are living in the Facebook and Twitter bubble and that we are not really aware with what's happening in the country and the society. Which is true, we really need to get more involved in the streets and with the society. And get more active in the sense of civil society."

Like others, Rola excuses a perceived lack of social cohesion with the old regime. She continues

> "(..) stop facebooking and tweeting and interact more with the people. Which is right – but at the same time: how? During the last 30 years and even the last 60 years all the public sphere channels that were available for people to interact and to gather and to discuss were not really there. The state was always trying to stop this."

Be it because of a generational gap, because of the effects of at least 30 years of dictatorship or because of the SCAF's campaign to tarnish the movements' reputation – it seemed that soon after the revolutionary moment was over, the uprising's youthful character which originally had contributed much to its success, came back to haunt it. The accusation that the regime was out of touch with the living reality of the people was turned against the revolutionaries themselves. They were portrayed as irresponsible dreamers that lack the wisdom and expertise to understand the country's woes – much in line with the pre-revolution image of Egypt's youth.

Not only have stereotypes about youth proven resilient, in some ways the youthful character of the revolution turned into an obstacle to the revolution's goals. The revolutionaries' failure to assert themselves and their objectives in the aftermath of the 18 days might be closely linked to the uprising's spontaneous character (see Beinin 2013):

> "A lose network of individuals communicating via social media lent itself well to mobilizing protesters, but not to participating in meetings with the SCAF, political parties, and other organizations. The issue of who could speak for the movement soon divided the organization [April 6]."
>
> (Carnegie 2012b)

Bamyeh makes the most comprising argument in this regard:

> "While spontaneity provided the revolution with much of its elements of success, it also meant that the transition to a new order would be engineered by existing forces within the regime and the organized opposition, since the millions in the streets had no single force that could represent them."
>
> (Bamyeh 2011: 3)

In the dynamics of the protests the manifold grievances had not been expressed directly, instead "the primary focus of these revolts has been representative and democratic governance" (Bayat 2011a: 51). The focus on political demand is explainable as they "were clearer than any other kind of demands; everyone agreed on them"

(Bamyeh 2011: 4) and eventually there was the assumption that once basic political demands were fulfilled, this "would guarantee the more just nature of any subsequent system" (Bamyeh 2011: 3).

In addition, I would argue that this focus was plausible because it was in the political realm where the deadlock, lack of change and exclusion had been most visible. Yet, in face of the protests' "narrowing" agenda, it is of little surprise that once the most prominent demand, the fall of Mubarak, was achieved, the movement's unity faltered:

> "If the resolve, spirit, and strength of the protesters seemed unbreakable during those first 18 days, they all stood for a common cause, 'the end of the regime.' Now the aims – social justice, social equity, the end to corruption – are not as clear, and even less apparent is how to achieve them."
>
> (Hamdy 2012: 46)

No matter how exactly these various factors interacted, in the end it seems that "the military regime and gerontocracy remains entrenched" (Elyachar/Winegar 2012).

4. The changing face of a failed revolution

In this paper, both youth/young and youthfulness/youthful have proven to be useful analytical categories that complement rather than substitute each other. While the Egyptian revolution was not exclusively a "youth revolution", young people, their image, narratives of their grievances, and youthfulness played an important role in bringing about and shaping the uprising. Grounded in the sheer number of people and the attractiveness of youthful opposition to the gerontocratic regime, the numerous activities led by youth in the 18 days and their aftermath drew attention because they illustrated a stark contrast between *emerging* and *existing* images of youth. Prior to the uprising, youth had been seen as victims of Western influence, endangered by moral decay or as self-serving, violent-prone baltagiyya. The youthful styles reproduced in the uprising and the revolutionary identity forged and communicated throughout the 18 Days were a way of talking back to existing stereotypes of youth. At the same time, many Egyptians not belonging to the age group youth could relate to youthfulness, and youthful features and skills seemed to gain more clout in society. Due to the political context, youth provided a category for identification and a rallying point against the patriarchal ruler who had belittled the entire Egyptian people through his paternalistic style of rule. These interrelations of images of youth, features of the political system and the revolutionary dynamics show that a grasp of what youth means in *this specific context* is essential to understanding the events and to assessing to what extent the Egyptian revolution was a youth(ful) movement. Similarly, other contextual knowledge about structural developments and grievances is important to trace how certain triggers could mobilise people around a common cause. At the same time, the patriarchal, gerontocratic context and the youthful character of the uprising provide a number of explanations for the revolution's failure to result in political, social or economic youth inclusion. Consequentially, there's a stark contrast between the revolutionaries' high hopes and their disappointment in face of the current political and economic situation.

Changing terms of the discourse in a co-opted revolution

Another remarkable difference can be observed: right after the uprising, it was easy to reconstruct images of youth from media discourses, individual interviews and focus group discussions because youth and various issues pertaining to it were so salient in people's minds. Youth was one of the categories to interpret and communicate the events that had shaken the country. By today, the registers of the political have shifted: in conflicts over identity, legitimacy and power, other labels provide a source for identification, mobilisation and framing. Especially since the election of Morsi, the terms of public debate and of the battle for legitimacy have changed towards supposedly religious categories. The proponents of the constitution and Morsi's presidency continuously try to frame conflicts about due process and outcomes as conflicts between pro-Islamic and anti-Islamic forces. This means not only young people and demands for youthfulness have been sidelined in the political process but even youth as a category has lost its importance for the discourse. Yet, young people and youthful revolutionaries are by no means the only ones who have lost ground. Rather, none of those who constituted the non-co-opted opposition under Mubarak, have gained ground. Nasserists, socialists, leftists, liberals, and seculars alike have not managed to secure inroads to political institutions and processes. The "new Egyptian order" (Beinin 2013) that seemed possible during the 18 Days, has not materialised. Instead, the MB and the military, both representatives of the old and persistent order, dominate, applying the same methods that Mubarak had become notorious for (Daragahi 2013). And thus, two years after the January 25 uprising, the situation is nothing less than bleak.

Sustainable change in mentalities or a morally deformed society?

Yet, what many Egyptians hold to is the *change of mind* or *the new mentality*. My interview partner Suzi on the one hand conceded "the shit doesn't stop", referring to military trials for civilians, abuse of prisoners and protesters, extra judicial detentions and the like – the very same forms of state violence that had provided a rallying cause in January 2011. On the other hand, she offered a glimpse of hope, assuring: "There is still a grain of Tahrir." Veteran activist and head of the Al-Nadeem Center for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence, Aida Seif El-Dawla, shares this perception:

> "One thing that has survived the counter-revolution in Egypt is people's sense of being capable of change, and their refusal to tolerate humiliation. They have not forgotten how they stood up to the police and the military. The images of the martyrs remain very alive in people's minds. The one thing that the revolution succeeded in reclaiming is the dignity of Egyptian people and their sense of entitlement to a better life."
>
> (Levine 2013)

In the end, what I have termed the "overall sense of empowerment and ownership" in chapter 3.6.2 might be as fragile as the new images of youth. In light of the most recent outbreaks of violence at the occasion of the second anniversary of the revolution, Daragahi notices that: "the colourful and lively civic ethos of the revolution has also been partially eclipsed by 'black bloc' protesters in balaclavas who arrived in Tahrir Square late on Thursday night ready to do battle with police" (Daragahi 2013). Tahrir, and moreover the *street*, today looks quite different than the utopian space that many revolutionaries of the first hour reproduce in their narrations. As protests and resistance to the state become more violent, sexist and destructive, it is tempting to give a negative answer to Hamdy's question[53] about the possibility of reclaiming moral integrity and human dignity to "rebuild a socially just country" (Hamdy 2012: 44). Yet, to me it seems a grave, in the end *essentialist* mistake to interpret the changing face and style of the revolution as an indicator of the deformation of Egyptian society. I prefer to follow interpretations that attribute the increasing "uglyness" of the revolution to the failure of political elites and institutions to channel people's desire for change into transparent, fair political processes (see for example Daragahi 2013). Not only the vision of a new Egyptian order but also the ability to shape the course of events and the discourses "was snatched from the hands of the occupiers [of Tahrir] even before Hosni Mubarak was deposed" (Beinin 2013). What we are observing now, the actions of the black bloc, the Ultras, is the violent attempt of some to rescue a revolution that has been co-opted by the establishment. Many other Egyptians have long returned to their old strategies: migration and apathy.

Remaining questions – and call for further academic engagement

Of course, the last word is not yet spoken – neither for the immediate nor the long-term future of Egypt. In particular it remains to be seen how powerful the social and cultural transformations are. It is important to note that these social and cultural transformations already preceded the revolutionary moment in 2011. They might have been accelerated and highlighted by the uprising but they do not necessarily die down with the revolution's immediate failure. These social and cultural transformations, their sustainability and their relation to political and economic change provide the subject for much further academic enquiry. Theories of non-movements, like those by Asef Bayat (2009) can provide the conceptual framework for analysing these developments. For Bayat, it is youth's "central preoccupation with 'cultural production' or lifestyles" (Bayat 2010: 31) that predestines them as carriers of a non-movement. Yet, youth in the Middle East and their relation to societal, political, and cultural changes deserves particular attention also because of the specific gerontocratic, autocratic and patriarchal socio-political context the importance of which I have been trying to highlight in this paper. Above that however, also the relation of youth and politics *in general* needs attention as contemporary constructions of youth show striking similarities across regions, and produce strikingly similar power hierarchies, in particular in the political and economic sphere.

In these regards, the question in how far the blossoming of youth sub-cultures in the Middle East in recent years has provided fertile ground for the development of *different political concepts and practices* is of interest, too. The trans-national linkages between revolutionaries, the possibility of a newly emergent global protest style, and its appropriation in different localities is another relevant subject of study that relates to ongoing efforts at "grounding globalisation". On a local level, a closer look at the networks between current Egyptian revolutionaries, the remnants of Egypt's activist scene in the 1970s, and established human rights organisations could yield key insights. From a critical perspective the extreme (and extremely fast) commercialisation of the 18 Days in Tahrir likewise merits further investigation. This commercialisation, the large continuity of economic policies, and the uncritical position many young Egyptians from the (upper) middle classes have towards their (cultural) consumption and insertion into world markets also cast doubt on the potential for deep social and economic change. In Egypt, there is a talk (and fear?) of an upcoming revolution of the poor. Issues of class therefore need to be considered in future analysis of the (failed) (youth) revolution. That said, in light of the reassertion of autocratic practices and neoliberal economic policies, and the tremendous suffering and desperation these developments cause, any academic working on Egypt is not only obliged to pick her research topics well but to also reflect critically on what the intellectual's own contribution to social change should be.

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[53] "Is there enough moral integrity left, after the decades-long assault against basic human dignity, to rebuild a socially just country?" (Hamdy 2012: 44).

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