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A Lost Generation Rising Up - Analysing the Egyptian Revolution from a "Youth" Perspective

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ABSTRACT

In this paper I argue that instead of asking "Was the Egyptian revolution a youth revolution?" we should deconstruct this question and ask instead "What does "youth" mean?, What "youthful"?, What does it mean in Egypt?", "What does it mean in the context of the Egyptian revolution?". This article is a very tentative account to approach these questions. I first discuss various **understandings** and **connotations** of youth that are of relevance to the Egyptian context. Two aspects are of specific interest: the **image of youth** in Egyptian society, as it has been considerably shaken by the 18 Days in Tahrir, and the importance of a 'successful' youth for the **transition to adulthood**, which has been and still is being blocked for many young Egyptians. Both aspects directly link to the economic, educational, political, ethical grievances of Egyptian youth that might have contributed to bringing about the revolution. I discuss these **grievances** in relation to the **structural changes** that have marked Egypt in the last 30 years. Also the **triggers** of the Egyptian revolution are related to these structural transformations, and resonate in specific ways with young people. The 18 Days in Tahrir then developed a counter-reality to the "old" regime. New and **youthful protest practices, values and styles** gave the Egyptian revolution its special character. Yet, to a large extent, this might draw on previous protest experience, intentionally marketed by revolutionary entrepreneurs from Eastern Europe. I discuss these cross-national influences as an example of a **global reservoir of protest culture**, tapped by young, connected revolutionaries in order to construct revolutionary identities. I further argue that, independent of these youthful attributes of the protest, "youth" suggests itself as a category for political conflict in a **patriarchal system**. While this patriarchal system and the respective mentalities have been dealt a blow in the revolution, the revolution has largely failed to bring about the **youth's inclusion** in the political process. Nonetheless, it might have ushered in a change of mind, sustainably **transforming the image of youth** and inter-generational relationships.

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1. A year after the "youth" revolution – some answers, many more questions¹

Even though it might be too early to "explain" the Egyptian revolution² (Bayat 2011a), certain narrations have become well-established and find consensus among academics, activists, journalists,³ and my other young interlocutors⁴. 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 "Kullina⁵ Khaled Said"⁶, 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 were behind much of the mobilisation efforts and the most numerous group to start the marches on January 25),⁷ 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.

While these interpretations have been developed and established over the course of the last year, in the heat of the battle, during the 18 Days in Tahrir⁸, a narrower reading became almost

- 1 I would like to thank Felix Schurer for his absolutely priceless help in editing this paper, and Maggie Fick for her journalistic advice. Most of all, I am indebted to the many Egyptians who shared their experience with me. My special thanks go to those young women who opened the door to their lives for me and participated in the biographical interviews.
- 2 Throughout the paper I call the events that began on January 25, 2011 and continue until today "revolution". I am well aware that so far the outcomes of the uprising do not match the social scientific criteria for a revolution. Yet, 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.
- 3 For an overview and various perspectives see the most recent 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*.
- 4 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.
- 5 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).
- 6 This translates as "We are all Khaled Said". Today there are an English and an Arabic language page.
- 7 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).
- 8 "The 18 Days" has become a common trope. It is used in conversations and has become the title of a variety of art projects, publications, and websites. The term and its usage draw a clear border between the Utopia of Tahrir in the early days of the revolution, and the many protests, street battles, and political processes that followed. I agree with the battle cry of many protesters and activists "the revolution continues" – meaning first, that the 18 Days have set processes in motion which have not come to an end. And second, that also the *open* battle for the country's future is still going on. Yet, when I speak of the revolution in this paper, I mostly refer to these 18 Days, as

hegemonic: on the evening of Thursday, February the 10th, 2011, both 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). Already during the revolution, many international and national media had adopted a similar reading: "The Generation changing the world" became the face of the Egyptian revolution⁹. "[T]he 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 that narrative, claiming that "long-time dictator Hosni Mubarak was forced to step down under pressure from a popular, youthful, and peaceful revolution (Khamis/Vaughn 2011: 1; Rushdy 2011). Yet, what does this actually mean – a "youthful" revolution? Shortly after the revolution, the tenor in international and Egyptian media was clear: it was youth who had brought down a dictator but was this really a youth revolution in the first place?

I want to argue that some things are wrong with the question "Was this a youth revolution?". First, Bayat's caveat uttered in autumn 2011 still holds largely true: "It is too early to explain the uprisings with a reasonable degree of confidence" (Bayat 2011a: 47). From the distance of a European desk or university classroom this might seem exaggerated but for anyone observing the ongoing struggle for the future and present of Egypt from closer, Elyachar expresses a felt truism: "Narrative continuity becomes hard when each day brings a radically different reality" (2012).

Second, there are certain meta-theoretical problems¹⁰ with this question. It ignores what a highly complex phenomenon a revolution is. If we speak of a "youth revolution", what does that mean? That the causes lay within the youth? That the participants were young people? That the demands were referring to youth? That youth were relevant to its outcome? A revolution is a complex, multi-layered societal phenomenon and does not fit reductionist methodology and ontology or oversimplifying labels (Khamis/Vaughn 2011: 25). I will later come back to that point applying a structure for analysis by Goldstone (n.d.).

Even if we were "only" looking 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", a combination of structure and agency (Goldstone 2002: 46).

is evident in expressions such as "during" and "after" the revolution.

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

10 Given that renown scholars are not capable of neatly defining and distinguishing (see Adler (1997) for an example that can cause considerable headache) whether a question is a methodological, epistemological and/or ontological one (not to speak of finding consensus on this question, see Mayer 2003), I am not going to try here.

The simple question "Was this a youth revolution?" assumes that there is an essence of the revolution which can be grasped with the right analytical tools. Such a perspective is not taking into account how much the event of the revolution is dependent on the observation and construction work by revolutionaries, media, and researchers.

Third, besides these theoretical issues, the question in itself, specifically the concept "youth" is neither straightforward nor unambiguous. Instead we could easily ask back: what actually does that mean: "youth revolution"? Or to break it down further: what does "youth" actually mean? It is this question that I want to engage with in the next section.

2. "Youth" – what does that mean in Egypt?

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 (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 the previous one by far. In the foreword to the same report, though, a different, even more impressive figure is mentioned: "According to the 2006 census, approximately 40 percent of Egyptians are between the ages of 10 and 29" (Handoussa 2010: IX). If we extend our definition of youth to include people in their early or even late 30s, as many of my interview partners do, we can even confidentially say that today youth constitute half of Egypt's population.

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 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 captured in the term "transition".

Even though developmental psychology knows other models of human development, one of the most influential ones, coined by Eric H. Erikson, rests on a similar notion of phases. Erikson distinguishes between different phases of life, each having specific "developmental tasks".¹¹

11 While I have dropped the idea of "developmental tasks" as a useful sensitizing concept for the text interpretation, the theory of developmental phases still provides a useful means to distinguish young adults from elders and children. A distinction that would never be questioned in daily life – unless our lay categories become non-viable in a specific situation. Child soldiers, under-age criminal offenders and mentally disabled people are three extreme cases that highlight the problematic aspects of "fixed" life phases.

Childhood comprises four phases, followed by adolescence (starting with puberty), then young adulthood/late adolescence, middle adulthood and late adulthood. 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, 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. As the main *developmental tasks* specific to the period of young adulthood/late adolescence¹² we can assume: 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).

This is interesting for us insofar as it corresponds to the reflections on Egyptian youth that stem from a development policy context, all being largely concerned with the problem of *transition*.

The SYPE report 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): "we assess three major interdependent transitions: education, employment and family formation. Here we pay special attention to marriage where possible (...) because social norms in the Middle East make the transition to family formation critical to full social inclusion" (2009: 3). The edition focuses on the above mentioned phenomenon, a pre-longed, unwanted waiting period that precedes marriage. Singerman argues convincingly how unfavourable socio-economic conditions (i.e., limited financial resources) and societal norms, which she terms the "imperatives of marriage"¹³, tie in – with the result of keeping people "stuck" in waithood. Without marriage – which "seems hopelessly out of reach for scores of young people" (Herrera 2009: 369) – the transition to adulthood cannot be completed. Assaad/Barsoum (2007: 8) emphasize how the blocking of this transition constitutes social exclusion. Youth – and the hereby subsumed "four important dimensions: education and learning; work opportunities; potentials for forming families; and channels for exercising citizenship" – is "a crucial stage in a person's life", its successful transition "pivotal for including youths in society". 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). In addition the emphasis on youth as a phase which precedes *full* social inclusion deserves attention.

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 distinction between young and youthful. While "young" refers to the age component of youth, "youthful" designates what we previously termed the respective connotations. For Bayat "youthfulness signifies a particular habitus, behavioral and cognitive dispositions¹⁴ 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). Bayat develops this further into an argument about the character of youth movements: "Rather than

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

13 This refers mainly to the high costs of marriage, but also to the norms preventing legitimate intimate relationships outside of marriage.

14 Time and again I am puzzled by Bayat's and Herrera's unwillingness to provide us with a tangible definition *which* habitus, behaviour, and thoughts are associated with youthfulness (see for example Bayat 2010, Herrera 2009).

being defined in terms of centrality of the young, youth movements are ultimately about 'claiming or reclaiming youthfulness'." This qualification provides us with a useful perspective to question in what sense the Egyptian revolution was a "youth revolution".

Bayat's work deserves particular attention also because he foresees the revolution 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), pointing out that youth were already suspected to be the new revolutionary class after the proletariat by Marcuse and claiming that "the youth movements have great transformative and democratizing promise" (Bayat 2010: 28-29). This holds 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."¹⁵

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, a social category, "youth", that they become a social actor¹⁶ (Bayat 2010: 30). A movement of young people alone does not constitute a youth movement in his definition. Applied to the Egyptian Revolution, this perspective shifts our attention from questions about the participants(' age) to the causes and demands and the character of the movement. As we will realize later, the "character" of a movement can be caught by the concept of "revolutionary identity" (and vice versa).

In a more critical perspective, we could question the "modernist" ideological undercurrent of theories that emphasize the transformatory potential of younger generations. Also, the NHDR's approach can be criticised for constructing 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 succeeds, the youth bulge becomes a source for danger or a source for change and human resources. Youth can even be understood as the creation of a new group of consumers, constructed with the "rise of a liberal, consumerist ideology targeted at youth" (Singerman 2007: 38). Even if youth might not be the result of such an ideology, it is at least shaped by Neo-liberalism, that "encourages 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). This perspective is of interest primarily as it addresses the influence of globalization on youth. Also

15 Based on this argument, Bayat expected Iran to be more prone to developing a powerful youth movement. 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 was that young upper middle-class women feel heavily restricted by the surveillance and "judgmentality" of Egyptian society.

16 In defence of his category "youth", Bayat engages with Bourdieu's critique, who used to reject the term "youth" as nothing but a word, pointing out that the realities of young persons from different classes were 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, 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).

Bayat speaks of an "increasingly *global* youth habitus" (Bayat 2010: 47). If we look to "youth" in Egypt, we realize that their construction as a group distinct from older generations relies heavily on the youth's global connections.

Perceptions of youth in Egypt

"I'm one of those old people, who believe that a young man under the age of 30 is still a boy,"
(Salah Hussein, 50 years of age, quoted by Sharkawy 2011).

Young people's place in Egyptian society – a macro perspective

Egypt is 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 a 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 live of others" (Joseph 2000: 24) remains largely unchallenged.¹⁷

The continuing dependence of young people is also an outcome of the specific politico-economic conditions: the Egyptian state fails to provide basic provisions for its citizens and adequate jobs with adequate wages are lacking. As a consequence, most young people are economically dependent on their families even after graduation from university¹⁸, and often even when already employed. Tawila et al. paint a dramatic picture: "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 light, the above statement "a young man under the age of 30 is still a boy," expressed by a 50 year old English teacher, acquires new plausibility. For many Egyptians the period of youth seems to stretch to the age of 30 and even beyond. Upon many young Egyptians the extension of their youth is forced by a combination of the socio-economic situation and the local norms for the transition to adulthood. This phenomenon has prominently been termed "waithood" and might be one of the many grievances that led youth to revolt.

17 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).

18 More than 3 millions of university graduates are unemployed (Hamzawy in Harders 2010: 50). We will come back to that point.

The image of youth in Egypt

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. Apparently, a largely negative image of youth prevailed and was communicated. "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" (Salma in Handoussa 2010: 232). Among other things, it is their internet use which rendered youth 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'" (Nadia¹⁹, a 23-year-old student of Political Science and Law). For the young people themselves, 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 live in urban centres, but most important is the exposure to a globalised world. Internet use is 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 mis-understanding between the generations has become:

"For more than a decade, young Egyptians were seen in the image of Islamist militants waging guerilla, 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: 45).

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." 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 (...) [youths] protection from political and moral ills had become a matter of 'national security' [sic!]" (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.

At the backdrop of the closure of the political sphere under Mubarak, the lamento of youth's political disaffection, frequently expressed before the revolution, is nothing less than irritating. Just 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 (e.g., Assaad/Barsoum 2007). One of the young women, Reem, a 22-year-old student of Political Science

19 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.

and Economics, 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" – implying that this clarification was necessary. Singerman is one of the few to point 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 these generalisations are and points 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 such "inaccurate portrayals of them in the media and the frequent moralizing about their supposedly hedonistic, selfish, and Westernized ways" (Singerman 2007: 39). Little surprising, the revolution supported youth in casting their image in a more positive way, as we will see when discussing the revolution's outcomes.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to fully reconstruct youth with all its shades, connotations, and situative variations as an emic concept. My goal was much simpler: first I wanted to sensitise the reader for the complexities of the category "youth". My argument in this paper rests on several observations: 1) the concept "youth" refers to much more than an age, 2) the borders between the definition and its attributions are fluid, 3) youth is often constructed in relational terms. These aspects become most salient if we see how youth came to be defined in the context of the revolution, when it was mainly defined by opposition to the regime. Second I wanted to provide the reader with some categories and concepts usually discussed in regards to Egyptian youth. They provide us with some conceptual background to look at the revolution and ask: What were youth's grievances? In how far can we speak of a youthful revolution?

3. The Egyptian Revolution – and its relation to youth

There are in theory two different ways of approaching the question in how far it is a youthful revolution: we could ask young people about their stance on and role in the revolution. And we can 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 we would like to focus on the broader concept of youthfulness, the second approach seems more promising. Nonetheless, much of my knowledge derives from interviews and interaction with young people.

Above we have already asked which element of a revolution should be related to "youth" in order to legitimately speak of a youth revolution. Goldstone (n.d.) 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: injustice, agency and collective identity. The "injustice frames" correspond to the structural factors and the dynamics of delegitimising in Goldstone's framework (Gamson 2011: 464; Goldstone n.d.: 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). It 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. These "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 n.d.: 21). As distinction from an "other" or an "adversary" is a central mode of (collective) identity formation and affirmation, it ties in closely with the framing of the state as unjust and illegitimate, constructing the revolutionary group as the legitimate and *essentially* different counterpart.

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 n.d.: 21-22). "The creation and maintenance of protest identities is a substantial task that draws on cultural frameworks, ideologies, and talented leadership" (Goldstone n.d.: 22). Identity construction is nothing that *happens*, but something that is *done*. We will return to this point – let us first look at the structural causes and the respective grievances in relation to youth.

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,²⁰ 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 were 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).

Bayat outlines several structural causes. While many scholars and journalists point to various economic, social, and political long-term developments that were influential or even causal to the revolution, his 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

²⁰ 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.

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 2011 a: 49). Their proletarianisation, 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 2011 a: 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 2011 a: 48).

So 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 economic exclusion, the state of the educational system, political exclusion, and the increasing impudence of Mubarak and his family, in face of heightened injustice and violence. The result is a feeling of "being stuck"; to many the only way out seemed to be migration.

Economic Grievances and 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, unemployment in the 18-24 age group reached 19%, among those 15-29 16% were unemployed (Population Council 2010: 13). "Unemployment among the educated, moreover, has been even worse: in Egypt, college graduates are ten times as likely to have no job as those with only an elementary school education" (Goldstone 2011). While general unemployment saw a slight decline, unemployment rate of university graduates has even increased in the previous years (Herrera 2010: 128; Herrera/Bayat 2010a: 357). According to Assaad, who considers unemployment a central manifestation of youth exclusion, youth make up more than 80 percent of the unemployed (Assaad 2007: 9). For many young people being unemployed means that founding their own family "seems hopelessly out of reach" (Herrera 2009: 369) and thus their transition to adulthood cannot be completed.

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 is slightly different: they 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.²¹ 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), as well as the lack of committed teachers and the 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). Burgat points out that the dire state of the educational system was a major criticism 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).

Political grievances in a patriarchal, closed system

Yet, there is no legitimate political channel to vent this frustration²². 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).

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:

21 I cannot emphasize enough here *how* common this trope has become.

22 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).

"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."

Also Mariam, a young journalist, 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. I heard someone say, "Suzi", Mubarak's wife had treated the country like "her farm" and Naima, a 23-year-old student of Physics, 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 the Palestinian cause: "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).

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. And Egyptians 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 infrastructure²³ can be subsumed under this label.

One of the major grievances refers to the widespread systematic police brutality, 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"²⁴ with young men (Ghannam 2012). Also Hafez confirms this perspective: "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

23 Examples are the lacking hygiene in hospitals, the insecurity of public transports and roads, the lack of a sewage system in many informal communities.

24 For the purpose of this argument it suffices to translate this as "thugs", the singular is "baltagi. For detailed elaborations on the term see Ghannam (2012).

higher one's position in society and the larger one's material, cultural, social resources (the latter is termed "wasta"), the easier it becomes to circumvent the daily hardship. Referring to the large majority of Egyptian society, however, Reem (a recent graduate of Economics and Political Science) 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.

Young in Egypt – being stuck without a future

Various grievances add up to the feeling of "being stuck". Assaad/Barsoum (2007) capture this with his concept of exclusion as a multi-dimensional, cumulative, multi-layered phenomenon. This 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: "The four dimensions are closely related. Poor learning leads to poor job prospects. Forming families and achieving personal independence are closely linked to productive employment and adequate earnings. The unemployed and those trapped in low-paying jobs face insurmountable challenges in forming families because of the high costs involved. Civic participation is essential for making a successful transition to meaningful adult roles. This latter stage refers to the ability to participate fully in society and the different channels available for participation" (Assaad/Barsoum 2007: 8). Also Goldstone's (2002) notion of upward mobility "being clogged" resonates with this: "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 this reading the potential for conflict results not from a dire situation per se, but from the inability to see a way out.

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 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).²⁵ 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" (Herrera 2010: 141-142). Another young Egyptian she quotes, Ahmed, is desperately looking for the entry point to 'real' life: "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?" (Herrera 2006). Youth's dependent social status contributes to the feeling of gridlock. 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 is the experience of youth across gender and class. For many, the answer is migration.

Naima's 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 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, 23): "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."

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 "revolutionary" process. The link between constant grievances and current action can be seen in the *triggers* of the uprising.

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

Social movement 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 "delegitimation and injustice frames" (Dupont/Passy 2011: 449) were already present, fed by above elaborated grievances. 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 (symbolised in the issue of ascension), and the publicity of police brutality

²⁵ In this case, the interviewee felt limited in particular by societal norms and patriarchal hierarchies, which – being economically, socially and emotionally dependent on her family – did not leave her the "space" she wanted.

(symbolised in the death of Khaled Said). Thus, in January 2011, the "regime had long since lost its legitimacy" – new, however, "was the sense that, by acting together, it was possible to do something about it" (Gamson 2011: 463); this change in agency can largely be attributed to the stunning success of the Tunisian revolution. 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 action²⁶, I would like to look at them in more detail.

Gamal and elections 2010 and Mubarak simply not dying

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 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:

"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.²⁷ 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).

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.

26 Khaled Said is 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 expressed the grievance. Wael Ghonim built on this relation between the structural causes and the specific incident when he founded the Facebook page "Kullina Khaled Said".

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

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

Khaled Said was a 28-year-old blogger from Alexandria.²⁸ 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? The horrible pictures of his distorted body, smuggled out of the morgue by his brother, went viral online.²⁹ The family of Khaled Said made a deliberate effort to circulate the pictures online, posted them on Facebook and distributed them to international human rights groups (interview with Zahraa Kazem, Khaled's sister and their mother).

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,³⁰ 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 and justifies this 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 cousin³¹" (Zeinobia 2010).

But 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). Abu-Lughod describes how the villagers in Upper Egypt – as the subaltern across 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).

28 The story is well known in Egypt and among those familiar with the revolution, I will thus keep it short here. I myself have heard and read myriad of (contradictory) accounts of Khaled's story. Wikipedia offers a good introduction (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_of_Khaled_Mohamed_Saeed), also Issandr El Amrani's icnredibly useful blog offers a background (<http://www.arabist.net/blog/2010/6/14/the-murder-of-khaled-said.html>).

29 For the graphic pictures see the respective blog post by Zeinobia (2010), (<http://egyptianchronicles.blogspot.com/2010/06/for-khalid-for-his-family-and-for-egypt.html>).

30 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).

31 Zeinobia is a woman, which is why she might invoke her cousin here.

Eman emphasizes that the story of "this boy" only brings to the open what a lot of Egyptian 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).

Wael 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 millions 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 cooperation³² 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 contextualise³³ 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 linked to existing *structural* causes, *and* because *actors* capitalised on this potential to become triggers. As we will see, both the structural causes and the immediate triggers are reflected in the process of identity construction, central to the dynamics of the revolution.

32 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" (2011).

33 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).

The dynamics of a revolution: collective action frames

Young people as the main participants?

A note on the question of participation: whoever claims that a certain group of people was or was not "in the square" does so with an agenda.³⁴ The question of participation is highly interwoven with ongoing struggles for legitimacy and hegemony of interpretation. At the latest with the events in Sharia Mohammed Mahmoud in November 2011 and February 2012, I had lost orientation in the exchange of blames and claims to participation in the ongoing street battles. As for the 18 Days in Tahrir, Winegard makes an interesting, logically compelling argument:

"To be the iconic revolutionary in Tahrir, one either had to be poor, without anything to lose, or privileged in certain ways. One usually did not have children to provide for (an older male role) or was not tasked with caring for them in the home (a female role, usually filled by mothers and older sisters). It helped if one had a salaried job at a place that was closed because of the revolution (as did government workers and some private sector workers, mainly in companies). People whose income depended on more informal employment (e.g., housekeepers, vegetable sellers, cab drivers, handymen, day laborers) often were not willing to risk losing potential pay by protesting for hours in Tahrir. 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. One had to also live in Cairo or have the capital (both economic and cultural) to get to Cairo and to stay there" (Winegard 2012: 69).

Winegard's argument is interesting because she argues that at large only a specific type of people positioned in a specific place in society could *physically* be in Tahrir! In the reminder of her article, though, she emphasizes that this alone does not say much about a person's stance on and participation in the revolution. 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. It 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 any case, understanding youth as a concept that includes much more than an age group, allows us to look closer at the "How?" of the Egyptian revolution.

The 18 Days in Tahrir – united, spontaneous, creative and ethical

On the next pages, I want to explore the "youthful" character of the revolution. The goal cannot be to fully reconstruct the shaping of a collective revolutionary identity or the collective action, yet, these concepts have provided a useful guideline for how to observe and describe the Egyptian protests. I would also like to expand the focus to include what Rushdy terms "the new". In his perspective the revolution has "three new faces" – it is peaceful, a revolution that belongs to

³⁴ 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.

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 emergence of new protest forms and the cultivation of a different set of values (unity, creativity, responsibility). Furthermore, the application of marketing strategies, which is one way in which a huge *global* cultural repertoire is tapped for shaping the local protest identities, practices and styles. In a last step, looking at the frontline between youth and regime will help to understand why "youth" might have become such a central category.

New Protest strategies and new media

One frequently remarked feature of the Egyptian Revolution were the new protest strategies. Saad describes the appeal of the protest tactics proposed by the webpage "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, my emphasis). 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" (my emphasis).

For the spreading of this "new culture" in Egypt, social media had 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 the youth 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 the relation to Tahrir of youth in Upper-Egypt was much more immediate than that of older generations in Cairo: "In the first days, they felt intimately connected to Tahrir. The older generation watched on television but the young people who had had friends there were especially traumatized because they had access to the Internet and watched the violence on YouTube" (Abu Lughod 2012: 24).³⁵

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. Also, the internet had provided youth with a space less subject to social and political control, where dissent could be practised (Singerman 2007: 39): "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

35 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.

Days this new culture could be practised and enacted in public³⁶.

New dreams and visions

This also relates to the protesters' attempts to confront the societal and political stalemate with a new mentality. Central were the youth's "enthusiasm, innovation and excitement" (Nadia). 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. She claims that after the Tunisian revolution Egyptian discourse was divided into 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'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). Clearly the vision of those who applied "novel, refreshing and inclusive" approaches to activism and hoped for an Egyptian emulation of the Tunisian experience, is 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 was clearly something *new*.

And these new mentalities and values materialised in Tahrir: "they 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"

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

(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 *and* a shared lifestyle and revolutionary protest activity.

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 (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). Advocates³⁷ 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 quite well:

"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 is so omnipresent in Egyptian politics and society. Agrama speaks of the revolution as an "asecular moment" (2012). My own 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

³⁷ 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 by the revolution. Being against the revolution per se is currently a non-position to have.

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". Yet, what in the narratives of many Egyptians who experienced Tahrir sounds like a fairytale, close to a miracle handed down from heaven, might actually be a carefully engineered product, handed down by the Serbian "revolution makers" CANVAS.

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!")³⁸, even personal links between Egyptian activists and revolutionary entrepreneurs such as CANVAS (Center for Applied NonViolent Action and Strategies) 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).

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. So, 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 the regime.

Already the reports of April 6 getting CANVAS training contradicts 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, movements like Kefaya, and 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 neighborhoods, 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 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 did not get injured instantly started justifying themselves, emphasizing how often they, too, had stood in the

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

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.³⁹ 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: the appropriation of ideas from CANVAS can be seen as only one instance of what could be called the globalisation of protest culture, or 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, as in my opinion it constitutes an essential feature of the Tahrir protests, and has its roots in the *exposure* of the younger generations.

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).

Bayat on the other hand focuses on cross-Arab linkages based on the 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." 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* connections⁴⁰:

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

40 To be fair, Bayat emphasises the effects of global connectedness in many of his works. And in the same interview he

"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).

In particular young 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.⁴¹ Another famous example is Che Guevara, whose counterfeit was frequently seen in the revolution. Mina Daniel, a famous Christian martyr who lost his life in the Maspero Massacre on October 9, 2011, was even portrayed as Che Guevara,⁴² who had died on the same date. Another interesting example is the appropriation of the slogan "Walk like an Egyptian"⁴³. It was often used as capture for a widely circulated photograph showing one protester in a defiant posture, alone, in the middle of a street, facing a row of security personnel⁴⁴. Here the creative (or distorting) potential of appropriation (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 (assumably 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. 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 (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" (Goldstone n.d.: 239). I argue that today, the youth 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

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 proletarianized the expansion of the new media makes them doubly aware of their own deprivation" (Bayat 2011a: 48).

41 April 6's logo: <http://6april.org/modules/news/images/stories/000000000.jpg>

42 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/>.

43 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.

44 "Walk like an Egyptian", at Zeinobia, Egyptian Chronicles <http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-DWjZubtNtOE/TcAze57SUII/AAAAAAAAPIY/ImSIY95Gv64/s1600/walk-like-an-egyptian-7545-1296264418-60.jpeg>

new from the old.

The (younger) people demand the fall of the (old) regime – political categories under patriarchy

In the previous pages I have tried to analyse which aspects of the revolution have been or could be associated with "youth". Yet, I have so far held back one major argument which explains why youth became an important category and focal point for collective identity formation: it is the patriarchal political system that pits regime and youth against each other. The distribution of power and the structure of relationship made this the most plausible category around which the fight for the future of the country could revolve. Why so?

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 likelihood 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 out In silence, every person

in the square solemnly held out "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).

But what had caused this breakdown of patriarchal authority?

In the 18 Days, both Mubarak and 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?"⁴⁵

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'" (Khamis/Vaughn 2011: 16).

Also, 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 traditional 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 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). This argument suggests

45 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...".

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.

Yet, my own observations support a different narrative: the 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. Nadia's statement resonates with demands often expressed in regards to a more sustainable development that respects the 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).

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). In 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 to 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 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 their 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.

The Revolution one year after – some tentative hypotheses on the outcome

In Goldstones's review the outcome of a revolution is the third important element besides the causes and the processes. In fact, the social scientific classification "revolution" is itself dependent on the *outcome*. And so it is for the people: if nothing changes, it was not a revolution. It is much too early to assess the outcomes of the Egyptian revolution. The narrations are still very much in flux (Elyachar 2012). Many of those "effects" I could observe in April have evaporated by now, or have been turned into their opposite. Nonetheless, I would like to put forward two hypotheses, as to what has been set in motion – and what has not. First, I argue that the picture of youth and with it the norms for inter-generational relations have been in turmoil after the revolution. Second, I argue that – so far – the political representation of youth (both as an age group and as a mentality) has not matched the cognitive transformations that were initiated by the events in Spring 2011.

More respect for youth? Changing intergenerational relationships?

Right after the revolution, 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 when after Mubarak's resignation 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 often staged as in this account by Nadia: as the young revolutionary is still out in streets, where their protest had led to the fall of Mubarak, the parents have to call them on their mobile phones to deliver their apologies and recognition.

The revolution 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 "sha3bab" (youth) in spring 2011, people often asked back: Before or after the revolution? Noor expresses what many fellow Egyptians told me in similar ways – I share her quote in 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 advice, 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 revolution. Youth have acquired a more positive connotation, after the revolution, they appeared as a force for good, engaged, ethical, very much in contrast to the prior image of youth. And also in another sense the ideational fabric of Egyptian society might have changed through the revolutionary events.

The people's empowerment

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".

If Hafez is right, then the increased inclusion of youth in decision making and the inclusion of the people in political processes, might not be a democratic *moment*, but of a more sustainable and lasting 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-Lughod 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 bottom-up. This said, the central political institutions still constitute the main hallmark for measuring a revolution's success. In Egypt, statements like Reem's have become more frequent: "(...) 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 that causes complete change".

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. "Now the festival atmosphere in Tahrir has dissipated and a 'politics of disappointment' has emerged" (Winegar 2012: 69). For a year now, many youth groups (such as April 6, the larger Revolutionary Youth Coalition and the One Demand Initiative⁴⁶) have demanded a swift handover of power 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.

So Mohamed El Baradei, maybe the most distinguished advocate for Egypt's revolutionary youth, 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). Just as 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 represents and reasserts the dominance of old men and reproduces the norms supporting the patriarchal order. Many of my older female interview partners pointed out that the *military* is *the* epitome of patriarchy.

For different reasons, the youth's and the revolutionaries' representation in parliament (upper and lower house), is weak. Their failure to secure a larger amount of seats can be attributed to their

46 The One Demand initiative was launched in late January 2012. It is 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).

lack of funding, organisational capacity, and experience, especially if compared to the best established opposition party, the Muslim Brotherhood, and the highly funded Salafist Al-Noor Party, which both enjoyed a considerable head start vis-a-vis revolutionary coalitions. Above that, however, a persistent tendency to "trust in the power of white hair", as El Sharkawy (2011) puts it, might constitute the most decisive impediment to youth's inclusion in the political process. Besides this lack of trust, a different tolerance and willingness to bear the economic and emotional consequences of continuous revolutionary action divides 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 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 here: 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. 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 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 whose immediate importance they 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). Yet, the marginal 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). And while many young and old revolutionaries are willing to continue their struggle, there is some feeling of losing ground in the war against the re-assertive patriarchy impersonated in the SCAF.

Battle won, but the framing war over legitimacy continues

Many young people feel, SCAF has post-January 25 won the battle for the mind of the majority. Not reproducing Rola's reading of a quasi natural generational cleavage, many activists attribute this 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 rely heavily on arguments that seemed to have lost their force in the 18 Days (Ghannam 2012; Hajjar 2011): they

are branded as foreign agents and *baltagiyya* and are accused of irresponsibly halting the "wheel of production". Consequentially, two initiatives focusing solely on the "media war" have formed (Carnegie 2012a). One is the "Kazeboon Campaign" ("kazeboon" translates as "liars") which screens videos of police and military violence in public, on squares, and streets to reach out to the wider population, which to a large extent are consuming state media only. 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 on SCAF's efforts, but in addition she qualifies that some of the stereotypes held about the 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. Stop facebooking and tweeting and interact more with the people". Like others, Rola excuses perceived lack of social cohesion with the regime "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 discussed were not really there. The state was always trying to stop this". It seems that the youthful character of the revolution has come back to haunt them: the accusation of being out of touch with the living reality of the people is turned back against the revolutionaries themselves.

Several other reasons for the revolution's failure to bring about the revolutionaries' inclusion in the political process also relate to the character of the revolution. Its failure to assert itself might be closely linked to the uprising's spontaneous character: "A loose 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 2012 b). 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 and lack of change 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 movements 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). And even the improved picture of youth might be at best a very fragile outcome.

4. "El donya bayza" – the world is broken

While the Egyptian revolution was not exclusively a "youth revolution," young people and youthfulness played a particularly important role. Grounded in the sheer number of people and the quasi-natural opposition to the gerontocratic regime, the numerous activities led by youth that sprung up in the 18 Days and their aftermath drew attention because they illustrated a stark contrast between emerging and existing images of youth. My paper has shown that an understanding of what youth means in this specific context is essential to assessing the extent to which the Egyptian revolution was truly a "youthful" movement. In how far the long-term effects of the revolution match the youth's aspirations and transform the patriarchal social and political order in Egypt remains to be seen. For sure it provides the subject for much further academic enquiry. Youth in the Middle East and their relation to societal, political, and cultural changes will remain an interesting research topic as the particular local impacts of the Arab Spring in Egypt and other countries such as Libya become clearer. The question in how far the blossoming of youth sub-cultures in the region in recent years has provided fertile ground for the development of different political concepts and practices deserves attention. 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. 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.

While the Egyptian revolution and its failure to produce political inclusion of the youth are an intriguing subject for research, they are also bitter reality for the young people living in Egypt. When the uprising started in January 2011, I was on my way to Egypt. To conduct field research in a time that felt so historic and momentous to those who lived it was a unique experience. The young people I met were drunk with euphoria about their victory. The happiness about having regained a future that had already seemed lost was enormous. And so was the optimism. I left the country on April 8, 2011. When I returned six months later, everyone had sobered up. Many of my friends and acquaintances described themselves as depressed. Many felt "el donya bayza" – the world is broken. Also for me, the change in atmosphere was tangible.

But the revolutionary vibe had not simply evaporated. Instead, it had died down in face of continuing brutal oppression at the hands of the SCAF. With increasing uneasiness I watched from a distance how the revolutionaries seemed to lose ground in the struggle for defining the shape of the new political order. Over the past year there was the "Yes" in the March constitutional referendum, delays in the holding of parliamentary and presidential elections, the total lack of transparency in the political process, the continuation of military trials for civilians, the maintenance of the emergency law, and the repeated accounts of torture by the military of civilians (most famously the "Virginity Tests"). These events have cast more and more doubt on whether there would be a new order at all. Instead we observe more of the same; as Suzi, a 29-year old blogger from Alexandria said: "The shit doesn't stop." On the other hand, she offered a glimpse of hope: "There is still a grain of Tahrir."

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