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Youth Civic and Political  
Participation and Citizenship Education  
in the Mediterranean:  
Lessons from the Arab Spring

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Isabel Menezes, Ibrahim Makkawi

## Editorial: Youth Civic and Political Participation and Citizenship Education in the Mediterranean: Lessons from the Arab Spring

In December 2010, a young economically under-privileged Tunisian man, Mohamed Bouazizi, set himself on fire protesting the police confiscation of the fruits and vegetables he was selling in the Tunisian coastal town of Sidi Bouzid. This event generated a series of protests and demonstrations that spread across Tunisia until the dictator, Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, was forced to leave the country on January 16th. Soon enough, the so-called "Arab Spring" spread to other Arab countries leading to the overthrowing of dictator rulers in Egypt, Libya, and Yemen. Further mass demonstrations and demands for political changes took place in Lebanon, Palestine, Iran, Morocco, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. Syria has been the focus of daily demonstrations, repression and controversies over external involvement for several months.

Beyond the growing debate between the claim for the authenticity of the current Arab revolts and Western involvement, whether indirectly (Syria) or through direct military action (Libya), two striking facts remain unique to the current "Arab Spring": first, the overwhelming mass involvement of the popular classes and their persistence to overthrow their ruling dictatorships. Second, there is a clear leading role played by youth in organizing and

sustaining the struggle. It is the second striking phenomenon of youth revolutionary involvement that constitutes the main themes of the current issue of JSSE – and the way this movement expanded throughout Europe, namely in the North of the Mediterranean.

There has been intense discussion on the promise (or the disillusionment) surrounding these events as either a sign (or a failure) of the democratic transition in the South of the Mediterranean. But, given the fact that young people are more than one-third of the population in the Arab world, the role of education and schools, on the one hand, and youth grassroots organizations, on the other, is central – and surely persists beyond the mediatisation of the "Arab Spring." What are young people actual daily experiences in schools and beyond? What are the meanings of these rising forms of political protest for young people? What visions of democracy and citizenship are being constructed? This volume presents a series of papers that discuss how the Arab Spring has engaged young people in Egypt and Libya, and considers the events that co-occurred/followed in two countries of the Eurozone particularly affected by the economic crisis and austerity measures: Portugal and Greece. In fact, it is recognized that youth on both sides of the Mediterranean and beyond share, as journalist Bruce Crumpley stated back in 2011, a similar "conviction that existing social structures – and the leaders responsible for them – are simply unable to deliver on their people's aspirations (...) and the result is a growing risk that the explosion of anger on Greece's streets this week will be repeated and with greater intensity, both there and elsewhere" (<http://world.time.com/2011/06/17/why-greek-tumult-signals-the-coming-of-europes-own-arab-spring/>).

This apparent participatory revolution (Kaase 1984) is quite interesting particularly because it openly challenges a vision of young people as detached from politics that appeared to be central to political, academic and educational discourses in the last decades and seems to echo Hannah Arendt's vision, back in 1969, when she was considering "student rebellion as a global phenomenon" and affirming: "psychologically this generation seems everywhere characterized by sheer courage, an astounding will to action, and a no less astounding confidence in the possibility of change" (p. 15). Again, a generation of young people across the Mediterranean and the world is faced with a highly disputable and uncertain future – or even with no future at all. And, astoundingly again, they act and trust it will make a difference.

The papers in this issue report and discuss how these events were lived and thought of by young people on both sides of the Mediterranean – involving visions of action and trust, and the lack of



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both of them, in Egypt, Lybia, Portugal and Greece. Interestingly, papers come from various disciplinary traditions in the social sciences, and thus expose the richness of conjugating these traditions in reading civic and political participation. Nevertheless, two striking theoretical trends appear to cross the various papers. The first is that context matters. The need for contextualized research and analysis clearly emerges from these papers, whose authors discuss global movements and tendencies, such as the clear emergence of the internet as a context for political action, while emphasizing that meaning is context-created and context-specific – and therefore action should not be viewed without taking into account the cultural, social and relational context where it evolves. The second is that emotions matter. The idea that political action does not exist without passion, as Michael Walzer would say (2002), clearly transpires in this collection of studies – and the possibility that political action expresses different emotions is also of significance, as consensus and dissent are the essential two-faces of democracy (Ranci re 2005).

The paper by Youniss, Barber and Billen, that rests on interviews with young Egyptian activists and non-activists, begins exactly by questioning how researchers approach the issue of civic and political engagement and participation to defend that “behaviors and attitudes [should] not be viewed abstractly, but instead as grounded in and coupled with the proper enabling or impeding conditions”. In fact, this emphasis on what Kelly (1966) designated the ecological metaphor is essential for a deep vision of individual and collective action as depending on both attitudes and knowledge, as well as on resources and opportunities – civic and political action as deriving from agency and structure. The interviews reveal an expansion of the public discourse: “Mohsen ... recounted that an old man congratulated him and his generation by saying that because of what they did “we can have a conversation about the vote [instead of being restricted] to talk about football.”” – a quote, by the way, that could well be equally pronounced in any European country; and an expansion of the agora beyond Tahrir Square, as activists recognize that now they can discuss politics everywhere: in cafes, in taxis, ... This obvious renaissance of politics and political action seems to have also generated a massive trust in the ability of “we, the people” to change and produce change – even if the more recent events in Egypt and elsewhere show that political leaders should clearly cherish trust as the core of democratic living and legitimacy.

Abdullatif’s paper about Arab women’s participation in the current political transformation brings to mind two interrelated historical junctures in the history of Arab women’s participation in the struggle for liberation. First, the participation of Algerian women in the revolution against French colonialism was conceived as an indispensable step towards women’s emancipation and equality in the new society after liberation (Jayawardena 1986). Regrettably, when the revolution was over, freedom

fighter Algerian women were confined back to their traditional domestic roles in a male dominated patriarchal society. Second, Palestinian women grass root involvement in the first Intifada in 1987, marked an articulated Arab women’s feminist agenda in which they argued for the integration of both nationalist and feminist discourses (Abdo 1991, Hasso 1998). Palestinian women Intifada activists vowed that they will not accept to repeat the fate of their Algerian sisters and that they have already learned the lesson from that experience (Abdo 1991; Peteet 1991). Unfortunately again, when the “Oslo” agreement -- with all of its implications of set-back for the Intifada and national cause – resulted in yet another male dominated semi-political system, Palestinian women’s seminal achievements during the Intifada were compromised once again (Makkawi & Jaramillo 2005).

In both Algerian and Palestinian women’s experiences, women’s participation in the public space – which after all is a male dominated space in a patriarchal Arab society – was accomplished through their active involvement in the national liberation struggle. Arab women’s political involvement in Abdullatif’s study (Libya and Egypt) were able to venture into the public space within the intensified actions of the Arab Spring through the internet as a “virtual public space” which was creatively utilized by activists in these countries. The question remains, however, for current day Arab women political activists through the unfolding developments of the Arab Spring to “learn the lesson” and avoid the unfortunate fate of their Algerian and Palestinian sisters in previous cases of the national struggle?

Regardless of their sharply different ideological underpinnings, there is a striking parallel resemblance between the vast majorities of the post-independence Arab regimes (with all that is imbedded in their continuing dependency on their previous colonizers) on one hand, and the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe until the early nineties of the twentieth century. Both groups of regimes would be safely and fairly described as repressive and provide little space for freedom expression and political participation of their populations. Following the fall of the Berlin wall, a wide spread of mass protests mushroomed through the various Central and Eastern European communist regimes culminating in drastic regime changes in most of these countries with less than a year. Optimistic observers of the early days of the Arab Spring, predicted similar fate for the majority of the repressive Arab regimes. However, the mass protests and popular demonstrations that brought about the overthrow of both dictators of Tunisia and Egypt with relatively very few losses in human life, was contrasted with bloody civil wars in Libya, Yemen and Syria. With the growing controversy about Western direct or indirect involvement in the last three countries, one is pondering that the Arab Spring has not been “spring” after all. In contrast with the swift collapse of Central and Eastern Europe regimes, we cannot fully understand the quick demise of the Arab Spring as it could be by and large

defined by mass protests and demonstration as opposed to prolonged civil wars with rising numbers of human casualties.

Despite this shift in the means of protest, many countries around the world have been inspired by the early days of the Arab Spring. The paper by Estanque, Costa and Soeiro about the current wave of global mass protests inspired by the Arab Spring, with particular focus on the Portuguese case, recalls the widespread of the students' movement of the 1960s (Altbach 1989). In both cases, youth have been in the forefront of organizing and sustaining the struggle for democracy and political participation. But this youth leadership and youth inspiration alone, is not sufficient without our understanding of the material condition of relative deprivation (Gurr 1970) and economic exploitation. Certainly, as the paper reveals, the combination of repressive and exploitative local material conditions, together with youth energy and shared aspirations for a better future, facilitated by contemporary modes of communication (the internet), is a fertile mixture of conditions conducive for mass protest and demonstration that spread from country to another. In this case, the Arab Spring was only an inspiration.

The paper by Chryssochoou, Papastamou and Prodromitis considers the situation in Greece during the severe economic crisis the country is facing since 2010, and particularly in the midst of the very intense political mobilization in the final months of 2011 when the effect of austerity measures was growingly painful and the political mobilization of the Greeks was peaking. As the paper describes, the events in Greece are within the most dramatic of the Eurozone crisis. Both the Arab youth generation and the young Greeks, together with their young European co-citizens, are more educated and potentially more unemployed than older cohorts. But while young Arabs trust that fighting for democracy and pluralism will guarantee a future, young Greeks, as young Europeans in other Eurozone countries, are confronted with the limits of a future when democracy does not resonate with trust, participation and equality. The crisis in Greece and other Eurozone countries is not mainly the crisis of the sovereign debt but the crisis democracy and of the legitimacy of the balance between representative government and market economy inside the European Union.

In this paper, drawing on classical work in social psychological theory, Chryssochoou, Papastamou and Prodromitis explore the structure of reactions towards the crisis, from various forms of collective action to individualized solutions, and including depression. The design of the study considers the role of different predictors of these reactions such as people's actual financial position, sense of grievances, feelings of vulnerability and emotions towards the events. Results indicate that "financial threat should be taken into serious consideration when researching political participation in times of crisis. Moreover, sense of grievances is linked to more radical forms of action but also to depression. ... it is important to note that it is deprivation in relation to

others and not a sudden loss of income that lead people to react when facing a crisis."

The Open Space Technology used by Claudia Gross and Andreas Jacobs rests on the recognition that "the Arab-Islamic culture is very much based on the spoken word. ... Therefore, the Egyptian revolution itself was based on the desire to speak up." The project reported here takes into account that "[t]he desire to express themselves on topics like politics, religious diversity, social norms, gender and environment remains and seems to be increasing. It is channelled in arts, graffiti, jokes, songs, Facebook-pages, blogs and many other formats. No surprise, that since the revolution any format that provides opportunities to talk and exchange fell on fruitful ground." The idea that democracy rests on deliberation and debate among inevitably diverse opinions is at the core of classic political theories, such as the vision of Jurgen Habermas or Hannah Arendt. Open Space creates the conditions for this deliberative climate to emerge, clearly in tune with the cultural traditions of the South (and North) of the Mediterranean and the momentum resulting from the events in Tahrir Square.

Back in the late eighties, Ignacio Martin-Baró (1996) challenged social scientists to assume the responsibility of taking sides on behalf of the people, by recognizing the role that oppression and social injustice play on the well-being and freedom of both individuals and communities. This commitment is, we think, clearly assumed by the authors of the papers included in this issue – and fortunately so, as the result is a diverse and thought-provoking assembly of research and praxis that urges us to look for deeper, more complex and simultaneously committed research on the civic and political engagement and participation of young citizens across the world.

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## Review of the Book:

Brigitte Geissel, *Gefahr oder Ressource für die Demokratie?* ("Critical Citizens: Risk or Resource for a Democracy?")

Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2011  
ISBN: 978-3-593-39392-6

According to the theory of political system support, a political system and a democracy need the support of its members to persist. Critique towards the political system (political critique) is, therefore, seen as a threat to democracies. However, in the nineteen-nineties many scholars have abandoned this paradigm and have adopted the idea that political critique is a resource for democracies since critique can help to refine the political system. In summary, democracies need political support as well as political critique. Is this a contradiction? In her book "Kritische Bürger. Gefahr oder Ressource für die Demokratie?" Brigitte Geissel intends to untangle the two concepts: the concept of political support and the concept of political critique.

In the first chapter, the author rightly criticizes that political dissatisfaction has been used as an ambiguous proxy variable for political critique. Political dissatisfaction could be understood as a healthy inclination to question the political system, but also as a depressed withdrawal from the political system. Geissel suggests that in addition to the concept of political dissatisfaction the concept of political attentiveness should be included into the concept of political critique. According to Geissel, political attentiveness consists of the willingness to monitor the political process and of the willingness to intervene into the political process when considered necessary by the citizens. Unfortunately, she does not show how these two civic duties are correlated, although she merges them into the concept of political attentiveness.

By crossing the two concepts - political dissatisfaction and political attentiveness, Geissel classifies four types of critical citizens: 1) attentive-satisfied, 2) attentive-dissatisfied, 3) inattentive-satisfied, and 4) inattentive-dissatisfied. Although she develops this typology, she does not describe explicitly how the two dimensions are related on a theoretical basis. At the implicit level, however, Geissel hypothesizes that citizens get involved in the political process as long as they are politically attentive, regardless of their degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. In contrast, politically inattentive citizens withdraw from the political process, regardless of their degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

In the second chapter, Geissel examines the causes of political dissatisfaction and political attentiveness. Whereas political satisfaction is explained by the economic and democratic performance of the political system, political attentiveness is not explained by socio-demographic or by contextual variables. She concludes that political attentiveness is an independent core belief. Does this mean

that individuals are born either as politically attentive or inattentive citizens? From the perspective of political sociology, this may be doubted. Considering Geissel's estimations, one must rather conclude that her models are insufficiently specified to explain political attentiveness.

In the fourth chapter, Geissel examines whether an entity with many critical citizens is more democratic than an entity with few critical citizens. The author reveals that there is a positive relation between an entity with many critical citizens and the democratic level of the entity.

Based on these results, Geissel concludes in her fifth and sixth chapter that politically attentive citizens are a resource for democracies and she suggests that political attentiveness should be introduced into civic education.

Brigitte Geissel is one of the first researchers who intend to untangle the relation between political dissatisfaction and political critique by introducing the concept of political attentiveness. Even though her attempt to examine every aspect of political critique is commendable it also entails some inaccuracies. She gains, however, some new and interesting insights which advance the research on political critique.

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## Review of the Book:

Hristova Lidija and Collaborators, Political Identities in the Republic of Macedonia

ПОЛИТИЧКИТЕ ИДЕНТИТЕТИ ВО РЕПУБЛИКА МАКЕДОНИЈА,

Христова Лидија и др; , Скопје, Република Македонија, Универзитет „Св. Кирил и Методиј“ Институт за социолошки и политичко правни истражувања, 2011, 260pp.  
ISBN:978-9989-43-294-1

During the last two decades, the quality and the quantity of empirical research in the social sciences and in particularly in sociology in the Republic of Macedonia were determined by the changing patterns of available funding and by new research agendas. In the first instance, public resources were shrinking dramatically, in all areas of public services and provisions. This trend endangered the very existence of long established research institutions. Their functioning was basically conditioned by the capacities of researchers to obtain external funds. Safety belts were offered by numerous international organizations which were active in the country on various grounds. In their efforts to support the processes of nation and state building of the country, for internal and for regional stability reasons, they raised the demand for applicative skills of the domestic researchers. As a consequence, instead of concentrating on fundamental or developmental studies, researchers were writing various types of reports. Under such circumstances professional ethics requires us to identify, salute and articulate any signs which testify to the existence of academically inspired research. The work of Lidia Hristova and her collaborators is such an example.

Their book provides a readable and empirically supported account of how political identities are shaped and sustained within societal milieu of a developing country in transition (in economic and political terms) such as the Republic of Macedonia.

Theoretically the authors have made an effort to embed their research question and methodological approach into existing Western literature on political identities, reviewed in the first part of the book. Following that model, the fundamental question they have tried to answer is whether the existing and manifestly distinctive political identities (operationally recognized and studied via the citizen's political attitudes and values and their political party affiliations and support) are based on existing "social cleavages" (defined as social groups with distinctive interests, needs, consciousness and perceptions of the world).

Methodologically, the research questions are studied by utilizing content analysis and survey methods. Content analysis is used for profiling the ideological differences between one dominant left-wing and one dominant right-wing political party (within the two domain political blocs in the country, the ethnic Macedonian and the ethnic Albanian). The survey method is used for obtaining data on demographic characteristics, social origins, ideological positions and voting behaviors of

citizens. The obtained data is studied by descriptive statistics and a simple design of factor analysis.

The authors present the results of the empirical study in six interrelated themes in the second part of the book. The first chapter (by Lidija Hristova) studies the characteristics of Macedonian political pluralism; the second chapter (by Aneta Cekic) analyses the electoral programs of two dominant ethnic Macedonian political parties; the third chapter (by Bekim Kadriu) analyses the electoral programs of ethnic Albanian political parties for the 2008 elections; the fourth chapter (by Anica Dragovic) by using factor analysis studies the relation between the various elements of the socio-economic status and the party affiliation; the fifth chapter (by Lidija Hristova) analyzes citizens' values and political orientations; and the sixth chapter (by Eleonora Serafimovska) studies the political predictors and manifestations of the personal correlate of social conformism.

Within such a theoretical and methodological frame-work, Lidija Hristova as coordinator of the study summarizes the individual research findings by concluding that political party identities in the country are not based on structural grounds (socio-economic status) and interests. Political parties in Macedonia do not have a social basis (class or ideological) other than ethnicity. She argues that the classical distinction between the political left and the political right does not apply in the Republic of Macedonia. Rather, the dominant political identities are founded on the alternative divide between liberalism and conservatism, based on values and in particular on the national identity. This explains some of the most striking antagonisms in the Macedonian political arena between the "traitors" and "patriots", "communist" and "anticommunist". At the same time and in parallel with this, interpreting the survey research findings, Hristova concludes that citizens' party affiliation (even among the so called "loyal" voters) does not significantly correlate with their values and political orientations. The majority of citizens subscribe to the values of the left and support state interventionism and the welfare state (70%) and, at the same time, to values of conservatism (80%).

Summarizing the area specific findings, Hristova and her collaborators argue that in Macedonia, as well as in other contemporary democracies, the political projects of political elites shape the opposing political identities. This general conclusion is more a heuristic than an empirically tested statement and thesis. According to it, the professionalisation of politics, political marketing and

mediatisation of politics have become principal traits of political party identities. According to this, in Macedonia too the 'unchanged voters' change their votes stimulated by charismatic leaders and party leaderships which politicise differences. Yet, unlike in developed democratic countries, Macedonian society is a divided society with poor civic traditions, and it is for these reasons that the authors end the book by posing new questions about the future consequences of such kinds of elite intervention and political entrepreneurship.

Ilo Trajkovski  
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## Review of the Book:

Wing-Wah Law, *Citizenship and Citizenship Education in a Global Age. Politics, Policies, and Practices in China.*

New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc. 2011, 259 pages

Price: € 24.80

ISBN: 978-1-4331-0801-3

The author, Wing-Wah Law, is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Hong Kong and a distinguished expert in citizenship, citizenship education. He has been exploring the social and historical interrelation of social change, citizenship, and citizenship education in Mainland China. His research mainly focuses on the social changes in an increasingly globalized world. In fact, this book contains some articles that have been published in such international journals as *Cambridge Journal of Education*, *Comparative Education Review*, *International Journal of Education Development*, and *Teachers Colleges Record*. Thus through his logical adaptation and careful expansion, all the individual texts could coherently synthesize and integrate into the different parts of this book, in correspondence with the flow of discussion. Through reading this informative book, a clear and distinctive overview is revealed about the development of Chinese citizenship education in response to the social change and globalization occurring during the 20th century.

The terms of citizenship and citizenship education first appeared in 1912 during the Republic of China, however; the historical and cultural roots of those terms could be tracked back over two millennia to the Chinese imperial monarchy. Actually, imperial China refers to China from the first unification of the Chinese empire in the Qin Dynasty (221-206 B.C.E.) to the end of the Chinese monarchy (1644-1911 C.E.) by Sun Yat-sen in the 1911 Revolution. During the period of the 2000-year-long imperial system, Confucianism as the state-supported orthodoxy plays role in fostering and reproducing traditional Chinese citizenry. Subsequently, Sun Yat-sen's Three People's Principles, Chinese socialism, multileveled multidimensional citizenship education, and Chinese modern citizenry respectively witnessed social transition, development of citizenship, citizenship education in the response to domestic and external context over time.

The book consists of eight parts. The first part begins with the introduction of three broadly researched themes, globalization, citizenship, and citizenship education, which also plots the overall structure of the book and outlines citizenship and citizenship education in China. In the following 4 chapters, the author analyzes how the historical factors and social changes in domestic and international context influence citizenship and citizenship education in China. Generally speaking, Wing-Wah Law begins his analysis with Confucianism,

sociopolitical values in imperial China, and the historical root in pre-1911 China, then makes an exploration on different changes of Chinese citizenship from the Republic of China 1912-1949, to socialist China PRC (People Republic Communist), and ending with prosperous China post-1978.

Following that in Chapter 2, he argues that in pre-1911 China, the Chinese state adopted a mainly state-centric and "Confucianism"-oriented approach to citizenship and citizenship education with a view of consolidating the ruling class's leadership and interests, while maintaining social harmony in the monarchy. Then, whereas, the next chapter (Chapter 3) explores China's search for a modern citizenry between 1912 and 1949. It also explains that, in that period, the Republic of China attempted to identify and educate a modern citizenry. Meanwhile, the Chinese citizenship and citizenship education were offered and developed by the CNP (Chinese Nationalist Party) and the CPC (Communist Party of China) in their respective areas. On the one hand, both sides struggled for leadership on the field of Chinese citizenship education in the domestic contexts. On the other side, in correspondence with fighting for leadership, there was the ideological competition between capitalism and communism in the international context that affected the curriculum of citizenship education. As mentioned in the Chapter 4, with the founding of New China dramatic changes of socialist citizenship happened in the PRC under the CPC between 1912 and 1949. The author illustrates not only the basic elements of social citizenship, but also the continuities and changes of Chinese socialist citizenship in correspondence with successions of power within the CPC and socialistic government. Simultaneously the chapter also presents international relationship; the markets' role, the state' and people' relations to law, civil society, and Chinese culture. Tracing the changeable notion and versions of Chinese socialist citizenship in the period of Chinese nation building, the following section (Chapter 5) examines how these changes have been refracted and reflected in Chinese citizenship education. This part focuses on changes to the school curriculum's development; and presents its continuities and constant changes in the sequence of Mao's Era (1950-1970), Deng' Epoch (1980's), in the 1980s and early 1990s, and Post-Deng Era since 1990s.

The next section turns to investigating the role of cities in the development of citizenship in China, which particularly focuses on the shaping and reconfiguration of citizenship education in the global

cities or aspiring international centers.

Therefore, the 6th chapter gives two specific cases of aspiring global cities: Hong Kong and Shanghai. The chapter consists of an empirical study focusing on the students' perceptions of the cities' reorganization with regards to citizenship. Through the comparative study, the cases of Hong Kong and Shanghai show that local government can have different degrees of autonomy in addressing economic and sociopolitical problems and in selecting strategies to deal with their relationships with the nation-state and global forces. Meanwhile globalization extends intense economic, political, and cultural competition between nations and between cities into the field of international and regional events, particularly sporting events. Therefore, at the turn of the millennium, China began to host international events, such as the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and the 2012 Shanghai World Explosion of the later.

Thus, with reference to these two significant international events, the 7th Chapter focuses on the key role China's state plays in defining new notions of citizenship and citizenship education by promoting nationalism and nation-specific elements of citizenship education, while linking its people to an increasingly interconnected world. In the conclusion, the book closes with an open discussion of current events, and challenges that are confronted with fostering a modern Chinese citizenry. Presenting a theoretical framework for globalization, citizenship and citizenship education with reference to a dynamic and context-bounded social construction can be continuously implemented in a multi-levelled and multidimensional polity.

Aside from tracking the development of Chinese' notions of citizenship and citizenship education in the relation to the social changes and historical transition, the work actually owns several distinguishing characteristics. Firstly, the author takes China as a case study for interrelationship among historical development, social changes, citizenship and citizenship education in different periods with reference to transformations of international and domestic contexts. To exemplify such changes and to shed light on globalization and its effects the multidimensional and multileveled citizenship education he focuses on a significant international event that happened in China in the new century: the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Secondly, the author does not only provide a historical, cultural, social analysis of citizenship education in socialist China, he also explores the changes of citizenship's beliefs and the social effects of the dynamic national shift in socialist citizenship and citizenship education since 1949. Last but not at least, he makes a thorough inquiry of the current issues and problems existing in fostering and shaping modern Chinese citizenry in the globalized world of 21st century.

All in all, the book provides certain inspiration towards taking an empirical case study on the significance of hosting international events for later research on citizenship and citizenship education, simultaneously it makes a great contribution to the literature of globalization, citizenship and citizenship education.

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## Children In the Garden of Democracy: The Meaning of Civic Engagement in Today's Egypt\*

Keywords

Egypt, youth, civic engagement, revolution

### 1 Introduction

This is the second in a series of reports on the current wave of youth civic engagement in Egypt. Our goal is to offer an on-the-ground account of the unfolding political changes in Egypt from the perspective a small group of youths. Individual young people were selected by the second author in the first of his recurring visits to Egypt beginning one week after the resignation of Hosni Mubarak on February 11, 2011. Local contacts recommended individual youth to be interviewed, who then provided further introductions. Through this "snowball" procedure, the final group of youth (ranging from 8-12 depending on availability at the time of subsequent interviews) was selected strategically to include much of the apparent diversity among Egyptian youth, while at the same time being small enough to permit in-depth, repeated interviews with them over the unfolding course of the revolution. Specifically, the group (all in their 20s) included males and female Muslims and Christians from Cairo and Alexandria who were involved to varying degrees in the revolution—ranging from never being involved in demonstrations to constant participation (e.g., through sitting in Tahrir Square night and day during critical periods). They have been interviewed individually in English at approximately 4 month intervals since the initial contact in early 2011.

Our first report was based on the portion of the interviews in which the youths described their involvement in the demonstrations of early 2011 that led to the resignation of Hosni Mubarak. We viewed their comments in terms of a social-movement approach to civic engagement. These

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young people spelled out their grievances against Mubarak's government, the ideological outlook they shared on political reform, the opportunities that enabled their actions, and the organizational apparatus that made this momentous event possible (Barber & Youniss 2012).

This article is a reflective analysis of questions that have emerged in our unfolding research. We continued to interview these same youth over the past year and situated their evolving views first with our further exploration of Egypt's complex political situation and second with our knowledge of recent social scientific thought regarding civic engagement among youth. This triangulation leads us to consider three kinds of questions: 1) how to assess civic engagement adequately in a population of youth that lived under politically restrictive conditions; 2) how new definitions of active Egyptian citizenship are emerging; and 3) what these new definitions imply for engagement in the future.

### 2 Assessing Civic Engagement

The events of early 2011 caught the attention of scholars worldwide who study youth civic engagement. For the past decade, the bulk of research was focused on four issues: 1) the lack of engagement of young people in established democratic states; 2) the tendency of youth engagement to involve predominately members of higher social-economic communities; 3) the possibility that enmeshment of youth in social networking activity may detract from political engagement; and 4) attraction of youth to armed conflict and political violence in weak or failed states (Milner 2010; Goldstone 2011).

The initiatives taken by youth in Egypt fit none of these categories. They resemble more closely youth action during the 1950-60s civil rights movement in the United States, the 1960-70s anti-war and anti-nuclear movements in various European nations, and the series of uprisings and revolutions on behalf of democratic reform of authoritarian regimes that occurred in the former Soviet Bloc in the 1980s and 1990s (Collin 2007). Regrettably, those instances of revolution passed without much global attention and little scholarly study (with the exception of East Germany; Oberschall 2007; Opp & Gern 1993) and thus there is little from those key events to guide us.

The movement was unanticipated, even in Egypt. A survey of 15,000 Egyptian youth conducted by the Population Council in 2009 and first reported on in December 2010 assessed engagement in terms of self-reported voting, internet use, volunteering, degree of trust, and attitudes toward the government. The authors offered the following conclusion: friends and family... They do not invest time to learn

"Civic engagement in young people in Egypt is very weak ... Their social networks are limited to few more about the social and political issues from available media, in print, or online" (Population Council 2010, 147).

Only one month after the study's publication, on January 25, these characterizations proved to be misleading as hundreds of thousands of young people took public action at considerable risk, demanding the end to an oligarchic regime and the beginning of a new democratic state. The size of the demonstrations and the ability to sustain them in the face of counter-movements by the government required extensive organization and coordination among various networks and interest groups. These overlapping networks functioned together via communication linkages provided through the Internet. Thus, one month after findings of the 2009 survey were published, most of the elements in the report's conclusion were contradicted.

We do not fault the conduct of the survey for this misreading of the population. Rather, the problem more likely lies with the nature of and assumptions behind such surveys. Items such as voting and following current political news are standard in surveys of youth in Western societies that have established democracies in which voters are recruited and the media are unfettered from government control. This leads us to ask whether these items are useful for estimating the political orientation of societies with oppressive regimes, such as Egypt under Mubarak. For example, what value did voting have if results of elections were preordained? And why would young people follow news controlled and knowingly censored by the state?

A more telling criticism pertains to the assumptions that underlie this kind of survey. Behind any survey are assumptions about the conditions that would lead to the behaviors being measured. If the behavior in question is voting, then assumptions might be that everyone in the sample has an equal opportunity to vote and that each vote is meaningful to future political decisions and policy. If these assumptions are incorrect, then it is not reasonable to conclude that failure to vote signifies disinterest in or neglect of civic duty.

This is not an esoteric point but highlights the importance of decisions about measurement when assessing civic engagement. In the United States, for example, it is common practice to survey youth and use the findings to characterize behavioral and attitudinal tendencies of cohorts. One might call this "generation labeling" as youth born between certain dates are given names, such as GenX or Millennials, and then assigned proclivities such as "consumer oriented," "self-centered," "highly moral," "generous," and the like. These attributions are nearly worthless unless one knows the context and resources that might have led to the behaviors and attitudes being measured. For instance, affluent young people in the United States are bombarded with targeted commercial advertising that encourages them to be heavy consumers of material goods. It would truly be news if young people therefore were not consumer oriented.

A positive example of a survey of Egyptian youth that took account of resource availability and opportunity was also reported in 2010. The e4e (Education for Employment, 2010) survey sampled 1,500 youth and 1,500 employers including public and private educators, policy makers, and civil society leaders. The aim of the survey was to assess job and educational aspirations of young people in correlation with the educational and employment conditions in which they were living. By design, this survey sought to connect behaviors and attitudes of youth with the resources available to them. There would be little value if youth said they aspired to become physicians yet they had no opportunity for medical education, or to become computer programmers if they had no access to computers. It follows that there is value in the decision to assess youth attitudes alongside available education and employment opportunities.

The conclusions from this survey were quite explicable and realistic. The relative scarcity of youth with technical skills was not attributed to youth's indolence or preferences but to the outdated curriculum used in their schools. These data came from youth and employers; the latter noting that they have had to construct on-the-job internships to compensate for the lack of skills even among college graduates. It follows that youth are capable of acquiring such skills but that they are not typically provided with them by schools using antiquated curriculums.

This point is made well by Queen Rania of Jordan who sponsored the e4e survey. She argued that the way to predict the future is to shape it through education. Instead of attributing qualities to youth as though there were no context, she recommends that youth be educated for the qualities that are needed in the contemporary job market. She claims, "We are letting [youth] down in ill-equipped classrooms with untrained teachers ... with outmoded curriculums already obsolete in the modern marketplace." She then adds, importantly, "If I have learned one thing over the years, it is this: we can trust youth to maximize opportunities when they are presented" (Education for Employment 2010, 7). In other words, when youth are given educational opportunities, they typically respond by capitalizing on them. And, therefore, to assess their capacities more effectively one should consider the resources they are provided in education to succeed.

Another positive example that reinforces this point are the findings of analysis of youth's role in ending the Mubarak regime reported by Gerhart Center for Philanthropy and Civic Engagement at the American University in Cairo (Gerhart Center 2011). They began by mapping assets that enabled youth to become politically engaged. Instead of assigning attributes to youth in the abstract, the authors sought to connect behavior to the available resources. For example, in trying to understand how large, orderly crowds turned out and then were sustained, the report described youth organizations whose pre-Tahrir activities helped young people become critically aware of the circumstances that repressed their political potential and educated them

in the importance of their own civic engagement. A case in point was the non-government organization, For You My Country that offered community-level training for entrepreneurs and young people wanting to create their own NGOs. FYMY was established in 2002 and has a staff of 50 persons. Its founding principle was to teach youth that charity to the poor will momentarily eliminate deprivation, "...but that sustained civic engagement and strategic social development ..." have the potential to eradicate poverty (Gerhart Center 2011, 17).

In addition to the substantial experiences young political activists had over the years in organizing for political change (El Mahdi 2009), the above examples reveal that an enabling basis for the demonstrations in early 2011 was laid down by programs that gave youth experience in taking active steps to change the society around them. Shehata (2008) has provided a complementary analysis of organizing experiences and sensed that a decade of activism, spurred by the second Intifada in 2000, might bring about a new mobilization of Egyptian youth. This prospect was based on several factors. The decade of activism took place outside existing political parties, was non-ideological and inclusive of diverse outlooks, and was supported by use of information technology which broadened communication and allowed efficient organization.

This last point was confirmed in a telling way by Wael Ghonim, who documented the Internet campaigns that were focused on Khaled Said, a young Egyptian who was tortured and killed by the security police in 2010. During the second half of that year, the Internet was used to create networks of activists who gained practical experience with public demonstrations by participating in vigils to honor Said and shame the Mubarak regime (Ghonim 2012). These vigils provided youth with experiences of coordinating communication among social networks as well as with taking public stances against abuses by the security police and risking the negative repercussions.

To conclude on the first point, there are sophisticated ways to assess the civic engagement potential of Egyptian youth. They require that behaviors and attitudes not be viewed abstractly, but instead as grounded in and coupled with the proper enabling or impeding conditions. The assignment of attributes in the absence of contextual conditions can be a misleading exercise as was evident from the 2010 Population Council report. The youth depicted in that survey had little in common with the youth of Tahrir, the youth assessed in the e4e survey, the youth with multiple NGO experiences, or the youth who participated in Internet-instigated vigils described by Ghonim. Once conditions in terms of opportunities and resources are taken into account, a more realistic portrait of youth's potential for civic engagement comes into clear view. If one wants to estimate the political potential of Egyptian youth, one first has to understand and measure the resources and opportunities from which political behavior could arise.

### 3 A New Kind of Citizenship

The assessment of civic engagement also depends on assumptions about what a good citizen within a democracy is and how he or she should act. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) have shown that definitions of democratic citizens range from voting and obeying the law to working actively for equality and justice. Within democracies, there is legitimacy in these and other forms of citizenship.

Given the political events that have occurred in Egypt since 2011, it seems reasonable to ask whether people have begun to reflect on a contrast between the kinds of citizenship that fit the past and emerging concepts appropriate for the future. Although the future remains uncertain, no Egyptian can escape discussion about democratic reform, parliamentary elections, justice for killings and arrests, numerous decisions by SCAF, the role of Islam—the Muslim Brotherhood and the more rigidly conservative Salafist Al-Nour Party—and the writing of a new Constitution. It would be unusual if the broad public airing of these issues did not provoke Egyptians to consider seriously the kind of state they want and their relationships to it and to their fellow citizens.

Signs of change were already evident in the demonstrations that involved various citizen groups that previously might not have publicly interacted. Individuals from various social sectors and organized groups took part in large rallies to form a self-organizing whole. Individual but connected groups formed to take charge of communication, safety, sanitation, mediation of disputes, and so forth. In the process, generational, geographical, social, and economic boundaries were bridged through collective, collaborative action. Outside the context of the massive demonstrations, for example in cafes and during small social events, individuals began to speak openly about political views rather than keeping them private or restricting them to family and close friends.

Recent scholarship on citizenship may be helpful for understanding the direction in which Egyptians' concepts of citizenship could be headed. As noted in the Gerhart Center's 2011 report and Shehata's and El Mahdi's documentation, many young Egyptians already had experience operating in civil society organizations and networks that extend well-beyond family and close friends. They acquired experiences of acting collectively without top-down management in dealing with creative media, entrepreneurship, volunteerism, and human rights organizing and education. Abu-Lughod documented impressive self-organizing capacities among youth in Upper Egypt prior to and during the early months of the revolution (Abu-Lughod 2012).

These activities may be understood in terms of Elinor Ostrom's "self-organizing and self-governing forms of collective action" (Ostrom, 2009). Her Nobel Prize winning work has shown that people around the globe have the capacity for managing their affairs productively without intervention from government or other formal institutions. She has

studied ways in which individuals come together to manage fisheries, forests, and other common resources which might otherwise be exploited in the classic “tragedy of the commons” scenario. Her major finding is that pure market competition vs. government management is only one way to model the situation. She has documented a third possibility that occurs when people choose to deliberate with one another about sharing common resources for mutual benefit and then create rules for managing resources for mutual gain.

Peter Levine (Levine 2011) has built on Ostrom’s work to argue that we should not be blinded by three decades of political rhetoric that disjunctively pitted government regulation against free market activity. When limited to this either-or model, people become either voters or consumers. Lost in the process is the view that people can be “co-constructors of systems of rules and norms” to guide their own affairs (Levine 2011, 9). He emphasizes that citizenship often entails that people interact within networks, deliberate about issues, and plan strategies of action, both as individuals and as members of organizations. The result is “politics on a human scale” with emphasis on communication, trust, and collective cooperation.

Danielle Allen (Allen 2004) offers another perspective on this theme. She designates the 1954-65 civil rights struggle in the United States as a threshold event which altered understanding of people-generated politics. As the civil rights movement played out, forms of human relationships sprung to public awareness so that people saw themselves in different ways. They began to comprehend that benefits accruing at large to the middle class white community were contingent on sacrifices made by the African-American community. They became aware of the segregated system and its effects on reproducing a society of inequality, in turn affecting the ways by which individuals, as members of communities, were able to envision their own acquisition of or limitation towards different means and measures of success. Once this reciprocal relationship became apparent, a choice had to be made either to continue in an asymmetrical fashion or to acknowledge the possibility for a more symmetrical reciprocity. Selection of the former would result in maintenance of racial segregation while choice of the latter would lead to a “consensually based political community” inclusive of everyone.

Along with Ostrom and Levine, Allen recognizes that an inclusive form of democracy must be continuously renewed. There is no pretense that all people are alike or that literal equality can be achieved. The goal, instead, is to keep striving for a kind of wholeness guided by communication, equitable treatment, and trust that others will reciprocate.

At the time of writing, Egypt’s political future remains uncertain. Will Egypt revert to oligarchy and paternalism? Will Egypt become a religious state, a secular democracy, or some mixture? We have no answer, but in this brief discussion of citizenship we will use interviews from young Egyptian activists to

suggest the relevance of this thinking to Egypt’s current political evolution. As with civil rights in the United States 50 years ago, in 2011 Egyptian citizenship might have crossed a threshold which closed the door to the past and opened the path to a new future. At the very least, many Egyptians have had opportunities to glimpse a new kind of polity in which citizens can construct their political relationships in a context within which government ensures and encourages principled fairness.

Evidence that this new vision is emerging comes from interviews with our sample of youth. We begin with what they said about conditions before the revolution. In February 2011, as the revolution was unfolding, Omar, a human rights worker, noted that the population was intimidated by being under constant threat of arrest for public statements against the government. An example he used was that one could not have a harmless conversation in a café without fearing that the stranger at a neighboring table would later haul you into his office for interrogation. Political conversations were undermined by what most of our sample described as a culture of corruption in which people with power exploited those with less power.

By July 2011, the youth in our sample noticed a dramatic shift. Mohsen, also a human rights worker, observed: “Now people are talking about military courts. People are talking about civilians’ rights... about the system, the regime. How we need to get the judicial branch to be independent... People are beginning to believe in principles that match their values.” He added later: “Now if you have a point of view and I dislike it, I will say, ‘OK, you are on the opposite side of the revolution,’ and you will say the same to me... We grew up in a system without a chance to debate. We need to learn how to talk, how to dialogue... We exchange opinions. We are like children in the garden of democracy.”

Dina, a Christian human rights educator, made the point about open discourse this way. “We are now more aware... This is not the upper-middle class; ‘we’ is everyone. ‘We’ is the taxi driver. ‘We’ is everyone. It is really impressive. Now when you sit in the taxi and you pick up a conversation with the taxi driver there is depth that wasn’t there before. And there’s interest in what’s happening.” The same before and after perspective was expressed by Kholoud: “Whatever I [previously] thought I just kept to myself. I use to think [about] what is right, but silently. Now I am not silent anymore.” Omar, several months after his initial expression of fear, described the change: “We didn’t know before that we [could] do it. Now we’re free; everyone can talk. Everyone can organize themselves... Before you avoided people; you never talked. But now I... go and talk.”

The same spirit of public discourse in which potent ideas are exchanged was expressed as well in November during the week of the long-awaited elections. Mohsen said: “I was discussing [politics] with a lot of people; I didn’t know one of them before. We discussed the election, the candidates, the process. It was the first time to have this kind of conversation in a café... [Everyone in] the café was



discussing these issues. People are ready [to listen]. They are flexible. If you use good arguments, you could convince them." He also recalled a conversation with a taxi driver that grew into a vigorous debate about the Emergency Law which essentially gave security forces unrestrained power to arrest and detain. Once Mohsen explained the manifest abuses of the law, the taxi driver said, "I don't know all these things you said. But now I'm against the emergency law." Aly stated succinctly: "People are free to speak out. Before, they were not allowed to talk [about] government oppression."

For Aly, the entire political system was now open to public debate: "How are we going to establish institutions? What is the role of the state? The relation between the state and the masses? The social order?...We are fighting about an Islamic or secular state; it is more important to ask how this state is going to perform." Mohsen, too, saw discussion about the system as a new possibility. He recounted that an old man congratulated him and his generation by saying that because of what they did "we can have a conversation about the vote [instead of being restricted] to talk about football." Mohsen added: "The next step is to start to talk about the constitution... talking about if we need a presidential system or a parliamentary system, how we choose government, how we [ensure] laws...as we go forward."

In summary, activists that were interviewed said that before the revolution they were "walking beside the wall," meaning that they cautiously watched what they said as they warily traversed daily interactions with strangers. This metaphor also means that by staying near the wall, they were succumbing to the government's insistence that it alone decided political and economic affairs. After the revolution, the activists interviewed said they had moved into the center where they actively participate in politics instead of harboring views privately. In the center, they were engaging with others. They felt they could now take up "serious" matters and topics of "depth." Even strangers now felt free to express political perspectives to one another. They are willing to listen to arguments, to try to change the minds of others, and to change their own minds.

A new kind of relationship was emerging among Egyptians. They trusted that by stepping away from the wall, they would not risk detention by security police, and instead participate in the re-making of society. This shift to self-organizing interaction was summarized by Kholoud: "[We] now feel secure. People have changed. People were sleeping by one another [during the demonstrations] and nothing bad happened. [We did not need] police or the security force. Nothing [bad] happened. [We experienced] social solidarity. If you have a bottle of water, you share it with everybody." Clearly, the bottle of water could represent an idea and "sharing" refers to exchanging views in a spirit of political collaboration with one's fellow citizens.

#### 4 Building a Democratic Polity

Within a democracy, civic engagement can involve working to create and sustain institutions as well as opposing and reforming structures. Media accounts since Mubarak's resignation have been focused on opposition to the regime which held power for three decades and to the culture of oppression that fostered relationships of corruption and mistrust among ordinary citizens. Many of these accounts also portray an uncertain population waiting for decision makers to determine its fate. But if our sample of youths is to be believed, people are not standing by idly. Rather, there are signs that some engaged youth have turned from revolution to the task of constructing a new people-driven democracy to replace the former system. The point of this third section of our paper is to describe the forms of engagement that illustrate youth perspectives and actions leading to this goal.

The interviews reveal a surprising level of realism amongst highly idealistic youth. In July 2011, Kholoud observed, "it's not yet a post-revolution. It's still [an ongoing] revolution. There is no revolution on a date [at an appointed time]. It's not a matter of days, or weeks, or a couple of months. It's like the French Revolution that went on for ten years...It's really still on the very start." What do these youth expect to unfold with time? According to Aly, "We need the time to develop political parties. Please, we need to build structures; [to develop] natural leaders who [will rise] from their own districts." He added, "for new political parties, you need...years. We need time to build structures."

Mohsen reflected, "We started the revolutionary process six months ago but the philosophy of the regime is still there. It's in the normal [Egyptian's mind]. We get it in school. It's [in the] relation between the people who are ruling us and [in us] as citizens. It's about how you deal with me...It's about the culture." He continued, offering a glimpse of the task ahead: "we have to work to make civic education for people all over the country." He then used the metaphor of planting seeds in agriculture. "We plant the land and then get a yield in two or three years... If this process is successful the values will come from the people. We need to educate people. Maybe it takes years. I think it will succeed in the end." Aly offered comments similar to Mohsen's: "Calling the military council to step down will not help the cause. Now we have to call for real change. How are we going to establish institutions? How are these institutions going to function?"

Not only do these activists see the situation in realistic terms, but they see their generation's engagement as key to a democratic future. In this regard, they view themselves as committed and engaged citizens. Omar said, "we are about change happening. We reached the minimum level... against corruption, people who stole our shirts for thirty years. We are building for the [future] the next youth [who will follow us]. This is more difficult than convincing the [older generation]... I don't think anyone is feeling satisfied, that we [can] now relax."

Aly added, "We have serious problems on different levels that need to be transformed. Just giving some 'pain killers' wouldn't work... I mean we are speaking about revolutions so just take your time and work on. Work on the issues; deepen your strategy. Allow yourself to develop more tactics and to understand the causes in a much better way." Later he elaborated, "The World Bank is telling us that we are fine, that everything is perfect... It's mathematics and economics. But you have to deconstruct these [data] and understand what they mean."

Mohsen poetically suggested that, "We are like children in the garden of democracy. We have a whole society who are like children in the garden...Children want to learn by doing. If you tell them this electricity is harmful, they will burn their finger by experiencing [it]." Elaborating on this, he used his own future as an example, describing that he would one day be a grandfather narrating stories to his grandchildren: "I'll tell them stories about me and my generation. If we succeed in this revolution, we would be like the first [founding] fathers of society. Every society has its first fathers. They place the first stone, take the first step to make a democratic society."

In reviewing the interviews from our sample, we noted a frequent and explicit commitment on behalf of the activists to their nation's future. Instead of viewing themselves as superiors leading the masses, they saw their actions as a means to awaken a democratic spirit within their fellow citizens. In Aly's words, "This revolution was horizontal, not top down." Nearly every individual in our sample expressed belonging to the social mass and, moreover, believing their actions were contributing to Egypt's history and future. Dina expressed: "I think many of us have nationalistic feelings. We are attached to this country one way or another. But it has always been frustrating to be attached to Egypt ... We live in different continents while living in the same city. People lead very different lives. They come from very different social backgrounds, social classes, economic classes." But when people stood together against the old regime, she described, "It was beautiful. It just felt beautiful."

Alluding to the bombing of a Coptic church which stoked tension between religious groups to make a similar point, Kholoud noted: "It was really tragic. I was crying every day. But the people surprised me again. I have faith in the people. Every time I feel [the revolution] is coming to an end...something happens that brings new energy." In this case, Egyptians came out to demonstrate in support of religious tolerance. Describing the demonstration, Kholoud said: "It was really hot, people were tired, but they continued to sit in. When you think things are getting out of control, something happens and then you know why you invest [trust] in people. Not in political parties, not anything other than the people."

## 5 Conclusion

There is no standard or best way to assess civic engagement among youth. Throughout this paper we

have tried to show different sides of young Egyptians' engagement. Our general thesis is that engagement cannot be approached merely as an abstract concept, but needs to be analyzed in conjunction with both enabling and impeding socio-political conditions. Using this framework, it is clear that the demonstrations which led to President Mubarak's resignation opened new paths for social and political action for Egyptians. When people operated in a context of corruption and authoritarian control, relationships between individuals were marked by wariness and distrust. Individuals hid their ideas from public scrutiny, keeping them private or within a restricted circle of close friends and family. The revolution enabled new forms of public discourse, and as people began to express ideas publicly, feelings of trust became formed even between strangers and when disagreements were likely.

In making these arguments, we have drawn primarily from the youth of our sample who were socially conscious and politically engaged prior to the revolution, whether in human rights education or reform-oriented civil society organizations, and who participated actively in the demonstrations. Concentrating on such youth was important because they are the ones likely to lead and train their peers through the process of democratic political change. Despite their prior engagement, each individual was transformed by the power and efficacy of the revolution. And, as illustrated above, their awareness of the real hindrances, struggles, and actions to be taken has matured.

The initial euphoria that came with Mubarak's resignation has become a more sober realization that if the revolution is to succeed, public discourse must be accompanied by civic education. Many have become aware, painfully, that the ways of the old regime are etched deeply into Egyptian society and that it will take time for them to be replaced. Nevertheless, the revolution has provided a sense of individual and collective efficacy in no longer permitting the young activists to be abused by leaders' self-interest, corruption, and brutality. These youth have faith that the population can move forward with the help of strong institutions that replace those of the previous generations. This is a powerful outlook insofar as it leads to and sustains these young people's own engagement for the sake of a new democratic Egypt.

Finally, we wish to present two observations from a broader interpretation of the interviews we conducted. First, it is essential to point out that there are many voices among Egyptian youth. Our conversations with youth, who, unlike those we have described above are not political activists, both support and complicate the interpretations offered throughout this article. In terms of support, all youth with whom we spoke were unequivocally in favor of the revolution. For example, Sayed, a 27-year old from the Giza suburb of Cairo, did not participate in any demonstrations. Sharing the attachments of his family he was sympathetic to some degree to Mubarak. Despite this, he was thrilled by the success

of the initial phase of the revolution and more so than any of the other youth we interviewed elaborately extolled the grand history of Egypt and the various ways in which the regime had defiled that cherished identity. He phrased the permanence of the change Egyptians have undergone through the revolution in the following way: "Nobody [can] come to get our throne now."

However, Sayed has been very unsatisfied with the way political activism has preceded. Like many youth who approached us in Tahrir Square just weeks after Mubarak stepped down, Sayed feels that the revolution is "killing Egypt." He and generations of his family work in the tourist industry and they have felt the economic consequences of the revolution severely. Beginning with our first interview with Sayed in March 2011 and in every meeting thereafter, he expressed frustration: "So, what do you need?" he asks, referring to the protesters in Tahrir. "All Egyptian people now need to stop. We made our revolution successful, it's ok. We got our president in a jail, it's ok. His son is in a jail, it's ok. His wife now is very old . . . all the thieves people from the old system, now [are] in a jail." Sayed does not underestimate the value of mass protest at Tahrir. Indeed, he continued his statement by saying that if the new president were to resemble Mubarak, then "It's back to Tahrir!" But for him, "What do we need now? You must work! If you love Egypt, you must work."

Thus, while it seems clear that at a broader level the revolution has facilitated an openness and trust among Egyptians, it is also apparent that there are real divisions that may complicate progress towards that democratic goal. With specific regard to youth and their commitment to change, Sayed's narrative reveals that there may also be substantial distrust among youth regarding what kinds of changes should be made and how quickly.

Our second point has to do with the volatility of this first year of the revolution. Above, we intentionally provided excerpts from the narratives of the youth we have been studying to illustrate the paper's central points about civic engagement and citizenship. We have come to know these youth well over the past year and have no doubt that their expressions of growth, maturity, commitment, and patience are authentic. However, these inspiring and promising comments on real change occur within narratives that are otherwise replete with frustration and disillusionment; and, it appears, this is increasingly true. In the most recent interviews in March 2012, each individual described him- or herself as very depressed and tense.

We provide this sobering portrayal not only to be true to the lived experience of these young people, but to illustrate points made above about the dependency of democratic change on enabling conditions. Crucially, all of the activists indicated that their depression was a function of their perception that no real change in the fundamental conditions has been achieved. This was born out in the timelines of the first year of the revolution that we had them draw during the most recent interview. Invariably, those timelines can be described as

"tragic" (that is, with a systematically downward slope).

On one hand, despite deeply disappointing moments – ranging from the increasingly abusive behavior by the military to criticisms by peers or adults that call into question the youths' motives – these youth are still able to articulate commitment to principles of citizenship and democracy. On the other hand, we have to acknowledge the uncertainty in the durability of these transformations. They appear to be highly sensitive to fluctuating conditions. Despite those ever-changing conditions, the youth continue to demand respect, trust, and inclusiveness as fundamental to their movement.

Perhaps one future indicator of their growth will be the degree to which the young activists are able to adapt to changing political structures. For example, while lecturing Aly and his compatriots to abandon the Tahrir protests after the November events in Mohamed Mahmoud Street (during which Aly was shot in the face), his cherished mentor, a noted professor and political activist, advised them to adapt to current realities. Anticipating the completion of the parliamentary elections that began that very week, she told them that mass protests at Tahrir would no longer be useful. Rather, they should begin visiting – daily if needed – the offices of the newly elected officials and demand their action on behalf of meaningful reform (Barber 2011).

Egypt has moved forward in establishing new political structures by electing a new parliament and a new president. Given that virtually no youth are among the new leadership, it remains important to understand how youth will adapt their attitudes and methods of engagement to align with prevailing realities. Or, should the new structures continue to violate the self-respect and dignity that Egyptians reclaimed through the revolution, perhaps it will be "Back to Tahrir!"

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## Endnotes:

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## Amna Abdullatif

### Voices of Women in the Arab Spring

This paper attempts to analyse the new and exciting times occurring currently in the Middle East. I will be examining the role of women during the Arab Spring by taking a community psychological approach, by assessing the issues of marginalization, concientization, and empowerment presented by the media articles under analysis written by female Arab journalists, bloggers and activists. I aim to find analyses in Islamic feminist literature which deal with the issue of religion, gender, and patriarchy within specific cultural and religious backgrounds.

#### Keywords

Feminism, Islamic feminism, Arab spring, community psychology, media, social networking

#### 1 The Arab Spring

'Arab Spring' is the term generally used in the media in reference to the turbulent and yet exciting changes currently occurring in the Middle East. The recent uprisings were initially sparked by a young Tunisian fruit seller, Mohammed Bouazizi on the 17th December 2010. In sheer desperation over unemployment, corruption and lack of freedom of speech afforded to Tunisians under the despotic rule of president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, Bouazizi set himself alight and died as a result of his injuries. This tragic incident led to surges of Tunisians coming out in huge protests against the corrupt regime. Despite an initial crackdown, the uprising in Tunisia led to the ousting of the Tunisian president and calls for democracy and free elections.

These events in Tunisia sent shock waves across the Arab region, and Egypt was the next country to hold a popular uprising. This was undoubtedly assisted by what has become known as the "Facebook generation" (Springborg 2011). Young protestors began an online campaign that encouraged thousands of Egyptians across the whole country to come out to protest in desperate hopes of achieving the same outcome that the Tunisians were able to bring about. The instant access to information provided by the internet and the vast numbers of people with access to mobile phones, allowed the popular uprising to spread like wildfire. Once again, despite an initial brutal crackdown, President Hosni Mubarak was forced into exile (Tadros 2012).

A Facebook campaign began in Libya, which culminated in huge demonstrations in the city of Benghazi on 17th February 2011. However, what is less well known perhaps is that initial protests in Benghazi were started on the 15th February by the mothers and families of 1,200 men who were brutally massacred by machine gun fire in the Abu Saleem prison in 1996 in Tripoli. These mothers had come out in protest after the lawyer they had

appointed to ensure that those who killed their sons and husbands were brought to justice was imprisoned by Gadaffi forces the previous night.

This led to a general uprising in Benghazi which, following the usual pattern, was subjugated by a brutal crackdown. As Gadaffi prepared for a final brutal assault on the city of Benghazi, a United Nations resolution, 1973, was immediately implemented by NATO in support of the Libyan revolutionaries. Gadaffi was killed by rebel forces in the city of Sirte where he was hiding out on Sunday October 23rd 2011. Celebrations ensued to announce the liberation of Libya, which were held in Benghazi, called the cradle of the revolution.

#### 1.1 Feminism

Feminism has fought for the rights of women throughout history, to allow women's voices to be heard and to have political and social relevance, so that attitudes as well as laws can be changed to support women. As Conrad and Peplau (1989, 381) state, 'feminism is both an ideology - a set of beliefs and values about women and gender relations - and a social-political movement for social change'. However, there are differences between different types of feminists and how they work towards ensuring that women are heard.

Pre-1980, issues related to feminism were subjected to a world-wide generalisation that assumed that all types of women's activism against oppression was the same and that women everywhere faced the same problems. This premise was put forward by western feminists who assumed that their political aims were universally applicable to all women and that oppression against women was common to all. This assumption of commonality failed to take into account the many divisions and differences apparent when feminist issues take into account race, class, religion, nationality, region, language and sexual orientation (McEwan 2001).

These divisions were not previously considered and feminism in general was based on 'Western' theories that were often not applicable in other settings, divisions and differences were neither acknowledged nor anticipated. Today, feminism is viewed not only as an ideology, but also as a movement for social change, and this has been

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highlighted by the role of women in the Arab Spring.

Feminism in relation to social change is a political movement where the main aims are the improvement of women's lives and to bring gender equality into every aspect of public life. However, there is no doubt that there are many individual definitions of feminism and this is often reflected in the actual commitment to social activism (Conrad & Peplau 1989). This issue of diversity and difference amongst women is clearly illustrated in Peplau and Conrad's (1989, 385) quote:

'As some have put it, the notion that there is no universal man, implies that there is also no universal woman - women's lives and experiences are varied'.

Feminists themselves often differ and fail to agree on certain aspects of feminism and often have rigid views based on their own experiences and perspectives which take no account of diversity of experience and opinions. Western feminists can often view 'their' feminism as being a universal view that all women should follow and agree with. In recent years, this has been questioned by feminists from other cultures (Burman 1990).

Black feminists view the notion that 'women fitted into a unitary group' to be simplistic when considering their other struggles (Davis 1992; Bjavani & Coulson 1986). The argument put forward by black feminists is that since the main objective of feminism is to emancipate all women from the constraints placed upon them, then feminist ideology should not only theorize the similarities found amongst women, but should also include the differences between them (Burman 1990).

This same argument can also be put forward by feminists in the Islamic world who are often perceived as oppressed by western feminists without consideration for the differing and diverse set of challenges that Muslim women face in their countries.

It is inevitable that women within devalued groups tend to question any negative inferences towards their group. There is a tendency for such groups to try to redefine feminist ideologies that view their differences as being problematic. It has often been the case that feminists who choose to define specific social dilemmas purely from their own personal viewpoint are often completely removed from the actual problems they are attempting to define. It could even be argued by some that such disregard for, and ignorance of the issues faced by other groups of women, is actually just another form of oppression that needs to be addressed (Burman 1990).

What is important to note is that to women of other races and cultures, the issue of patriarchy was not of the utmost importance since they suffer oppressions due to race and class as well as gender, and therefore, their experiences as women were more complex and differed greatly from those of white Western women. Much like black women, Arab women's experiences differ greatly, and therefore what they want to challenge will differ when dealing

with a range of conflicting issues which surround them which will be under discussion.

## 1.2 Islamic feminism

Islamic feminist readings are an integral part of the process to enable an understanding of the issues facing Muslim women in the Arab world and elsewhere. This is often viewed as being 'paradoxical' and many Western secular feminists find issue with the very notion of 'Islamic' feminism, as they often view religion in itself to be patriarchal in nature and therefore inherently misogynistic towards women in general.

This view is also linked to the general perception in the West that Islam treats women badly, a view that is often encouraged by the press and media. This pervasive view of Islam propagated by the West and leapt upon by secular feminists is often a point of contention for many Muslim women. Many such derogatory viewpoints towards Islam's alleged treatment of women are fuelled by ignorance about the religion, culture, and customs. Katherin Viner (2000) refers to the use of feminism to gain political support as the 'theft of feminist rhetoric', to make women a cause for international politics.

Even so, for many Muslim women who perceive themselves as feminists, the labelling of Islamic feminism is problematic for them also. Asma Barlas comments about her own issues with being labelled an Islamic feminist by others and questions the whole notion of Islamic feminism:

'As Margot has defined it, Islamic feminism is a discourse of gender equality and social justice that derives its understanding and mandate from the Qur'an and seeks the practice of rights and justice for all human beings in the totality of their existence across the public-private continuum.' (Barlas 2004, 1)

The problem highlighted by Barlas (2004) is that even though the definition as given by Margot should mean all devout Muslims must, by definition, also be Islamic feminists, differing interpretations of the Quran means that opinions differ amongst Muslims and often Islamic practice is intertwined with cultural practices and the lines become blurred.

This issue of interpretation is one which many Islamic feminists have contended with. Many believe that the major issue with the perception that Islam is problematic for women and women's rights is primarily due to the interpretations which have limited the rights women have within Islam, and that this is quite often primarily due to the more strict and conservative interpretations of Islam that would appear to treat women as less than equals.

## 1.3 Islam and patriarchy

Barlas (2004) believes that the main reason the Quran is patriarchal is simply due to the fact that readings and interpretations of the Quran have

traditionally been undertaken by men who were living within an already existing patriarchal system where men were perceived as being dominant over women. Within this context, many of the traditional Quranic interpretations have been skewed to meet the needs of men, thus ensuring the continuance of male domination and culture.

One of the questions that needs to be answered - whether from a religious or a secular viewpoint - is who has the authority to interpret texts and which interpretations are then accepted within a particular society, who decides upon the nature of authority and how it derives its legitimacy.

Historically, Muslims have read the Quran and accepted the general view of scholastic interpretations that Islam is a patriarchal religion. However, in recent times, contemporary scholars argue that Quranic interpretations are related to who has read the Quran and in what context. Traditional conservative Muslims will always read the Quran with a patriarchal perspective that they feel comfortable with. For this reason they are unwilling to consider alternative interpretations because these threaten their traditional roles within society. As a result, customs and traditions become more entrenched in their restricted view of Islamic teachings and practices in order to continue with the traditional gender roles they are comfortable with, regardless of the rights of women granted to them in Islamic law.

Islamic feminism challenges these conservative, traditional interpretations of Islam and highlights the ideology of equality and liberty for all.

#### 1.4 Hybrid feminism

Ahmed-Gosh (2008) goes further in discussions regarding the limitations of secular and Islamic feminism and instead introduces us to a new form of feminism referred to as 'hybridized feminism', which presents an amalgamation of both secular and Islamic feminist viewpoints in an attempt to rid both of their individual limitations:

'Hybrid feminism could be the analytical tool to address women's issues as affecting them regionally and culturally. This flexibility is defined through women's real lives in their communities as dictated by their social norms and local and national politics. Such grounded reality of women's lived experiences varies not just from region to region but also rural through urban, class, tribal and ethnic identities.' (Ahmed-Gosh 2008, 102)

This new way of looking at women's issues and how best to resolve them by pinpointing them within the regional and cultural positions in which women live is vital in looking at the Libyan and Egyptian revolutions. Although these two countries are neighbouring, both are Arab, North African, and predominantly Muslim countries, the specific cultural and regional norms vary drastically. Even within those countries, cities are often perceived socially more open, whereas rural areas tend to be more

conservative in dealing with issues related to women.

In being able to understand the differences in women's needs and the issues which effect their daily lives, this form of hybrid feminism is a step forward from the often enclosed space of understanding provided by Islamic and secular feminists.

Charrad (2006) emphasises the importance of the multidimensionality of Muslim countries, and the cultures within them. It is important to note how different each individual country is and not to pigeon hole Muslim countries and women as one homogenous group who act, think, and experience the same culture in the same way. However, what Charrad (2006) does bring forward is that women are looking for change through the use of religion, in order to guide them and bring change.

#### 1.5 Politics of the veil

One other crucial way in which Muslim women are politicized is through the veil, which is an issue of contention across the Western world. According to Charrad (1998) the veil is often used to 'evoke images of passivity and subordination' which is often the problem between liberal feminist and Islamic feminists. However, for many Muslim women the veil, which is so often politicized and deemed negative, is for them a sign of 'resistance, protest, empowerment and entry into male space', as has become apparent during the Arab Spring. Women were standing side by side with men in protest, were camping out all night, which was culturally a taboo in the conservative Muslim countries, and its through the veil that these women were able to show resistance, not only to the changing government but also to all those who deemed Muslim women as silent and passive.

Abu-Lughod (2002), in an aptly named article asks the important question, 'Do Muslim women really need saving?'. She questions the 'obsession with the plight of Muslim women' in the West.

She notes how throughout colonial history women have been used as an excuse to justify the actions of ruling global powers. In her view '...the significant political-ethical problem the burqa raises is how to deal with cultural 'others'' (Abu-Lughod 2002, 786). The 'other' has been perceived a problem throughout colonialist history and literature, and the veil has acted as a means in which women in the Middle East have become mystified in the West.

It is important to understand the context that women's lives are being presented from, and to understanding the cultural, religious, and historical aspects related to them. This will guide our understanding in how women's voices have been presented during the revolution and what roles they played.

#### 1.6 Methodology

In this study I will be employing a multi method approach, using thematic analysis through the use of various mixed media articles found through the

internet using a qualitative approach. The use of a qualitative methodology allows a more in-depth investigation and analysis of the texts. Thematic analysis is used to bring out themes present in the documents under analysis.

The following articles, video transcript, and interview were chosen to be analyzed in this research:

1. Dalia Ziada transcript on video shown on vimeo.com in a British feminist blog called *The f-Word*

2. Eman El Obaidi, 'our logo' article, in a website called *Peace X Peace- Raising Women's Voices*

3. The Guardian article '*Libya will only become inclusive when women are given a say in its future*' by Farah Abushwaha is a Libyan-Irish writer and film-maker and a member of Women for Libya

4. Article printed in The Guardian and presented in Mona Eltahawys blog titled, '*These virginity tests will spark Egypt's next revolution*'

These texts were specifically chosen to have an all-female and Arab voice from the two countries under focus in the study, which are Libya and Egypt. These women are activists, bloggers, and journalists and present the voice of some women in the Arab revolution.

One reason the internet was chosen as a means to collect data for this research was the sheer number of sources available for this topic. The popularity of the internet during the Arab Spring sparked a huge interest to find out how useful the internet had become in pushing forward popular revolts, such as those seen in the Middle East, and understanding the role of women during these times.

These media texts will be approached using thematic analysis, which will enable me to pull out major themes which are present in the texts and which are important to the writer (Feredy, Muir, Cochrane 2006). Rubin and Rubin (2002) suggest that thematic analysis is important within research because themes are discovered during any analysis of data. However, despite its wide application, there is a certain amount of discussion as to what the definition of thematic analysis is and how to actually use it.

One approach, that was highlighted by Weber among others, is known as 'verstehen' or 'understanding'. The basis of this approach is to adopt an interpretive view of social and cultural events which is founded upon understanding (Hayes 2000, Gergen 1985).

According to Miller and Banyard (1998) the use of qualitative approaches to research follows the community psychology 'core values' in research methodology. This is primarily because it offers an opportunity to find out the 'why' questions of human life and behaviour, in order to gain a greater understanding of the experiences of others. These developments led to specific research into feminist psychology in the 1980's. The conventional norms of psychological methodology were questioned by feminists who placed greater emphasis on the

significance of human behaviour and experiences in psychological research and analysis. The foundations of the feminist proposals were that new research could be meaningful and rigorous without the previous need for dependence upon statistics to achieve academic recognition (Hayes 2000).

In order to give a 'voice' to the women who have written the articles as well as those they represent, a qualitative approach in methodology presents the researcher with ample opportunity to discover more depth within each piece analysed. In fact, Feminists recommend greater reliance on qualitative data techniques as a way to correct the biases of traditional quantitative methods. Qualitative techniques are seen as a way to encourage researchers to focus on the entire context and to be open to multiple, interacting influences. It also allows the researcher to be more spontaneous, altering the focus of observation as the situation changes (Peplau & Conrad 1989).

The themes which have emerged through the research have been based on a community psychology outlook in order to understand how the voice of women has been influential throughout the Arab Spring. Community psychology is the understanding of how individuals impact the societies in which they live. Themes which are discussed here and are of great importance to community psychologists include marginalization, social change, conscientization, empowerment and participation, the self and agency, gender roles and politics as well as looking at how women's voices are perceived through the internet and the media.

## 2 Analysis

During analysis of the articles certain themes were discovered which will be under discussion. A community psychological approach is presented in dealing with the themes which have arisen from the mixed media documents.

### 2.1 Marginalization

Marginalization is at the very centre of exclusion within society and prevents the fulfilment of full and active social integration on individual, interpersonal, and societal levels. This exclusion through marginalisation basically disenfranchises people, leaving them with little control over their own lives and circumstances, nor over the resources and services they can access (Burton & Kagan 2003).

In many cases, stigmatization within society can result in negative public attitudes towards those who are marginalized, which serves to further entrench them within the fringes of society. As a direct result of their forced exclusion from society, such individuals have few opportunities to make any form of social contribution. This inevitably leads to the invasive development of low self-esteem and self-confidence (Burton & Kagan 2003).



In the interview with a Libyan activist, Amani Mufta Ismail, where she is asked about the case of Iman Obaidi, who was brutally raped in Libya by Gaddafi forces during the conflict, she talks about the struggles for Arab women to discuss such a sensitive issue as sexual abuse:

'It's so hard for the Arabic woman to say that. It's not easy. Maybe there are thousands of Eman Al-Obeidi — not thousands, millions of Eman Al-Obeidi in the Arab world — but they never say that because maybe our traditions, our culture, our families, we can't say that.' (2011)

However, in many situations, people who are oppressed can also present great resistance and resilience which can open up opportunities to reclaim and reinvent their circumstances. For many individuals, exclusion and isolation with a denial of their basic, fundamental rights can push for a desire to remedy the situation and an improvement of circumstances (Kagan & Burton 2003).

The resilience shown by this young activist towards such a sensitive issue at such difficult times, is very revealing. She goes on to say that *'We are all Eman Al-Obeidi, not she, just she, but all of us, even me. I am Eman Al-Obeidi because we are sisters, we are all Libyans, we are all Arab, we are all human'* (2011). The resilience and support towards Eman Al Obeidi and the thousands of other women who have suffered during the revolution, as well as before and after, to sexual abuse has proved a new shift in subjects which have become important to discuss without the regular cultural stigma placed on them.

Liberation psychology involved the application of a rather different proposition which served to challenge gratuitous academism by looking towards the popular masses, or what has been referred to as 'the oppressed majorities' by Martin-Baro, for the truth (Burton 2003).

According to Burton (2003), people become marginalized within a society or community because of the manner in which the society discriminates against them as a result of attitudes towards age, disability, nationality, ethnicity, sexual preference and of course gender. Within a feminist framework, it would be viewed that women in general hold a marginalized position within society and this is clearly depicted in the articles and blogs under discussion.

Eman Al Obeidi's story is an emotional look at the way women were treated during the revolution in Libya, where there was systematic sexual abuse of women by Gaddafi's forces to bring shame and dishonour to families within the religiously conservative country. She says *'It's so hard for the Arabic woman to say that. It's not easy.'*

Also in Mona Eltahawy's article on the virginity tests, which were forced to shame women by the Egyptian police, it shows the extent to which women's sexuality is used to keep them marginalised and silenced within society. She urges that *'this must be our moment of reckoning with the god of virginity. The rage against the military must also target the*

*humiliation brought by those tests, regardless of who carries them out.'*

In Dalia Ziads transcript she also mentions the struggle they've had with male protesters after the revolution, she describes 'the reaction from the male protesters was very bad' when women came out fighting for their rights in Egypt.

## 2.2 Social change/Process of change

Much of the work involved in community psychology is concerned with how to improve and bring about social change in order to initiate positive advances with regard to social deprivation, social disadvantage, and social inequality (Kagan 2005).

The main aim of emancipatory action is to raise collective consciousness to provide participants with the means to identify specific problems. This involves the investigation of a core-existing social phenomena and explores the options for bringing about social transformation (Grundy 1987)

The main aim of community psychology is to examine and analyse how social problems impact on the individual and to encourage a focus on the positive aspects relating to both the community and the individual. There is a huge focus in community psychology with Rapport's (1981, 1984, 1987) ideas on empowerment, ensuring that people understood the reasons behind the very structural issues which were disempowering them, and how to overcome them. Although, many psychologists understand that many inequalities within communities are related to their economic well being (Prilleltensky 2001).

This is very apparent in the Arab Spring and the way that the population understood the reasons why they were disempowered by the regimes. Now that those brutal regimes have been dismantled, women continue to struggle to gain their rightful position in society, as the young activist Dalia Ziad found out when she decided to participate in a women's day in Egypt. Her argument is, *'we want to be equal, we want to end, we want us to get our dignity as women, not only as Egyptians'*.

According to Hercus (1999, 41) *'feminist activism, whatever form it takes, signifies anger and reveals a deviant identity'*. Although the Arab revolutions were not initially started within a feminist backdrop, the very rights that women have been asking for as a result of the revolutions, has made this a feminist cause in nature, which was fuelled by anger at the injustices and suppression of their rights.

However, it is important to note, as Makkawi and Jaramillo (2005, 51) state, that to these female activists *'it is equally important to emphasise their deep and unquestionable commitment to the national struggle in general'*.

As well as this, *'Many women's rights advocates in the Islamic world demand empowerment within a changing Islamic culture'* (Charrad 1998, 75). Although women are looking for change much like Mahmoods (2004) work in the Mosque movement in Egypt, many women are looking for it within their own culture and religion.

Moghadam (2005) discusses the role of 'trans-national feminist networks', which connect and organise women from a variety of countries beyond a national level in order to support the issues affecting them all. Both Egypt and Libya have similar issues affecting women and would benefit in working together in order to deal with the inequalities present.

### 2.3 Conscientization

The main issue with much of the information related to women in the Arab world revolves around letting others know what is affecting women. This is to educate others of the problems and dilemmas women face, at a national and international level.

Part of the work that the four journalists and bloggers under discussion here are doing is bringing across those issues in order to publicise them and raise awareness within the public realm in order to bring about conscientization by educating people through social networking sites and media outlets:

'...man [sic] as being who exists in and with the world. since the basic condition for conscientization is that its agent must be a subject (that is, a conscious being), conscientization...is specifically and exclusively a human process' (Freire 1974).

The rape and sexual assault of Eman Al Obeidi and the role of other women in supporting her plight is of great importance to making relevant changes and educating others about the plight of women suffering from these issues.

Similarly, Mona Eltahway's article on the issue of forced virginity tests on female protestors in the '*hope it would shame them back home*', (2011) gained a lot of media attention, unlike the sexual assaults that occurred in Cairo years before the Arab Spring, which wasn't mentioned in mainstream media even though it sparked a huge social networking campaign.

### 2.4 Empowerment/Participation

According to Zimmermann (1990) and Rappaport (1984) it is not difficult to describe the lack of empowerment one has. They note 'alienation, powerless, helplessness', as characteristics of lacking power, but that it is more difficult to provide a succinct description of empowerment as it differs so greatly for every individual. Research on participation was found to be beneficial to individuals' empowerment as people are 'learning new skills, gaining information, helping others, increasing social contact, and fulfilling obligations' (Zimmerman 1990, 171).

Abushwasha (2011) points out the need for women's involvements in the formation of a new Libya, '*Women are a beneficial and vital force in Libya's future. We must be openly and transparently included in discussions and supported to participate*

*at all levels. To neglect this is to dishonour the legacy of the brave Libyan men and women who have given their lives for basic human rights*' (2011).

These Arab women have found themselves empowered through the revolution, their voices have been heard and presented more widely across the internet and national and international media, and they have ensured that their roles as women are presented in the rebuilding of their nation.

We can clearly see in the interview with the young Libyan woman that the tragic incident involving the rape of Iman Obeidi has formed a relationship among women across Libya as 'sisters'; it gave them a cause to support in order to feel a sense of collective empowerment.

This is also the case in Egypt where the young activist Dalia Ziad talks about the community gathering together for the same cause on the same side to oust Mubarak from power. She remarks '*it was amazing what the Egyptian [people] has achieved in these protests. We never thought it's gonna turn into a real revolution when we first started it*'.

Nelson and Prilleltensky (2005), looked at how communities can work together in order to change the issues which oppress them. We can see in the Dalia Ziad transcript on Vimeo, that she brings across her excitement at the revolution and what she perceived to '*turn into something really big*' because of the numbers of people as well as the difference in the types of people who turned out to the protests. It was her realisation that it went beyond the cyber-activists and that '*it is the whole population is coming out*' (2011).

However, like many Egyptian women, she realizes that simply participating in these protests is not enough to change the situation of women in Egypt. Although these women felt empowered through their participation in the revolution, at the end of it there is still more that needs to be done in order for their voices to be valued and listened to in a legal and political context.

Dalia Ziad mentions the example of an Egyptian law which prohibits a woman from working outside the home if she is unable to 'balance' her home life with her work life and therefore her traditional role as a woman would be deemed more valuable for her than her life outside the home. As well as this, although Egypt has a very highly educated female population, Ziad mentions '*we have female judges in Egypt, but none of these judges, although they are highly qualified, none of them was invited for example to participate in the committee that helped moderate some articles in the constitution*'.

Rappaport's (1995, 796) work on empowerment and narratives suggests that through listening to the narratives of others it 'tells us not only who we are but who we have been and who we can be'. Often those who lack power have a narrative written for them by others. The experiences of Muslim women in the media tend to be written by often male Arab or Western journalists. Through the articles and blogs presented in this research, we are able to empower the voices of Arab women in allowing their

narrative to be presented.

Interestingly, Riger (1993), in her paper titled 'What's wrong with Empowerment', believes that the study of empowerment is heavily focused on the individuals sense of empowerment rather than the actual increases in power, thereby making the 'political personal'.

In some ways, the study of empowerment can mask the actual lack of power that marginalized and oppressed people within society have. Feeling empowered to make changes through social activism like the women under study are doing, and providing a voice for those who are in similar conditions highlights a problem, but can often have no effect in reality.

However, I would argue that this step in empowering individuals in order to make change facilitates bigger changes. In considering the Arab Spring, we can clearly see how communities and nations have come together to make drastic changes which would have never started had they not felt empowered to make change. Although women such as Dalia Ziad recognize that there is opposition towards their need to bring forward women's issues after the revolution, she still believes 'it's our time now to call for our rights, *it's our time now to say: we want to be equal, we want to end, we want us to get our dignity as women, not only as Egyptians.*'

## 2.5 The self/agency

According to Mahmood (2001), for any individuals to be considered truly free they must have freedom of choice as a prerequisite for that freedom and should not feel obliged to blindly follow what are considered to be the norms in any particular society. Mahmood (2001, 207) argues that 'individual autonomy' or individual freedom must occur through 'her actions' and '*...must be the consequence of her own will*' rather than of custom, tradition, or social coercion.'

However in arguing this, how does one know when an individual's actions accord to its own will and to what extent the tradition or social background of that individual plays a role in shaping the decisions they ultimately make? Gender identity is a permanent fact but that does not mean that it is resistant to change (McNay 2000). Many new ideas regarding gender view gender norms to be intrinsically unstable and are therefore susceptible to change brought about as a direct result of resistance and displacement (Butler 1999).

In the video transcript with Dalia Ziad she says, '*Nobody cared whether they are Muslims, Christians, whether they are men or women: during the protest women participated perfectly. They stood side by side by men, they faced this exactly like their colleague male protesters; they witnessed everything and participated effectively in everything*'. Even though women's place in society wasn't always so openly visible, during the revolution this changed.

In the interview with the young activist Amany Mufta Ismail, she also refers to the plight of

Eman Al Obeidy and describes her as the '*courageous one, she was the strong one. She said no to the people who do that, to Gaddafi's men - she has all the courage to that.*' She was courageous because there were many other girls and women in the same position as her, '*There are other girls in Benghazi that got kidnapped, at Ajdabiya they were kidnapped, at Brega, at Misrata*', and she stood up and allowed people to see what was happening and to take note.

For many Muslims, men and women, an individual's understanding and comprehension of Islam and the directives of the Quran are a vital and positive influence on their sense of worth as a human being. Muslims often feel and gain a positive strength of their own self-hood through their understanding of their religion (Barlas 2006).

As a definition of the self, or agency, Tajfel (1978) said that social identity can be considered as how the individual view of 'the self' can originate in the membership of, and insight into, a social group in addition to the emotional importance that comes as part of that membership. Abushewsha comments in her article: '*Libyan women have created an intricate web of mutual co-ordination, and - whether resident in Libya or forced to live in exile - have been involved in nearly all aspects of the nation's uprising.*'

The manner in which a social group was initially formed and the resultant status achieved by the group has a major influence on the affective commitment to that group. This inevitably means that when individuals have self-selected their membership to a particular social group or when the group is afforded a particularly advanced status, then the group commitment is generally strong and more visible to others. (Kortekas & Ouwerkerk 1999) This, I argue, is perhaps why such a positive turn on Arab and Muslim women was undertaken in the Arab Spring.

## 2.6 Gender and politics

It would seem that women in underdeveloped countries are of constant focus, according to Gibson (2001, 2), 'Increasingly, it seems, it is the figure of woman that has emerged in *'third world countries'* as the new subjects of development, the *"desired beneficiaries and agents of progress"*. Zine (2002) also discusses the Western literary viewpoint where the numerous transformations of the stereotypical view of a Muslim woman have been entirely the product of the male imagination.

I argue that interest in women's affairs isn't just about concern for women in Muslim countries, but in fact an interest in women in general has been ongoing for a long time and used as an issue to pursue the political agendas of other nations.

Eltahway asks a reasonable question where discussing the role of women in revolution: '*What revolution worth its salt can be fuelled by demands of freedom and dignity and not have gender nestled in its beating heart - especially in a country replete with misogyny, religious fundamentalism (of both*

*the Islamic and Christian kind) and which for 60 years has chafed under a hybrid of military-police rule?"*

Most discourse on the subject of post-colonialism are inherently based in European culture and tend to project a world view that is dominantly Western in character. Post colonial approaches tend to create a challenge to the previous assumptions that totally failed to acknowledge the values, traditions and meanings of other cultures around the world. Post-colonial discourse aims to destabilize and dismantle this dominant discourse prevalent in imperial Europe by calling into question the previous preconceptions found at the core of Western disciplines (McEwan 2001).

There is a school of thought that implies that the feminist gaze is a reflection of the masculinist gaze, particularly in the colonial era where 'other' women were viewed as different by both the feminist and male gaze. It has often been the case, and possibly still is to a certain extent, that Islamic women were viewed as caricatures based purely on an outdated idea of Islamic identity (Zine 2002).

There is a viewpoint that suggests that the western expectance of all women to conform to Western dress codes only serves to further alienate Muslim women who should be provided with an opportunity to express their own opinions on such matters rather than be denied them, not only from male dominance but also from western feminist ideals that pressurize them into conforming to the expectations of others. Muslim women should be encouraged to define their own definitions of liberation and empowerment rather than having it imposed upon them (Zine 2002).

Even the definition 'Muslim women' serves to stereotype the identity of millions of women who are Muslims but who nevertheless present a widely diverse community that is bound by religion but undoubtedly presents a vastly diverse group with regard to nationality, culture, economics, geographical position, etc. (Tohidi 1998).

Even so, there are some radical Western feminists who totally disregard the contributions of Islamic feminists because they view their efforts as flawed and insignificant because they believe Islam is in itself totally incompatible with feminist ideology. There is an unwillingness to gain knowledge and insight into Islam as a religion and a way of life which only serves to further marginalize and oppress other women from different cultures and backgrounds, rather than progressing towards a greater solidarity amongst women worldwide (Tohidi 1998).

A critical role for Muslim women is to strive to create a dialogue that can help to breakdown misconceptions on the part of western feminists, and indeed others, by a continuous programme of education to dispel such simplistic conceptions which are so common in the west and therefore promote a greater understanding amongst women the world over (Tohidi 1998). Abushwasha states that *'the Women for Libya campaign aims to mobilise and encourage Libyan women to take their*

*rightful place and be included as equals for the purpose of shaping a better Libya. We do not want tokenistic representation'*. She believes that women within Libya need to take a stand and take on important roles in the rebuilding of Libya.

Through the Arab Spring a new outlook on women in the Middle East is taking shape not only in the region but in the West. Perceptions of women's roles are changing, and the work of activists in the region is starting to make drastic changes on the shape of women's roles in the new era of Egypt and Libya. These revolutions have worried many Arab countries into making changes for women's rights to avoid similar ousting of leaderships. One example of this is of the Saudi King allowing women in Saudi Arabia the right to vote (Chulov 2011).

## 2.7 Voice and the internet

*'Since voice implies agency, it gives speakers on the Internet "the opportunity to be the agents" of their own meanings'* (Brouwer 2006, 3)

The role of social networking sites has played a huge part in both organising protests and also in highlighting events to a global audience, despite attempts by the various regimes to prevent information and evidence of their crimes against humanity reaching the outside world (Owais 2011).

What has become evident is that the internet and social networking sites have provided a much needed platform for many women around the Middle East. Blogs, twitter, and Facebook have become very popular amongst the younger generation to enable them to document their daily lives, thoughts, struggles, and to communicate these with others who may be experiencing a similar situation (Tadros 2012).

Mona Eltahawy has a very successful blog where major topics in public policy and related subjects are discussed. The topic of her article which appeared in The Guardian was also discussed in great detail in her blog as well as elsewhere online and in the media.

For women, the internet offers anonymity and protection where they can be free to discuss issues of concern without worrying about the backlash it might create. Along with this, within an online community, gender and sexuality are protected. They do not become the primary focus and therefore women are provided with an equal platform in which to have their voices heard and not be judged negatively for it.

Stoeger (2006) also discusses the voices of women in cyberspace by looking at cyberfeminism as a theory. Feminists, as she suggests, view computer mediated communication (CMC) as a positive shift to empower women. Feminists such as Haraway (1991) see the online interactions of women as an opportunity for non identity where gender has no real significance. Although this maybe true, it would be naive to suggest that gender does not play a role in all interactions we

have including those interactions online (Harding 1986).

It also brings to question as to why gender should be neutral if women such as those presented in this study want to deal with issues of oppression, seclusion, marginalisation, and so on, then surely gender should be the primary concern in their interactions, and not hidden from view. We can see that the work of the four activists and journalists under study all focus specifically on gender related issues in order to ensure that woman's issues are at the forefront of their efforts.

Light (1995) also perceives CMC as an opportunity for women to be empowered in making use of this tool in a way which best suits their needs and this she believes includes 'political mobilization and advocacy'. Through the use of CMC the women under study have made use of technology to push for their political and social positions within their communities. They continue to shed light on issues which are of infinite importance to themselves and other women in order to educate people of their challenges.

There has been a general recognition in the post-colonial era that the voices of the oppressed throughout history should be heard. There has definitely been a greater importance placed upon an acknowledgement that differing perspectives should be included in a wider discourse. The concept of agency is now given greater worth and is a central part of discourse. In this day and age, there is a general consensus that there should be a programme to overcome inequalities and that this can be achieved by the inclusion of non-Western people and how other cultures and nations have progressed their own knowledge of development and advancement (McEwan 2001).

The view that women can speak for women and that women listen to each other differently from men has come under review and has been challenged in some circles. Tavris (1994) has openly challenged the view of relational feminists who hold a geocentric perspective with regard to communication between women. She also questioned the validity of conclusions relating to certain unique aspects of women's experience. Travis highlights the fact that not all women hold the same opinion under the same experiences and there is no single voice for all women. This is of particular importance when we see how prevalent women activists were in Egypt within the media, whereas women in Libya weren't always physically seen in the media. This has a lot to do with the cultural differences between the two countries and the way in which the revolutions took place.

## 2.8 Media

It can be said that the media can often present biased views of events which can be very influential upon how readers or listeners perceive the news they receive. There is usually no attempt to gain any insight into alternative views and the voice of

women is generally presented to us through the eyes of Western journalists.

Jafri (1998) suggests negative stereotypes of Muslims in general and specifically Muslim women are the norm within Canadian media, and that this negative stereotype is often blamed on Muslims for not creating a better example for mainstream media to pursue. However, it is also noted that certain writers suggest that it is due to lack of understanding of Islam as a religion and the cultural context of Muslim countries which allows a negative stereotypical image to be present in the West. Imtoul (2005) argues that often during times of conflict where Muslims are involved that women become the central issue for Western media. Often focussing on backward traditions, the oppression of women, the veil and other questionable practices which affect women within Muslim countries.

This however, has changed tremendously since the start of the Arab Spring, when the full black veil had previously been a sign of oppression; we saw rows and rows of women in Yemen in full black veils representing the voice of women within their country. The veil was no longer a symbol of oppression, but in contrast it was finally a symbol of strength, of power, of revolution and freedom within their homelands. As Tohidi (1998, 289) argues, 'Not wearing the hijab means much more restriction in their social space and mobility, since without the hijab they would be unable to engage in economic and social activities outside the home'.

As stated by Stabile and Kumar (2005, 775), '*by consenting to an orientalist logic that paternalistically seeks to protect women, and that serves primarily as a cover for imperialist arms, progressive individuals and organizations risk distancing themselves from the struggles of ordinary people around the world.*'

It has been noted that the West's focus on the rights of women in Afghanistan is simply a rather cynical approach that is cited as a reason for the West's aggression in Afghanistan. Women's liberation is in effect a rallying call used to justify Western military intervention. This use of human rights as a justification for wars, according to Stabile and Kumar (2005) needs to be challenged. Actually, Stabile and Kumar (2005) argue, the western media are limiting human rights for women in the same way as the fundamentalists do - by preventing women from having a voice in their own destiny.

This is perhaps why the phenomenon of social networking has become such a crucial aspect in the Arab Spring. Social media has become a response to this organisational structure. Social networking sites have become a tool that enables a population to organise themselves independently without the necessity of a central leadership. The rebellions amongst the Arab youth that have been fuelled by access to social networking sites and the speed at which information can be quickly disseminated, highlights the need for a form of democracy that is based on the needs of the population. The use of social networking sites to share common experiences is quite a refreshing change from the routine discourse of a dominant media that is usually con-

trolled by political elites and used as a propaganda tool (Hardt & Negri 2011).

What is different and interesting about the Arab spring is that the large media outlets have allowed and presented the voice of women to be present in national media. The article written by Abushwasha (2011) about the inclusiveness of women and its importance in the new Libyan government was printed in the British national newspaper *The Guardian*. Mona Eltahwy, has not only had articles printed in newspapers but also established news websites online and interviewed extensively by worldwide news networks such as CNN and the BBC.

### 3 Conclusion

Riger (1992) quotes Naomi Weistein's critique that psychology is the '*fantasy life of the male psychologist*'. This is primarily due to the choice of topics and issues and even representations of women within psychology which are controlled by patriarchal assumptions of women's roles within society. When researching Muslim women, and specifically Arab women, where research is slim (Varghese 2011), these patriarchal assumptions are more pronounced, even when the researcher is female herself (Ali 1999).

It was my attempt in this study to research women beyond the stereotypical boundaries they are often placed, be it within their own cultural contexts or within the Western perceptions of Muslims and Arab women as passive and oppressed, to present a time of huge change and sacrifice which has had women at the forefront fighting for some of the biggest changes in their nations' histories. It has been problematic however, to assume that women have only suddenly become an important player in their country's history or in social change movements. Women have always played a role. However, it has not been recognized, be it within their own home countries, or within Western media. Activists, bloggers, and journalists as those presented in this study have been fighting for women's liberation many decades before the Arab Spring began.

According to the Gloria Declaration (Moghadam 2005, 5), there are 'two major systemic obstacles to achieving women's health and rights: globalization of the market economy and religious fundamentalism'. This is also suggested by Inglehart, & Norris (2003) who perceive that although women's lives have improved due to gender equality, that this is still effected by 'cultural legacy' such as 'Islamic heritage'. This does limit or slow down the progress that women within the Arab world will make and this does relate to the way in which Islam is currently effecting women's progress in Egypt and Libya.

A limitation of the study is that the women chosen in this research are part of a smaller percentage of Libyan and Egyptian women who have been highly educated, and can communicate clearly in English. They also represent some of the few women in those countries who have daily access to a computer and the internet (Stoeger 2006) as well as the ability to

live and work abroad. However, they are very much involved in the struggles of the revolutions in their countries and more so after.

The issues researchers choose to study and the frames of reference they use to structure their enquiries are often products of their individual interests and dominant social constructions of important issues (Burman 1990). This is clear in the texts presented in this research that were specifically chosen in order to analyse particular issues involving women's voices during the Arab Spring within a Libyan and Egyptian context. In having this frame of mind, I am conscious of my own position as a researcher as I read the texts.

This does lead to the researcher taking on a reflexive role in understanding that their positioning will very likely affect their interest in the topic under research, and will effect(affect) part of the outcome as it relates to our interests and what we hope to achieve from the research. My own cultural and religious background as well as gender has affected the research question chosen and the route my research has taken.

Although many researchers have suggested that information found on the internet does not invade a persons right to privacy as it is accessed by a large number of people, I still feel that it would be inappropriate and morally questionable to use social networking sites where people have used them for their own personal use as opposed to those directly inviting people to join their cause such as the work of activists or journalists writing on these issues. According to the the British Psychological Society's guidelines for ethical conduct in online-psychological research '*researchers should be aware that participants may consider their publicly accessible internet activity to be private*'. One of the other major issues when dealing with research online, specifically when using social networking sites on the internet is informed consent. The problem arises because it is often difficult to gain informed consent from those writing in social networking sites, as well as it is problematic to ensure that all those in the research study are over the age of 16 as there is no way to verify age online.

For many Arab women, their anonymity is an important aspect of their experiences in social networking. For many it is the safest way in which they can vent frustrations, and share opinions openly and honestly without any backlash from their families and communities. It would be irresponsible for a researcher to then draw attention to individual blogs, or other social networking pages, whereby women have attempted to stay anonymous.

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## Appendix 1

Transcript: Dalia Ziad: Women in the new Egypt  
It was amazing what the Egyptian [people] has achieved in these protests. We never thought it's gonna turn into a real revolution when we first started it. I thought it's going to be a protest like usual, like you know, at the end of the day we will go back home and that's it.

On that particular day, January 25th, I realised it's gonna turn into something really big when I saw in the streets with me, women who are older in age, who are dressing in a way that tells you they are from, uh, sectors in society that are more? [something I can't catch] and less educated. This sector of society is usually apathetic, not interested in politics. So at that time when I saw them in the streets I realised it's not us cyber-activists any more; it's more than that, it is the whole population is coming out.

Nobody cared whether they are Muslims, Christians, whether they are men or women: during the protest women participated perfectly. They stood side by side by men, they faced this exactly like their colleague male protesters; they witnessed everything and participated effectively in everything. But unfortunately after the protests happened and, um, We were able to bring Mubarak down and the revolution succeeded to some extent, unfortunately all, everything is happening in the country now during this transformation phase, women are completely marginalised from.

Also in this phase, we are ruled by the military high council. This is 100% men and they are having a military mentality, so they can hardly include women. We have female judges in Egypt, but none of these judges, although they are highly qualified, none of them was invited for example to participate in the committee that helped moderate some articles in the constitution. 90% of the law related to women's rights or the stipulations related to women in our law and constitution are completely against women.

For example, in our constitution, we have a clear article in the constitution, it's very funny but it's crazy and awful as I consider it, and very discriminative. It says if [a] woman cannot balance - I'm using my language of course - if woman cannot balance between her work, her household work, household activities like cleaning, washing and this stuff, and her work outside the house, then she should abandon her work outside the house. Don't you think this is crazy, yeah, it's ...

Women on the Women's Day, March 8th, wanted to go to the street as women, not as Egyptians, and call for more rights for women. But unfortunately the reaction from the male protesters was very bad. They kept telling, "It's not your time, it's not time to talk about your rights, go back home. We are now looking for democracy." But I don't really understand what they mean: if they are looking for democracy, then women's rights should come first, at least because we have been there, we have made this revolution, we have made this success. And it's

our time now to call for our rights, it's our time now to say: we want to be equal, we want to end, we want us to get our dignity as women, not only as Egyptians.

## Appendix 2

*Libya will only become inclusive when women are given a say in its future*

*Having played a key role in Libya's revolution, women must be fully included in the rebuilding and reconciliation process*

*Guardian, Farah Abushweshah*

At this week's conference on Libya in Paris, the Libyan National Transitional Council (NTC) and the international community talk about "inclusive-ness" in the new country's future. It seems strange, then, that half of the population - women - seem to be excluded from the discussions on the future of their country.

It is not commonly known, but Libyan women started the revolution when the mothers, sisters and widows of prisoners killed in the 1996 Abu Salim massacre took to the streets in Benghazi on 15 February to protest outside the courthouse after their lawyer was arrested.

Since then Libyan women at home and abroad have protested, smuggled arms beneath their clothing, founded countless civil society groups, tweeted, blogged, fed, nursed, mourned, mothered, raised funds and awareness, and sent in humanitarian aid and medical staff for the cause. Women have taken a central role alongside men and it has united us.

Libyan women may not have been visible on the streets with guns, but they have played an equally important role, displaying courage and strength that has been invaluable to the success of the country's revolution. Only now are some of the harrowing stories starting to emerge. We have seen the iconic images of Iman al-Obeidi, who spoke out about the sexual violence inflicted on so many who have otherwise suffered in silence; the elderly lady praising rebels at a lay-by and giving them her blessing; and Malak, the five-year-old amputee from Misrata - to name a few.

Libyan women will no doubt continue to play a vital part in the national reconciliation and rebuilding process, but the time has come for this role to be fully recognised, encouraging them to step forward. The Women for Libya campaign aims to mobilise and encourage Libyan women to take their rightful place and be included as equals for the purpose of shaping a better Libya. We do not want tokenistic representation.

Women for Libya is calling for the full inclusion of Libya's female population in accordance with United Nations security council mandate 1325, which emphasises the important role women play in peacebuilding. We are also calling for: aid to be ringfenced to support women's rights; financial aid to be accessible to civil society and grassroots initiatives set up by women, for women; and negotiations

and meetings on the future of Libya to be inclusive of all tribes and regional representatives, which should include sufficient numbers of women.

Sara Maziq, one of Women for Libya's founders, recently said: "We are facing an enormous challenge of rebuilding Libya and to exclude women is to ignore a vast resource for transitioning from conflict to stability. We can be a powerful unifying force in the aftermath of the conflict."

Libyan women have created an intricate web of mutual co-ordination, and - whether resident in Libya or forced to live in exile - have been involved in nearly all aspects of the nation's uprising..

Women are a beneficial and vital force in Libya's future. We must be openly and transparently

included in discussions and supported to participate at all levels. To neglect this is to dishonour the legacy of the brave Libyan men and women who have given their lives for basic human rights.

To exclude women is to exclude a vital force in the reconstruction of a stable, representative and democratic Libya.

### Appendix 3

These "virginity tests" will spark Egypt's next revolution

Thursday, June 2nd, 2011

By Mona Eltahawy-The Guardian

There's a thin line between sex and politics, and it is nonsense to keep repeating the mantra that Egypt's revolution "wasn't about gender". What revolution worth its salt can be fuelled by demands of freedom and dignity and not have gender nestled in its beating heart - especially in a country replete with misogyny, religious fundamentalism (of both the Islamic and Christian kind) and which for 60 years has chafed under a hybrid of military-police rule?

If the "it wasn't about gender" mantra is stuck on repeat so that we don't scare the boys away, then let them remember the state screwed them too, literally - ask political prisoners, and remember the condoms and Viagra found when protesters stormed state security headquarters.

Lest we forget, we replaced Hosni Mubarak with a supreme council of Mubaraks - aka the supreme council of armed forces (SCAF) - a general who recently spoke to CNN kindly reminded us how the patriarch sounds. Speaking on condition of anonymity, he admitted that female activists detained during a Tahrir Square demonstration a month after Mubarak's overthrow had indeed been subjected to "virginity tests" - as the women have insisted all along. "The girls who were detained were not like your daughter or mine," the general said. "These were girls who had camped out in tents with male protesters in Tahrir Square, and we found in the tents Molotov cocktails and (drugs)."

I have no doubt he genuinely believed that explanation would actually make sense. It is, after all, very rare for Egyptian women to spend the night outside their home, and couples must present

a marriage certificate if they want to book a hotel room together. But even the patriarch misfires.

Almost exactly five years ago, Mubarak unwittingly politicised many previously apolitical Egyptians when his security forces and their hired thugs began to deliberately target for sexual assault female activists and journalists at demonstrations. In conservative Egypt, where most women endured daily street sexual harassment in silence, the regime was determined to fondle and grope women in the hope it would shame them back home. Instead, women held up their skirts torn into pieces for the media to see. It's one thing to be groped and harassed by passers-by, but when the state gropes you, it gives a green light that you are fair game.

The next year, mass sexual assaults in downtown Cairo targeted girls and women during a religious festival. The police watched and did nothing. The state denied the assaults took place, but bloggers at the scene exposed that lie; this encouraged women to speak out and forced men to listen. For many Egyptian men, this was the first time they realised what it meant for their mothers, sisters, wives, daughters to navigate the battlefield that Egyptian streets had become. More than 80% of women now say they've been street sexually harassed, and more than 60% of men admit to having done so.

And with the virginity tests, here is SCAF retracing that thin line between sex and politics again, in the hope of shaming women away from demonstrating. The council has already replicated many of the other sins that had Mubarak facing the wrong end of a revolution: military trials for civilians, detentions and torture (by military police now, state security then), and an intolerance of critics.

Let's be clear, "virginity tests" are common in Egypt and straddle class and urban/rural divides. Be it the traditional midwife checking for a hymen on a bride's wedding night, or a forensics expert or doctor called in after a prospective bridegroom's suspicions, young women are forced to spread their legs to appease the god of virginity. But no one talks about it.

But it's different when the state/SCAF is the one forcing women's legs apart. A protest is planned for Saturday. It's a perfect time for gender to come out of the revolution's closet.

This must be our moment of reckoning with the god of virginity. The rage against the military must also target the humiliation brought by those tests, regardless of who carries them out.

So far, Egypt's Arab-language media has largely looked the other way. As Fatma Emam, a young revolutionary, told Bloomberg soon after Mubarak was forced to step down: "The revolution is not only taking place in Tahrir, it is taking place in every Egyptian house. It is the revolution of fighting the patriarch."

## Appendix 4

*Eman Al-Obeidy: A "Libyan Logo" for the Women of East Libya**Interview with Amany Mufta Ismail by Anna Therese Day*

In late March, 29-year-old Libyan student Eman Al-Obeidy caught the world's attention when she burst into a Tripoli hotel to inform Western media of her alleged detention, torture, and rape at the hands of Gaddafi's forces. After a series of further police detentions, heavily censored interviews, and virtual house arrest in Tripoli, it was announced earlier this week that Eman Al-Obeidy has successfully fled Libya with the help of two defecting military officers. Her story has put a face to the many crimes against women and children committed in times of war while also breaking the silence on a strict taboo in Arab culture.

In an interview with Anna Therese Day, 22-year-old Amany Mufta Ismail, a woman activist in rebel-controlled East Libya, describes her reactions to the story of Eman Al-Obeidy as well as her feelings surrounding attacks on Libyan women during this war.

Anna Therese Day: What was your initial reaction when you heard the story of the attacks on Eman Al-Obeidy?

Amany Mufta Ismail: First of all, I want to say that she is so strong because she went there and she said that. It's so hard for the Arabic woman to say that. It's not easy. Maybe there are thousands of Eman Al-Obeidy — not thousands, millions of Eman Al-Obeidy in the Arab world — but they never say that because maybe our traditions, our culture, our families, we can't say that. But she is so strong to go out to all the TVs and saying how "15 men doing blah blah blah to me..."

It was something so hard because she was going to Tripoli to complete her studying, to work there, to help to build the society but she was treated so bad. But she is so strong to say that. I support her. She's like a logo for us, she's a Libyan logo for us.

Anna: What was your reaction to the initial claims of Gaddafi's government that Eman Al-Obeidy was mentally-ill or drunk when she burst into the hotel in Tripoli?

Amany Mufta Ismail: Yes, actually we know about him and we heard about other girls. So when he say that about Eman Al-Obeidy, we know his ways to avoid the truth. It was something that maybe we have background to. Actually when we heard that I was laughing, I was just laughing, "Oh my god she was drunk? Come on!" She is not, because we heard about her and the other girls. But we couldn't say that because of, as I said, our tradition. But when she go out on the TV and she said that, then we all go out and say "Gaddafi, just go!"

Anna: What are your hopes for Eman Al-Obeidy in light of her escape from Tripoli?

Amany Mufta Ismail: There are other girls in Benghazi that got kidnapped, at Ajdabiya they were kidnapped, at Brega, at Misrata. There's women and girls, and sometimes children, you know. But she was

the courageous one, she was the strong one. She said no to the people who do that, to Gaddafi's men — she has all the courage to do that.

I just want her to know that we support her. We are all Eman Al-Obeidi, not she, just she, but all of us, even me. I am Eman Al-Obeidi because we are sisters, we are all Libyans, we are all Arab, we are all human.

Elísio Estanque, Hermes Augusto Costa and José Soeiro

## The New Global Cycle of Protest and the Portuguese Case

This paper focuses on the recent cycle of collective action across countries and continents over the past few years. It seems to be evident that in the outset of 2011 began a new wave of global protests made of contagion and communication that spread in different contexts. Our argument is that, unlike other cycles marked by post-materialistic values, changes in labour and material issues have gained a new centrality. The labour and social basis of these mobilizations is particularly evident, though not exclusive, linking up with disaffection towards political institutions and a crisis of legitimacy of elites in power. We will take the example of the demonstration of 12th March in Portugal as an expression of some of the features in this emerging type of mobilization, where youth plays a leading role. It is from the empirical information concerning this public protest that we will build our analysis, identifying in the Portuguese reality parallels with the international context but also national peculiarities, dynamics of continuity and rupture in relation to the historical past.

### Keywords

Cycle of protest, labour, social movements, youth, Portugal

### 1 Introduction

Since the beginning of 2011, the world has witnessed a new wave of rebellions and movements that have affected countries and cultures, including those where any idea of political transformation was unimaginable. The so-called "Arab Spring" astonished the Western world by unleashing a wave of movements that were forged at the heart of repressive regimes. The unleashed force of these movements, in many cases gave substance to political revolutions whose outcomes are still unknown but where the desire for liberty and democracy are crucial (Gelvin 2012).

The Arab Spring had a huge coverage in Western countries, apparently catching everyone by surprise. More so given the fact that the wave of indignation was, primarily, to bring down the tyrannical and corrupt governments which had been comfortably in power for decades.

On the 17th of December a young Tunisian vendor immolated himself with fire outside a government building. A few hours after this event,

hundreds of young people who suffered the same kind of humiliation, concentrated in protest around the same building. Mohamed Bouazizi's cousin made a video of these protests that became viral on the internet, and in the days that followed, several spontaneous demonstrations flourished all over the country. From a catalyst event, a revolutionary mobilization process took place. How can we explain it, if it seemed that a few months before it would be so improbable?

In a recent book on "social movements in the Internet age," the sociologist Manuel Castells tries to identify the causes that explain the emergence of the revolt in Tunisia, suggesting three fundamental elements: (1) the existence of an unemployed graduate youth, able to lead the revolt bypassing the traditional power and representation structures, (2) a very strong cyberactivism culture, which helped to create a critical public space against the dictatorship, with autonomy regarding state repression, and (3) a high rate of diffusion of Internet use, either in household connections, cybercafes or educational spaces which, combined with the existence of juvenile sectors with high qualifications and no job, made youth a central actor of the revolution (Castells 2012, 28 - 29).

In the Tunisian case, the first of the Arab Spring revolutions, it is not difficult to accept the idea that the existence of an "Internet culture" made up of blogs, social networks and cyber activism, was crucial in the ability to overthrow a dictatorship that seemed immutable. Not because this mobilization process has developed only in the virtual space of the networks, but precisely because, following the Castells's argument: "the connection between free communication on Facebook, Youtube and Twitter and occupation of urban space created a hybrid public space that became a major feature of Tunisian rebellion, foreshadowing the movements to come in other countries" (Castells 2012, 23). Mobile phones and social networks played a key role in disseminating images and messages that were important for mobilization. But the rebellion explodes when it goes from cyberspace to physical space, making those tools a means of expression and communication of the revolt against unemployment,

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deprivation, inequality, poverty, police brutality, authoritarianism, censorship and corruption. In the Arab world, a new era of revolutionary turmoil and upheaval took place and democratic aspiration has led thousands of people to take their fate into their own hands (Khosrokhavar 2012).

In very different ways, the combination of the degradation of the material life conditions for a significant part of the population, coupled with the legitimacy crisis of political institutions responsible for the management of collective life, serves as the backdrop for this new wave of global protest that had its origin in the Arab countries. Their beginning was symbolically associated with the self-immolation of a young Tunisian in December 2010. But, since then, the protest has spread to different countries around the globe. The Tunisian experience, like the experience of Iceland and its *wikiconstitution*<sup>1</sup>, were inspiring for mobilizations that followed, also because they could have as an outcome a concrete institutional change in governmental power, a transformation that changed the state. These were inspiring because they translated what was deemed as impossible to the concrete possibility of change.

Our hypothesis in this article is that the set of demonstrations that began in Tunisia, and before in Iceland, that led to the Egyptian revolution, but also the mobilizations in Portugal with the "Desperate Generation", in Spain with the Indignados, in Greece with the movement of Squares and in the United States with the Occupy movement, the students' revolt of 2011 in Chile, among many others, are not a separate phenomena, albeit some similar features. In fact, it seems to be something deeper. It is not just a sequence of events, but a wave of protest that should be analysed as a whole, in which different movements, that use the virtual space of information flows as a primary place of their struggle, binded together, contaminated each other and kept on communication.

This paper is the result of an on-going research on the process of precarization of work and the new modalities of collective action that are emerging, focusing on the case of Portugal. It is methodologically supported in (i) the systematization of statistical information from secondary sources, such as those produced by INE (National Statistical Institute) and Eurostat, and its triangulation with theoretical approaches and debates; (ii) a content analysis of newspapers and material from the 12th of march demonstration, namely the detailed categorization of 2083 documents produced by the protesters after the demonstration and delivered to the Portuguese Parliament on march 25th by the organization; these documents were classified quantitatively and qualitatively through a categorical grid, with 7 main categories.

## 2 A new cycle of collective action at global scale

When Sidney Tarrow (1995) proposed the concept of cycle of protest or cycle of collective action, he

identified five key elements to explain his concept: an intensification of the conflict, its geographic spread, the triggering of inorganic actions but also the emergence of new organizations, new symbols, ideologies and interpretations of the world, extending, in each cycle of protest, the available repertoire of action. In our understanding, we are experiencing such a process. In either case - from Tunisia to Egypt, from Greece to the United States, passing through Portugal or Spain - the collective action intensified, spread, new forms of action and new organizations emerged, with common references at a global level and dynamics of solidarity that occur on the scale of the nation state, but remain connected internationally in real time by the Internet space. In either example, collective action does not arise spontaneously from the exacerbation of people's difficulties and worsening living conditions, but needed an emotional mobilization that could transform anguish into anger and revolt into enthusiasm. An interesting hypothesis is that this element was precisely boosted by a *cycle effect*, that could generate a contagion effect. In Tunisia, in the government square where protesters converged in the early days of 2011, there were slogans not only in Arabic but also in English and French, revealing a certain internationalist disposition of the protest, which seemed to be aware of the importance of having the international support. In the end of January, the first occupation of the Tahrir Square in the Egyptian capital, protesters were shouting "Tunisia is the solution". In the United States, the first online call that would lead to the Occupy movement, which dates from July 2011, urged the occupation of a square in downtown New York, the heart of financial capitalism, asking "Are you ready for a Tahrir moment?". In European mobilizations, the silenced "Icelandic revolution" functioned as an example of citizen resistance to the attack on the financial sector: "Less Ireland, more Iceland" could be read on banners and posters during the mobilizations in Portugal. In mid-February 2012, concentrations whose motive was "We are all Greeks" took place in more than a dozen countries.

Although social climate and the forms of protest - in Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Yemen and Libya - have, in theory, few similarities with the situation in Europe and the Western world, there are many aspects that these movements have in common with those that swept across public squares and cities in the West. Of course each country and each square has its own history and peculiarities. But there are elements that have been observed transversally in different experiences: (1) the fact that they have, above all, been organized by educated young people; (2) the central concern of the protesters with the difficulties in finding employment and social justice; and (3) using the Internet as their main tool for both organization and public condemnations, as well as using satellite communications; (4) the demand for a "real democracy", rejecting authoritarian regimes but also the capture of the State and of political agents

by the interests of financial elites; (5) the distrust of political institutions in general, associated with corruption and self-interest; (6) the transgressive occupation of public spaces; (7) the production of new aesthetic references and the importance of audiovisual culture; (8) the opening to a democratic experimentation and the search for new ways of participation and organization; (9) the use of the logic of open source and multi-directional communication to organize the movement.

The "hybrid public space" (Castells 2012) created during this cycle of protest, that articulated the action in online social networks and the physical occupation of urban public space, gave rise to new levels of action, new forms of mobilization and organization, marked by the networking culture, horizontal communication, collaborative work, avoiding leadership, by the sampling of international references. Operating through social networks and reaching "dissident" social circles that are far beyond the "core groups" that in each context act as organising pivots, these mobilizations were, in most of cases, quite fluid and volatile, that move and circulate, like links in a transmission chain of energy, enablers of socio-political dynamism. And, being so, they set the agenda.

Are these common features enough to enable us to talk about a new kind of social movement? It is probably too early to construct a systematic theory about all these experiences. At the same time, it is our aim, with this article, to try to identify some common features of this cycle of mobilization, to deepen the analysis of the context in which they take place and, taking the Portuguese example, rise some sociological questioning about youth, political and civic participation and social movements.

### 3 Labour metamorphoses, precariousness and new social movements: the return of materialism

While trade unions and labour fields were in the past closely tied to the working class, social movements of the sixties, despite being heterogeneous, can be readily associated with the middle class. We are aware that this connection with the middle class is not as obvious as it was the working class toward trade union movement in the past. In fact, apart from "class determinism" being a misleading premise, the heterogeneity and the internal fragmentation of both the "middle classes" and "working class" strips away the sense of any cause-effect relation in this respect. What happens is that certain class groups - or if we prefer, some specific social segments - located themselves in the most general framework of the social structure, are to be found in such particular conditions, that they can trigger shared subjectivities and collective attitudes characterised by common concerns, therefore favouring collective action. Besides, cultural environments and socialising contexts are decisive to forge identities or at least shared forms of identification in conditions which give rise to social movements: identity, opposition to a recognised adversary and a common idea (principle of totality) in relation to an

alternative constitute three of the principles pointed to by Alain Touraine (1981 and 2006) as decisive criteria in defining a social movement (Tilly 1978 and 1996).

In what became the dominant interpretation paradigm of the new social movements, it was stated that post-materialist values and identity issues would be, since the 1960's and 1970's, the centre of new forms of social mobilization. Analysis about youth collective action emphasized the centrality of post-material issues. However, one of the strongest elements of the current cycle of protest is the return of materialistic concerns, particularly related to labour and employment, that turned out to be the top subjects and the cause of people's indignation and a powerful leaven of collective action.

Facing more urgent and primary needs, struggling against the "austeritarian" abolishing of a large set of labour rights, the aesthetic discourse loose mobilization capacity compared to those needs, but the new cultural identities of the precarious youth seems to be redefined on the grounds of both cultural and economic dimensions. Labour relations of our time are crossed by precariousness and by a new and growing "precariat" (Standing 2011) which also gave rise to new social movements and new forms of activism and protest. Thus labour relations and social movements have been pushed toward new ways and new discourses. In fact, the new socio-labour movements are movements of society, of a younger generation (largely of qualified young people connected to the university system) legitimately protesting against the lack of career opportunities, against the lack of jobs, against the irrationalities of nowadays economic austerity policies. The rapprochement between cultural criticism and social criticism is therefore a logical consequence of contemporary voices and forms of protest.

The report on employment trends for youth published in 2011 by the International Labour Organization refers to young people as a "lost generation". With the spread of precarious forms of employment, with youth unemployment rates around 25% in North Africa and 18% in Europe (41.6% in Spain), the spread of poverty wage (where young people appear disproportionately: 23.5%) and young people becoming the majority of long-term unemployed, the ILO notes that the roots of the protests that took place in 2011 in North Africa but also in Spain, England or Greece, must be found in these reality (ILO 2011, 3-6). Indeed, as pointed out by the same document, young people have been paying the highest price in terms of employment throughout the crisis that has developed since 2008 and this explains why they they "feel discouraged about the future" and even "angry" and "violent" (ibid. 6). One year later, the same agency pointed the extent of youth unemployment to 75 million, noting that "many young people are trapped" in a type of work that "does not correspond to their aspirations and often does not offer transition opportunities to a more permanent, productive and well paid positions" (ILO 2012a, 8). Also according to ILO, "between 2008 and 2012, youth unemployment rates in the



Eurozone increased by 5.4 percentage points, reaching 22.2 per cent" (ILO 2012b, 22).

The transformations of the world of work throughout the 20th Century, particularly in Europe, evidence a process of profound social change that calls into question the centrality of labour, and has brought about a new political lexicon: globalization, decentralization, flexibilization (Antunes 1997; Costa 2008). The decline of Fordism paved the way for new frameworks and began what would become the most profound reorganisation of labour market since the post-war era: decentralised production, greater specialisation, technological innovation, flexibilization, semi-autonomous teams (Toyotism), new qualifications, multiplication of contractual forms, sub-contracting, models of lean production, new techniques of production management (just-in-time), total quality management, reengineering, externalization and outsourcing, teamwork, etc. (Hyman 1994 and 2004; Amin 1994; Womack, Jones and Roos 1990; Costa 2008). It was evident throughout the first decade of the 21st Century that the new forms of labour relations meant an increase in precariousness, whether in Portugal or in Europe: receipts for the self-employed (or better, false receipts), short term contracts, temporary work, part-time work, illegal work in the informal economy, etc., are just a few types among a wider range of new forms of labour relations (Antunes 2006; Aubenas 2010).

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As Ricardo Antunes has noted, "there has been a decrease in the traditional working class. But, simultaneously, a significant subproletarianization of work has been carried out, resulting from diverse forms of part-time, precarious, informal, subcontracted work, etc. There has taken place, therefore, a significant heterogenization, complexification and fragmentation of work" (Antunes 1999, 209). For

some authors, this process of fragmentation and complexification involves a growing legion of people that move between insecure and badly paid jobs (in some countries the immigrant population is an example) who have no idea what job security is, who do not use the title professional to say what they do and who make up the vast world of the "informal economy" in which the word "rights" is put to one side (Standing 2009, 109-114). "Flexi-workers" or "generation Y" (born after 1980) are but two of the labels to designate a new precarious class which uses a new language – emails, sms, Facebook, etc. – that sometimes makes of them a "cibertariat" (Huws, 2003). If citizenship were defined in terms of occupational rights, then this precarious class would lack citizenship. The precarious worker "does not have a material basis, or the occupational space, to develop leisure and participate politically". In this sense, the precarious class "does not have freedom because it lacks security" (Standing 2009, 314).

Of course these changes in work affect the dynamics of engagement and collective action. So, for this purpose, we need to consider the "old" trade union organisations as well as the "new" ones, and to pay attention to the social networks which are emerging worldwide in the struggle for the right to employment and a dignified future. In fact, besides these transformations, work remains at the centre of social conflicts and present day political struggles. The role of work as a decisive space of social cohesion and as a condition of exercise of citizenship, invites us to think about the ways these new forms of social movements can contribute to revitalising the mechanisms of dialogue of a new social contract that consolidates democracy (Castel 1998; Santos 1998).

In the case of Portugal, the percentage of precarious employment (if we add short-term contracts, the self-employed, temporary workers and part-time work) is now close to 30% of total employment. According to official sources, in 2010 there were 37,6% of workers between the ages of 15- 34 working on fixed-term contracts, whereas if we consider the age group between 15 - 24 years old this percentage is close to 50% (INE 2010; Carmo 2010). In the last decade, jobs offering permanent contracts have decreased at the same pace as fixed-term contracts have increased. In December 2011, the percentage of unemployed in Portugal was 13,6%, whilst the average in the Eurozone was 10,4% and in the UE/27 it was 9,9% (Eurostat 2012). However, unemployment figures force us to emphasize, whether in terms of length or age groups, and it is young people (which are the better qualified) who are particularly affected.

Successive austerity measures deepened this process and were levers of massive social protest. In 2011, the Portuguese public servants had their salaries cut by up to 10% and saw their Christmas subsidy reduced by 50%. Furthermore, for 2012, public sector bonus for Christmas and summer – which have been the result of workers victories for over 30 years– were cut in a half, despite the fact

that in July 2012, the Constitution Court considered those cuts unconstitutional (Costa 2012). Meanwhile, the State budget law for 2013 revealed an increase in the tax burden – “a huge tax increase” in words of the finance minister. So the severe austerity measures that affect public sector workers (including both active and retired workers, with ramifications on the lives of approximately 3 million people) are a clear demonstration of the deficit of social justice in the wage relation and its extension to the private sector is a strong possibility (Reis 2009: 11; Reis & Rodrigues 2011). They were in the origin of most protest that happened during 2012.

The argument we would like to stress is that the intensification and expansion of precariousness, the fragmentation of productive processes, and the disregarding of rights and dignity associated with labour relations, intensified by austerity, are creating a new form of struggle which is based around work and the struggles for the recovery of its dignity will affirm a new state of politicisation. This appears to be happening through new socio-occupational movements that are presently raging across societies on a global level. The excluded, unemployed and segments of skilled youth, and those that turn away from trade union organisations seems to resist and want to struggle again. So, these recent social trends seems to reflect a new interconnection between two sides: the sociocultural side, related to the students and well educated segments; and the labour side, with the new “precariat” filed by those coming from the work field at the costs of the growing flexibility, unemployment and precariousness. Both sectors seem to become more united as they have been demonstrating together along 2011 and 2012 in several countries.

4 The Portuguese case: the example of the 12th of March demonstration.

On January 23, 2011, at the Coliseum of Porto, the Portuguese musical group Deolinda presented at the end of a concert, a new theme (“Parva que Sou” / “How silly I am”) that immediately provoked an excited and enthusiastic reaction from the audience. In the days that followed, the video of this song, uploaded on youtube by someone that was in the show, reached tens of thousands of views. It became viral. The song, endlessly shared on social networks, motivated an intense public debate about employment and the widespread precarious condition of portuguese youth. The song inspired the call of a “non-religious, non-partisan and peaceful” demonstration, through a Facebook event created by four young people who seemed to personify the situation described by the song. The protest took place on the 12th of March, 2011, in more than a dozen cities, gathering about 300,000 people in Lisbon and 80,000 in Porto, according to organizers, meaning it was one of the biggest demonstrations since the Portuguese revolution in 1974.

The success of the song is not a coincidence: the aesthetic communication has often has the ability to

synthesize and eloquently express reality and the networks of meaning and representations that circulate in a given society. “Parva que Sou”, whose tone ranges from complaint, regret to indignation, seems to have captured crucial elements of the youth condition for an important segment of our society.

“I belong to the generation without pay.” So begins the song, remarking that “the situation is bad and will continue/ I’m already lucky to have an internship”. Indeed, the proliferation of low salaries, unpaid internships (particularly in certain areas qualify as journalism, architecture, etc.) and precarious jobs supported by the state, mid-term situations between training and work, allow us to speak about a “low cost generation” (Chauve, 2008). In Portugal, it combines low wages - in 2011, over half of young employees earned a salary between 450 and 600 euros per month and more than two thirds of young people earned less than 750 euros per month (CIES / CGTP-IN 2011, 9) - with scarce social protection, which contributes to a poverty risk rate of 20% amongst young people.

This song, listened with emotion by thousands of young people, speaks not only of job insecurity, but also about a “parents’ house generation”. In fact, according to Eurostat (2010), Portugal is one of the countries where the percentage of young people still living with their parents is higher - about 60% of young adults face this situation, while in Nordic countries (Denmark, Sweden and Finland) this percentage is about 20%. Among the reasons that explain this “prolonged adolescence” are the difficult access to housing, unemployment and precarity. As noted by Alves et al. (2011), the dependence on parents remains even in situations where there is already residential autonomy. This “welfare-family”, that helped to compensate the fragilities of the Portuguese welfare can however begin to have difficulties in keeping its role, due to the deepening of the crisis (Santos 2011, 76-77).

Subaltern insertion in the labour market gives rise, among precarious youth, to a feeling of being “always postponing” their projects, to use the expression contained in the song at the origin of “Desperate Generation” demonstration. In Portugal, the employability of youth is characterized by being long, painful and complex. It compromises youth autonomy and encourages dispositions marked by the need for constant adaptation, a “new psychological contract” based on short-term commitments (Lewis et al. 2002), which strongly limits the emergence of collective concerns and of projects that can go beyond a short-term horizon.

It is not surprising that, inspired by this song and the wave of identification it created, the manifesto that called for a protest on March 12 took labour and precarity as the central issue: “We, the unemployed, 500-euros workers and other underpaid disguised slaves, outsourced, short-term workers, false self-employed, intermittent workers, trainees, fellows, working students, students, mothers, fathers and children of Portugal”, could be read in call to go onto the street. According to the same text, the responsibility about precarity is to be pointed to politicians, employers and ourselves”.

The 12th of March corresponded to a mass demonstration where converged the youth affected by precarious jobs, older generations impoverished or in solidarity, and discontents against Socialist Party (social democracy) government led by José Sócrates. The Anticapitalist left (as the Left Bloc, a party of Portuguese left), social movements (feminist, LGBT, associations as Inflexible Precarious, among others), sectors of the political right (as Social Democratic Youth, organization affiliated to PSD, the Portuguese Liberal Party, which at that time was in opposition), flooded the streets. Even some elements of the far-right tried to insert themselves in the demonstration by heading the parade. The leader at the time of the largest trade union confederation (General Confederation of Portuguese Workers - CGTP), Carvalho da Silva, also attended the demonstration, even if the unions looked to such an "inorganic" protest with some surprise and a lot of mistrust.

This amplitude on the street does not mean that the call of the protest was unclear or that its organizers - the four youngsters who created the event on Facebook - have not insisted on its main features: a democratic demonstration, "non-religious, non-partisan and peaceful", focused on the need for greater transparency and responses against unemployment and precarious jobs. In fact, the organizers rejected appropriations, fought against anti-union discourse or the liberal narrative of a "war between generations".

The days before the demonstration, the organizers asked each participant to take with him or her a sheet of paper or a poster that identified a problem and present a solution. These documents were then delivered to politicians. About 2000 people handed these papers to the organizers, who deposited them in Parliament so that MPs could consult them. Preliminary data from a study of these sheets delivered in Parliament reveal some interesting elements. Firstly, the social and labour issues are by far those who deserved more references among the protests. About half of them refer to work (49%) and, within this category, the false independent work (the so called "green receipts"), unpaid internships and unemployment. These documents also reveal that the issues about the political system (14%) and transparency and corruption (9%) are among the most mentioned. Within these, criticism of nepotism and the "wedge", "privileges of politicians" and "reducing the number of MPs" are the most frequent. The discontentment with the political parties and representative democracy were clearly visible: "The people united don't need parties" was one of the slogans shouted in the streets of Lisbon.

This dimension of dissatisfaction with political institutions is an important aspect, along with the socio-labour dimension. In Portugal, a recent study on the quality of democracy revealed that 78% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the idea that "politicians are only concerned with their own interests" and "political decisions in our country especially favour big business", with evident

distrust of political parties and social movements of protest being considered more able to give voice to popular concerns (Pinto et al. 2012). At the same time, the expectations from the state and from democracy as a system of goods and wealth redistribution are very high, which reinforces the frustrations against the inability of public policies to respond to the main problems identified in that research, namely, unemployment (37 %), poverty and exclusion (16%), the national debt (13%) and economic growth (11%). In the European context - and there we have the eloquent examples of Greece and Italy - not only there is the sense of the complicity of elected powers in relation to the logic of financial markets, but we assist to a kind of "postmodern coup-d'états" through which the management of the crisis is performed using a post-democratic strategy "that operates by the appointment or imposition of unelected technocratic governments" (Sevilla et al. 2012).

Another interesting element of this mobilization resides in its intergenerational characteristic. Contrary to an approach, disclosed in the Portuguese media before the protest, according to which the root of discontent and problems of the "precarious youth" should be found in the "dictatorship of the acquired rights" of the older generation, the demonstration belonged to all generations<sup>2</sup>. The analysis of the documents delivered in Parliament, but especially field observations carried out on the day, showed that the composition of the parade included a large age and social diversity. Indeed, the precarious and unemployed youth were in the streets fighting for jobs and autonomy. But also were students threatened by job insecurity and difficulties associated with the lack of social support. Parents concerned with the lack of opportunity for their children. Grandparents' of the "Desperate Generation" were present in solidarity and protesting due to their small pensions or and the overall impoverishment. Despite the youthful dynamism of the protests, the demonstrators were, in fact, notably diverse, from older citizens frustrated with the emancipatory promises of the revolution of April 1974, to middle-aged people made unemployed with the closures and relocations of companies, to those disposed of by the public sector, and so on. The austerity politics were, in fact, the common backdrop for the emergence of social protests, which created the possibility for the youth to take the forefront, in a very particular context as is the case in 2011, as the interpreters of general discontent.

One of the novelties in the tradition of social movements and public protest in Portugal is that the "Desperate Generation" and mobilizations of 2011, as well as those that happened in September 15, 2012<sup>3</sup>, have created a new pole of collective mobilization in this country. As evidenced by Santos (2011, 106), these mobilizations showed that "the forms of organization of interests in contemporary societies (parties, unions, social movements, NGOs) not only capture a small range of potentially active citizenship".

5 Outline of a comparative summary: the Portuguese case in the context of a global cycle of protest

Some structuralist sociological perspectives tend to depreciate approaches focusing on the "event" or exploring concrete episodes, as if they were closer to art than science. As Luc Boltanski argues in a recent article about the theories of revolt, "the rehabilitation of the event and of the episode is, in my opinion, an important task for social sciences" (Boltanski, 2012: 108). Indeed, the moment that triggers a revolt is always the domain of the unpredictable, is always a singularity. The catalyst events of mobilizations can be as diverse as the performance of a song (in the Portuguese case or in the Icelandic), a desperate act (the Tunisian self-immolation) or indignation against the violence of police repression (as happened in June 2010 in Egypt, or one year and a half earlier, in Greece, with the murder of the young Alexis Grigoropoulos). Therefore, the phenomena of protest and their cycles should be understood taking into account both the historical contexts and long-term trends that help explain them (in this case, changes in work, the imposition of austerity and the shrinking of democracy) and also the density of those concrete episodes that, as Walter Benjamin would say, "explode with the continuity of history", introducing the disruption in the "homogeneous, empty time" of watches (Benjamin 2012, 139).

In this cycle of collective action, the collective apprehension with the reduction in public investments and the withdrawal of or reductions in public service financing, particularly in health and education, are some of the aspects that have given rise to greater degrees of dissatisfaction in Portugal as well as in other countries in Europe. Whether on the subjective level, or whether in relation to working conditions and access to employment, educated young people, as we have seen in this essay, are among those most affected by the changes taking place in the economies. As for Portugal, the increase in precariousness and unemployment has been more pronounced for the young, with approximately half of these to be found in precarious situations and for whom unemployment is around double the national average. The economic crisis, the violent austerity measures, with the growing unemployment and the expansion of poverty (including in the middle class segments) contributed decisively to the new discontents. People are becoming increasingly impatient and mistrustful of national and European politicians, and over the last two years, they have started to protest. On the one hand, we are witnessing in Portugal large mobilisations of trade unions, organised, above all, by groups in the public sector and in the area of education. In November 2011, a general strike took place, organized by the two main trade union confederations, CGTP and UGT (ordinarily rivals). One year later, a new general strike took place, on November 14th, but in this case it gained a European dimension: it happened not only in

Portugal but also in Greece, Spain, Cyprus and Malta. It was the first European strike of the XXIst century and it can be considered a relevant step toward a "global trade unionism", an aspiration that has acquired more frequently the shape of a "delayed metaphor" (Costa 2008).

On the other hand, the initiatives of those involved in the "precarious" movements are proliferating, organised by indignant young people in the absence of opportunities to get a dignified job, and after having invested in academic careers at the universities. From having an individualist, consumerist and indifferent attitude, from the search for individual solutions that led them to reject politics, from the evolution of the old activism (of the 1970s) to recent indifference, young Portuguese people, similar to the Spanish, English, French, Greek, Americans and even those who organised the Arab Spring, are showing signs of wanting to have a voice and to return to assert a collective will.

Of course the social causes that underlie the Arab revolutions are obviously not the same as those underlying the discontent in Western Europe. In the first case, political democracy did not exist. In the second case, political democracy let itself become corrupted and was incapable of assuring with economic democracy. The defence of social cohesion, which formerly was secured by the social state, is on the verge of a breakdown. We must not forget that Europe is a puzzle of extremely unequal pieces which cannot be put together. In the late-developing European democracies of the southern countries (Portugal, Spain and Greece) the historical experiences of state authoritarianism left deep scars, and the brutality of the police forces and the centralisation of political power continued to prosper after the fall of the respective dictatorships.

In this context, how to apprehend these different phenomenon, identifying at the same time the commonality of its features and the specificity of each context?

In the Portuguese case, a feature that became evident, and it seems to be common to all this cycle of protest, is the return of material issues as central elements of political mobilization and struggle identity formation. Transformations in work, characterized mainly by the installation of unprecedented unemployment and a rampant process of precarization of labour relations, are now deepened by the dynamics introduced by austerity policies whose effects are cutting wages and social benefits, shrinking social functions of the state and the worsening of the debt problem, resulting from the transformation of a financial crisis in a crisis of sovereign debts of the states. March 12 was the moment of expression of a general discontent, which addresses not only the functioning of economy, but it is revealing, too, a crisis of legitimacy of political institutions. Indeed, if this cycle of protest began with movements for democracy in the Arab world, whose political regimes were clearly authoritarian, its expression in the countries of Southern Europe, or the way they emerged on the other side of the ocean in the U.S., reveals a distrust and discontent

of citizens regarding political institutions and the claim for a "real democracy", to use the expression of the Spanish Indignados.

Another element common in this cycle of collective action is the fact that young people, particularly young people with high skills and a subordinate insertion in the labour market, are among the most active protagonists of social movements. Like in other countries, but the specificity related to our development model, Portuguese youth has been among the segments of the population who suffers more with the economic recession and is particularly unprotected to face this situation with a minimum of security, regarding social and labour rights. The feeling of loss of quality of life, whether in relation to levels previously experienced, either by reference to expectations, or what could legitimately be expected given the increase and investment in skills, is one of the reasons that explain the current cycle of mobilizations.

In this context, this graduated and precarious youth has revealed a mistrust of traditional forms of organization, such as trade unions and political parties. In the Arab countries, the repressive context inhibited the emergence of a civil society and the virtual space of flows on the Internet was the place where could be rooted a public space with minimal autonomy. The most skilled young people, protagonists of this digital culture, were key players in the processes of democratization in those countries and dispensed, in most cases, previously existing institutions. In the Portuguese case, the onset of inorganic phenomena of mobilization with great ability to attract mass presence of discontents have reconfigured the field of protest, forcing parties and labour organizations to position themselves about this experience, forging a relationship marked by ambiguities, tensions and disputes.

The non-hierarchical logic of networking, which tends to reject delegation, doesn't mean anonymity, quite on the contrary. Both in "Desperate Generation" as in other examples of this cycle of mobilizations, the biographical testimony had an unprecedented relevance. In the U.S., the Occupy movement was preceded, during August, a Tumblr (an online platform) entitled "We Are the 99%", which welcomed the individual testimonies of citizens who shared their stories and, in doing it, activated a very strong dynamic of identification. Also on March 12th, both the convenors of the protest and the protesters acted in a logic of individual autonomy rather than collective representation. The event on Facebook was created by four youngsters who embodied, each in its own way, the new subjects of precariousness. In the day of the demonstration, people were asked to individually fill a sheet of paper or a design a poster, which then would be delivered to policy makers.

In any of these cases, though in different ways, Internet and wireless communication devices played a key role, not only as a means of communication but as elements that prefigure the forms of

organization, deliberation and political participation, leading to new collaborative practices, reinventing democratic practices, opening new political horizons. The multitudinous reappropriation of social networking and wireless communication can be characterized as a mechanism of "self-mass communication" (Castells 2012). The message is autonomously decided by the issuer, but it communicates with many, potentially with millions. Depending on the dissemination via Internet and wireless networks, used as platforms for digital communication, it was possible to create viral phenomena. Virtual communication networks made it possible to organize mass protests outside the traditional pre-existing structures and build up autonomous public spaces in authoritarian contexts, empowering individuals, which was a prerequisite for the international contamination between movements.

The occupation of public spaces such as streets, squares, symbolic buildings, or others, coupled with virtual spaces - social networks, participatory forums, phone applications and other devices - created a "hybrid public space" (Castells 2012). Either on the Internet networks, either in the released spaces of occupied squares or "acampadas", this hybrid public sphere was an essential source of autonomy, to enhance communication processes that escaped the control of those who hold institutional power.

Political diversity and programmatic fluidity are features of many of the mobilizations we've been referring to. In the case of the Portuguese March 12, the diversity of causes and agents was evident at the protest, proven either by the observation of who joined the parade, either by the analysis of the topics and approaches made by protesters on the problems that led them to the street and the solutions proposed. In fact, a certain desire for democratic experimentation, coupled with a more or less diffuse dissatisfaction with the current form of amputated democracy, dwelled this protest, in a sometimes problematic sometimes creative tension between now and the future, institutional, insurgents and disruptive practices.

## 6 Final Note

Since late 2010 and early 2011, we have witnessed a new cycle of global mobilizations. With significant differences according to the contexts in which they occur, its agendas and modes of action, many of the protests that have erupted in several countries share a set of features and are interconnected. They reveal, in different ways, a crisis of legitimacy of political actors, widespread dissatisfaction with the responses in the face of economic crisis and concern about the processes of labour precarization that are today a strong global trend, very relevant among the youth of Southern Europe and the Arab countries. Accordingly, we tried to demonstrate that material issues, and in particular the socio-labour topics, are at the heart of these new forms of collective action.

In Portugal, this cycle had its foundational moment with the demonstration of March 12th, 2011. Organized from an initial appeal in the Internet space of flows, called outside of traditional structures, this protest filled the streets of several cities in the country, with the participation of about half a million people. The identification of a common condition associated with precarity among young people - the so-called "Desperate Generation" - produced a feeling of unity and recognition that exceeded the cyberspace and materialized in the occupation of public space. This demonstration was intergenerational in its composition and very diverse in the type of claims that were expressed, the issues of labour and employment having dominance, but the discontent against government, politicians in general and corruption also having a relevant weight.

The Portuguese case has specificities related with the country's semi-peripheral condition, the rhythms of its own political process, its history and its institutional structure. There are however a number of features that bring together the demonstration of March 12 and other phenomena of this cycle of global protest, namely informality, demand for horizontality, contamination and transnational flows, the role of graduated precarious and unemployed youth, the intensive use of social networks, creating a "hybrid public space" that combines online and offline, as well as a programmatic fluidity and a desire for democratic experimentation.

The Portuguese example is interesting to think about the conditions of collective action in societies where, from an economic point of view, there is recession and a process of rampant precarization, from a political perspective assist the weakening of democracy by the agendas of international institutions and financial markets, and from the standpoint of social logics by strong individuation. Internet and its culture of autonomy were, in this context, an instrument for reinventing the modalities of collective action in a society of individuals. March 12, as other examples of the global cycle of protest to which we refer, had the ability to set the political agenda and determine the themes and terms of public debate. Its programmatic fluidity may, however, be regarded as both its strength and its weakness, in that the immediate consequences of these mobilizations are dependent on how institutional agents react and how in the political field is redefined the balance of forces. Bringing new dynamics to the field of citizenship, these mobilizations are certainly a central subject for sociology of social movements in the present time.

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#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Since January 2009, Iceland witnessed to a new process of popular mobilization against the recovery of the debts of private banks and the decisions of the political institutions. The protest of citizens led to the appointment (by the Icelandic Parliament) of a group of 25 independent citizens in order to design the draft of a new constitution. This group of people launched a participatory process, through social networks and the Internet, which collected more than 16,000 suggestions. After 4 months, this group presented a draft constitution, which was known as “wikiconstitution”, once it was done using the interactive and collaborative platforms allowed through cyberspace.

<sup>2</sup> The expression “dictatorship of acquired rights” was used in the Portuguese parliament by the leader of the right-wing party youth, Duarte Marques, on the 20th of January 2012. This thesis is, in different forms, a mainstream argument of many approaches based on neoliberal presuppositions and on the idea of a generational segmentation of labour market (cf. Mário Centeno (2013), *O Trabalho. Uma Visão de Mercado*. Lisboa: Fundação Francisco Manuel dos Santos/Relógio d'Água).

<sup>3</sup> A group of 29 citizens launched a call in the social networks for a manifestations on that day under the motto “Fuck the Troika! We want our lives back”. In the manifesto of the initiative, there is a very critical diagnostic with regards to the recent political choices: “after more than one year of austerity under the external intervention [bailout], our perspective, the perspective of the great majority of people that live in Portugal, are getting worse” because “the austerity that is imposed and that destroys our dignity and life, does not work and destroys democracy”. The appeal to the citizens insubordination - “if they want to us to bow and force us to accept unemployment, precarity and inequality as a way of life, we will respond with the force of democracy, of liberty, of mobilization and of struggle” - had an echo and would be materialized in more than 30 cities that gathered approximately one million people in various Portuguese cities.

## Xenia Chrysochoou, Stamos Papastamou and Gerasimos Prodromitis

### Facing the Economic Crisis in Greece: The Effects of Grievances, Real and Perceived Vulnerability, and Emotions Towards the Crisis on Reactions to Austerity Measures

This research was conducted in Greece during a period of major economic crisis when everyday events contributed to a changing and threatening socio-political environment. The paper looks at the structure of reactions Greek people (N=1040) have towards the crisis. Informed by social psychological theories of collective action and relative deprivation it is hypothesized that these reactions would depend on people's actual financial position, their sense of grievances and feelings of vulnerability and the emotions they felt towards the crisis. Results show that people have multiple ways of reacting that go from radical and even violent practices towards individual solutions and depression. These reactions are differently predicted by people's position, feelings of vulnerability and sense of grievances and by different emotions. It is not people's actual position that influences reactions and feelings of vulnerability are a major predictor. Moreover, sense of grievances are linked to more radical forms of action but also to depression. Emotions play an important role in predicting reactions to the crisis. Anger is confirmed as a predictor of political participation and collective action whereas fear and frustration are a major predictor of depression. Positive emotions also predict collective action with the exception of violent practices.

#### Keywords

Economic crisis, Greece, collective action, emotions, depression, vulnerability

#### 1 Introduction

In April 2010 the Greek Prime Minister, G. Papandreou, announced that the country was unable to overcome its financial difficulties and would ask help from the IMF. In the weeks that followed this announcement, a support mechanism was created for the first time involving the IMF the EU and the European Central Bank. These three institutions formed a Troika under whose supervision Greece was due to function. The government signed a memorandum of agreement regarding the country's debt and started imposing severe austerity measures to the Greek society. Since then, several memoranda have been signed and several waves

of austerity measures have been imposed from subsequent governments. Strong protests took place in the whole country against these measures and against the impoverishment of society at large. In many occasions the protests were confronted by police who used serious force to contain protesters. One of the first, and perhaps the largest demonstration since the end of the dictatorship in 1973-74, took place the 5th of May 2010. It, unfortunately, ended with the death of 3 people suffocated in a bank branch that took fire after being attacked by petrol bombs. On May 2011 a new wave of austerity measures led the movement of indignant citizens to occupy Syntagma square at the center of Athens (25/05/11). This movement, followed by thousands of people, lasted till the autumn of the same year when people were violently chased from the square by police force. In general, spring 2011 was marked by important public demonstrations. On June 29th 2011 another major protest was brutally counteracted by police leaving several people injured. The protest took a different form in October 2011 when, during national celebrations, people expressed their anger against politicians throwing against them eggs and yogurt and chasing them from the parades. The same events continued in subsequent national celebrations. The end of the occupation of Syntagma square led to the birth of different popular assemblies in neighborhoods. Big demonstrations including clashing with the police continued to take place (February 2012). Greek society protested vehemently against austerity measures. However, protest did not take only the form of public demonstrations. There are, for example, acts of public disobedience and of refusal to pay taxes and tolls which are considered unbearable and unfair. Moreover, besides these actions of public protest, it is not uncommon that people decide to put an end to their life. On the 4th of April 2012, D. Cristoulas, 77, killed himself in the center of Syntagma square leaving a political message of protest. More people put an end to their life in a less public way. From the start of 2009 till

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August 2012, according to police records more than 3000 people committed suicide in Greece which correspond to a 37% rise. Today, unemployment corresponds to 26% of the active population. Among youngsters the unemployment is more than 60% and many seek a better situation abroad. Grievances are generalized in Greece.

When the "Arab spring" started the protests in Greece were already there. Although the popular protest in these countries was initiated by different socio-historical factors and different claims are involved, there is also a common point: people's reaction against power-holders accusing them of violating the popular will and asking clearly for democracy in the public sphere. When the "Arab uprising" started the dispute in Greece was acute. Movements were calling for public disobedience and ministers were denouncing these behaviors as "antisocial". Thus, the Greek situation might echo aspects of the "Arab spring".

The research presented here was conducted in this context. Data were gathered in November-December 2011 as part of a larger questionnaire aiming to investigate how people represented the economic crisis and the factors that would influence such representation. Informed by social psychological theories we tried to explore the new social context, marked by the severe economic crisis, a crisis which turned to be also political, social and humanitarian. In this paper we aim to explore the structure of the reactions to the crisis and some factors that may differentiate them. As said earlier the crisis generated different forms of collective action than what is observed usually. These actions are radical collective actions (actions done collectively with the aim to change things for the whole group) radical violent actions, individually acted practices that aim to make a collective difference or individualistic actions. We aim to investigate the willingness of people to participate to an array of actions that took place as a result of the crisis in Greece and to explore the structure of reactions. Moreover, given the important rise of suicides we aim to look at the factors that lead to depression and to the contemplation of killing oneself.

We know from the social-psychological literature that factors which influence collective action include self-identification with social categories that either are affected by the issue (Drury & Reicher 2000; Tajfel and Turner 1986; Reicher 2001; van Zomeren, Postmes and Spears 2008) or promote action for change (activists) (Simon, Loewy, Sturmer, Weber, Freytag, Habib, Kampmeier and Spahlinger 1998; Simon and Klandermans 2001; Sturmer & Simon 2004). Other factors found to influence collective action are perceptions of grievances and efficacy of the actions (Klandermans 1997) and emotions (van Zomeren, Spears, Fischer and Leach 2004).

Reacting to a major event such as an economic crisis, impoverishment and austerity measures presents differences in relation to other issues that cause grievances. An economic crisis is a major and threatening event that impacts, albeit differently, on

large parts of the society in terms of material resources. Moreover, it touches also the representation of everyone. Thus, it does not constitute a specific issue concerning a certain category of people that could be mobilized for change. As a consequence, from a social-psychological point of view, it is difficult to identify the social category that would constitute the identity to be mobilized. In this context, identities would be used strategically by people and "entrepreneurs of identity" (Reicher and Hopkins 2001) to promote specific political plans. In this research therefore we would not focus on a specific group or a specific identification but we would investigate feelings of grievances due to the situation as well as people's actual position defined by their income.

Indeed, it is believed that people are motivated to act and protest if they are affected by measures or when they occupy a disadvantaged position in society. However, there is also evidence that people in low socio-economic status legitimize the system that sustain the inequality disfavoring them (Jost and Major 2001). Thus, it is important to look at the impact of people's actual position as measured by their income on the different reactions to the economic crisis along with their perception of grievances.

Grievances are found to be a major predictor of collective action (Klandermans 1997). It is the realization of common grievances that could make salient collective identities that in turn would promote action. In relation to such a massive event that affects large parts of society, such as an economic crisis, grievances take different forms. It is difficult therefore to specify their content. Relative deprivation theory (Crosby 1976; Pettigrew 2002; Runciman 1966; Walker & Smith 2002) considers that it is not so much the content or level of grievances but the fact that people feel entitled to something in comparison to others at an individual or collective level or in relation to what they had in the past. Informed by this theory we conceptualize grievances, here, as the realization that one is in a worse economic position than others in the country or in relation to one's previous position in the past. We believe that a motivation to act would come either by the realization that one has a disadvantage in relation to others or, given the crisis, the realization that (s)he has lost one's position.

Furthermore, an economic crisis constitutes a major threatening event that undermines people's possibility to make plans and to vision a future. We hypothesize here that along with their actual position and the realization of grievances another important factor that may impact on collective action are feelings of economic vulnerability in the future. These feelings of vulnerability are found to impact on perceptions of the social order and the welfare state (Staerkle, Delay, Gianettoni and Roux 2007). We hypothesize here that feelings of vulnerability would affect reactions in the sense that the more vulnerable people would feel the more they would be pushed to do something about. Given, however, that vulnerability expresses the threat people feel it

might affect all types of reactions, either individual or collective.

Collective action is found to be influenced by emotions and in particular feelings of anger provoked by the situation. Recent research considers that there are two routes to collective action: the efficacy route and the emotion route. Although research shows that they might be issues where one route is prioritized over the other (Tausch, Becher, Spears, Christ, Saab & Singh 2011; van Zomeren et al. 2004) a question remains as to whether we should separate what would seem a more rational from a more emotional aspect (Jasper 1998; Miller, 2011; van Stekelemburg, Klandermans & van Dijk 2009, 2011). Moreover, in the case of an event sustained in time, such as an economic crisis, where the adversary is not clear and the power-holders towards whom one claims and protest are vague, efficacy may not be the deciding factor for action. People in Greece protested several times and despite the violent clashes with police forces, the massive demonstrations and the general opposition to the measures, austerity was voted by the parliament. Thus, what motivated people to demonstrate may not be the feeling that their action would have an immediate effect. In this paper we will not explore the efficacy route. We hypothesize here that reactions relate to the emotions people felt towards the crisis, emotions that somehow imposed a reaction (Jasper 1998). It is striking that a poll conducted by MARC for the newspaper "ETHNOS" (Nation) for the first time asked people about their emotions. Thirty point eight percent of the respondents (30.8%) said that they feel rage and 30.9% disappointment (Ethnos 27/02/2011). Thus, we investigated whether different emotions led to specific types of actions. Besides anger, we included emotions that, according to relative deprivation theory (Crosby 1976), lead to depression ( stress, frustration and helplessness) as well as emotions that are found to inhibit action such as fear (Miller, Cronin, Garcia and Branscombe 2009) and emotions that relate to fighting, solidarity and optimism that are also connected to protest (Jasper 1998).

To summarize, we investigate here the structure of reactions people have in the context of Greek economic crisis and we hypothesize that these reactions would depend on people's actual financial position, their sense of grievances and feelings of vulnerability and the emotions they felt towards the crisis.

## 2 Method

### Participants

One thousand and forty (N=1040) questionnaires were collected in November-December 2011 in Greece mostly in the area of Attica. An almost equivalent number of men (N=495) and women (N=525) responded (20 people did not report their gender). Participants were between 17 and 91 years-old with a mean age of 39.05 years (median=38). All participants were born in Greece (465 in Athens) and

more than half were living in Athens (N=694). Almost 50% were married/divorced or widowed (N=459). In terms of education, half of the respondents had a higher education degree (N=520), an equivalent number completed technical education after secondary education (N=228) or had a secondary education degree (N=223) and fifty two people had completed only primary education (17 people did not report their education level). Most people were in full-time jobs (N=437), 88 reported being part-timers, 79 unemployed, 98 were retired, 47 ticked the box "housekeeping" and 17 the box "career break". The sample comprised also 184 students (25 people ticked "other" without specification and 65 did not report their employment status).

### Material and Procedure

Participants were approached individually by researchers and were asked to reply to a battery of questions from which only the following, pertaining to the research questions, will be presented here. A series of questions (N=32) concerned intended reactions to the crisis. Beyond the standard items of political participation such as "strike", "demonstration", "signing petitions", "occupying public buildings" "participating through political parties or unions" and "creating blogs", questions were proposed to include new forms of participation that emerged during the crisis (for example " reconnecting illegally electricity", "refusal to pay more taxes", "attacking police forces", "participation in public assemblies of indignant citizens" "redistributing robbed food from super-markets"). Moreover, more individual solutions were proposed ("immigrating", "acquiring skills through education", "keeping money at home"). Participants had to reply on 7-points Likert scales from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree). Responses were factor analyzed (see results section) and after controlling for the internal reliability of each factor new variables were computed to be used as outcome variables in the analysis. Another variable used as outcome related to questions aiming to measure the depressive state of participants. We used a subscale of the General Health Questionnaire (Goldberg, 1978, 1988). Respondents had to give on a 7-points scale (1=not at all, 7= all the time) the degree to which during the last four weeks they felt (7 items): "worthless", that "living is not worth it", that "the possibility to give an end to their life crossed their mind", that "there is nothing they can do", that they "wished to be dead to avoid all the problems" and that they found that "the idea to end their life crossed their mind very often". The internal reliability ( $\alpha=.871$ ) being good, a new variable was computed averaging the individual scores for the seven items and was called depressive state. To measure real and perceived economic vulnerability, participants were asked to supply the level of their family annual income on a seven points scale from "below 5000" to "more than 50.000" (measure of real vulnerability) and to respond to a 9 item scale of perceived vulnerability inspired by Staerkele, Delay, Gianettoni and Roux (2007). In

particular respondents had to evaluate how likely they thought it was that in one or two years from now they will find themselves to be "not able to find a job or losing the one they already have", "needing economic support from friends and relatives", "living with relatives, roommates etc. in order to cope financially", "attaining the goals they had set up for the next two years", "finding that their education is no longer of value in the labor market", "doing things you enjoy", "having free time", "not being able to pay your bills" and "finding that the things that you would like to have are too expensive for you". Answers were given on a 7-points Likert scale (1=not at all likely, 7=highly likely). After reversing the relevant items so that high values correspond to high vulnerability, the internal reliability was controlled ( $\alpha=.754$ ) and a new variable named "perceived vulnerability" was computed by averaging the scores of the nine items. Grievances were measured by two separate items. Respondents had to say (on a 7 points scale 1=much worse to 7=much better) what was their economic situation "compared to other people in the Greek society" or "compared to one year ago". Grievances were measured in comparison to others as a relative deprivation issue, since we were interested in the perception people had of their current position. Finally, participants were asked to evaluate the extent to which they felt the following emotions in relation to the crisis (1= not at all, 7=very often): anger, disappointment, fear, frustration, guilt, helplessness, humiliation, indignation, optimism, rage, sadness, sense of fighting, solidarity, stress, trust (Jasper, 1998).

The variables issued by the exploratory factor analysis on the items measuring the reactions towards the crisis and the depressive state were used as outcome variables in the analysis whereas the variables of real and perceived vulnerability, relative deprivation and the emotions were used as predictors.

### 3 Results

Analyses were performed using SPSS 17 statistical package at a level of significance  $p<.05$

#### Reactions towards the crisis and their structure

The 32 items concerning the reactions towards the crisis were submitted to an exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation ( $KMO=.901$ ) which yielded 7 factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 explaining 63.38% of the total variance. The first factor with eigenvalue 9.24 and variance 28.86% included the items (loadings in brackets): occupation of public buildings and ministries (.729), participation to public demonstrations against austerity measures (.722), refusal to pay any new taxes (.712), refusal to pay tolls (.687), blocking roads, ports and airports (.644), reconnecting illegally power to those that could not pay electricity bills (.641), strike (.640), participation to the meetings of indignant citizens (.564) and participating to popular assemblies in neighborhoods

(.476). After controlling for its reliability ( $\alpha=.884$ ) a new variable was computed averaging the scores of the above named items and was called "Activism". The second factor with eigenvalue 3.34 and variance 10.45% included the items: placing incendiary devices in public buildings (.837), burning cars of politicians (.797), destroying public property (.752), physically assault politicians (.724), attacking anti-riot police forces during demonstrations (.671), assaulting politicians with eggs and yogurts (.570), robbing food from supermarkets and distributing it to poor people (.554). Again, after controlling for its reliability ( $\alpha=.867$ ) a new variable was computed averaging the scores of the relevant items and was called "Violent practices". The third factor with eigenvalue 1.93 and variance 6.04% included the items: action through participation in political parties (.772), action through participation in unions (.692), signing petitions (.547), action through NGOs (.480), petition to exit the Euro-zone (.397). The reliability being satisfactory ( $\alpha=.701$ ) a new variable was computed by averaging the scores of these items and was named "usual forms of participation". The fourth factor with eigenvalue 1.85 and variance 5.78% included the items: taking one's savings out of Greece to foreign banks in order to protect them (.796), taking collectively all money deposits from banks (.771) and keeping money home to be able to cope with tough moments (.719). Since the reliability was satisfactory ( $\alpha=.740$ ) the items were averaged into a new one called "financial security". The fifth factor with eigenvalue 1.56 and variance 4.87% included the items: publication of text on the internet approving acts of political violence (.704), publication of text on the internet inciting to political disobedience (.607), sending political e-mails (.583) and constructing a website/blog (.536). These items were also computed into a new variable after checking their reliability ( $\alpha=.778$ ) and formed a factor called "Internet and political disobedience". The sixth factor (eigenvalue=1.21, variance =3.78%) included two items: boycotting foreign products (.851) and buying only Greek products (.842). The internal reliability being satisfactory ( $r=.658$ ) again these items were averaged into a new variable called "National consumption". Finally, the last factor (eigenvalue=1.15, variance=3.61%) included also two items: increasing one's abilities and skills through education and training to be able to cope with the demands of the labor market (.692) and immigrating to a prosperous country to find a job (.653). The correlation between them being satisfactory ( $r=.240$ ) these items were computed into a new variable, using the average scores' method, which was named "individual reactions".

These reactions can be ordered from radical collective actions to individualistic reactions and inaction (depressive state). In this research depression is considered as a variable to be explained and not as an explanatory variable.

#### The structure of emotions

The 15 emotions were subjected to an exploratory factor analysis with oblimin rotation ( $KMO=.874$ ) that

yielded three factors with eigenvalue greater than 1 which explained 58.23% of the total variance. The first factor with eigenvalue 5.291 explaining 35.274% of the variance included the items: fear (.757), frustration (.738), sadness (.733), stress (.704), disappointment (.617), guilt (.611), humiliation (.558) and helplessness (.553). These were emotions that denoted a negative psychological state in relation to the crisis. After checking the reliability ( $\alpha=.853$ ) these emotions were computed in one scale by averaging the score of the relevant items. This scale is called "fear/frustration" from the first two loading emotions. The second factor with eigenvalue 1.963 and variance 13.085% included the emotions: trust (.741), optimism (.688), solidarity (.659) and sense of fighting (.603). These were positive emotions towards the crisis denoting, in particular, a sense of trust and optimism that the crisis would be overcome with solidarity and fighting. The reliability of the scale being satisfactory ( $\alpha=.639$ ) the emotions were averaged in a single factor called thereafter "trust in fighting/solidarity". Finally, the third factor with eigenvalue 1.481 and variance 9.871% included the emotions: anger (-.773), indignation (-.752) and rage (-.719). After checking the reliability ( $\alpha=.842$ ) the three items were computed into a new variable by averaging their scores. The new factor is called hereafter "anger/indignation".

Descriptive Statistics of the variables used in the analysis

As can be seen from table 1 the most intended reactions are "national consumption", "individual reactions" and "activism" whereas the least intended are "violent practices" and depressive state. In addition the most felt emotion is the factor of anger (anger, indignation, rage) and the least felt are the

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations for all variables used in the analysis.

Variable	Mean	SD	min	max
Violent practices	2,05	1,33	1	7
Activism	4,19	1,57	1	7
Internet disobedience	3,25	1,68	1	7
Usual forms	3,67	1,28	1	7
National consumption	5,12	1,85	1	7
Financial Security	3,3	1,70	1	7
Individual reactions	4,51	1,57	1	7
Depressive State	2,08	1,20	1	7
Family income	3,66 <sup>*</sup>	1,46	1	7
Perceived vulnerability	4,84	1,1	1,33	7
Grievances comparison with others	3,95	1,25	1	7
Grievances comparison with a year	2,81	1,36	1	7
Anger/Indignation/Rage	5,75	1,4	1	7
Fear/Frustration/Sadness/stress/deception/guilt/humiliation/helplessness	4,47	1,27	1	7
Trust/solidarity/sense of fighting/optimism	3,89	1,19	1	7

\* The mean family income corresponds approx. to the level 10.000-25.000 euros a year (median income between 10.000 and 20.000 euros a year).

emotions relating to trust in the fight (trust, solidarity, sense of fighting, optimism).

It is noteworthy that all reactions correlated positively with each other with two noticeable exceptions (table 2): violent practices did not correlate with individual reactions and depressive state did not correlate with national consumption.

Table 2: Reactions to the crisis-correlations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Violent Practices	1							
2. Activism	.512**	1						
3. Internet Disobedience	.451**	.601**	1					
4. Usual Forms	.222**	.514**	.466**	1				
5. National Consumption	.106**	.304**	.233**	.241**	1			
6. Financial Security	.317**	.317**	.267**	.188**	.108*	1		
7. Individual reactions	-.026 ns	-.139**	.168**	.125**	.136**	.205**	1	
8. Depressive State	-.231**	-.133**	.135**	.190**	.058 ns	.163**	.077*	1

Predicting reactions to the crisis: the effects of real and perceived vulnerability, relative deprivation and emotions

A series of 8 hierarchical regressions were performed with the 7 reactions and the variable "depressive state" as outcome variables and family income, perceived vulnerability, grievances and emotions as predictors.

*Violent practices* ( $R=.224$ ,  $Rsq=.050$  AdjRsq=.043  $F(7-982)=7.357$   $p<.001$ ) were predicted by fear/frustration (negatively), anger/indignation/rage, perceived vulnerability and comparison with others in Greece (see table 3 for the betas). Thus, the more people felt vulnerable, angry but also fearless and the more they judged their situation to be in a worse condition than others in Greece the more they were willing to engage in violent actions.

*Activism* ( $R=.420$ ,  $Rsq=.177$  AdjRsq=.171  $F(9-982)=29,911$   $p<.001$ ) was predicted positively by feelings of Anger/indignation/rage, perceived vulnerability, and trust in fighting and negatively by fear/frustration and comparison of own situation with others in Greece. Thus, the more people felt vulnerable, enraged and combative and the less they felt fearful/frustrated/sad etc. the more they intended to engage with actions of activism. Moreover the worse they judged their own situation in Greece in relation to others the more they claimed this type of actions.

*Using the Internet for political Disobedience* ( $R=.262$ ,  $Rsq=.072$  AdjRsq=.065  $F(7-982)=10.766$   $p<.001$ ) was predicted by perceived vulnerability, "anger/indignation/rage", "trust/solidarity/fighting/optimism" and grievances in comparison with a year ago. The more people felt vulnerable, enraged and with solidarity/trust/fighting and the more they declared that their situation was in a worse condition in comparison with a year ago, the more they were willing to use the internet to incite towards political disobedience.

*Usual forms of participation* ( $R=.267$ ,  $Rsq=.071$  AdjRsq=.064  $F(7-980)=10,641$   $p<.001$ ) were predicted by all three factors of emotions ("anger/indignation/rage", "fear/frustration", and "trust/fighting/solidarity/optimism"). It was also

predicted by family income (negatively). In other words, the more angry, frustrated and trustful in fighting people felt, the more they intended to engage in usual forms of participation through organizations. Moreover, the less family income they declared the more they were willing to engage in these forms of actions.

*National Consumption* (R=.265, Rsq=.070 AdjRsq=.064 F(7-977)=10.497 p<.001) was predicted only by emotions: "Anger/Indignation/rage" and "Fear/Frustration". Thus, the more people felt angry and fearful/frustrated the more they were willing to buy only Greek products or boycott foreign ones.

*Financial security* (R=.184, Rsq=.034 AdjRsq=.027 F(7-977)=4.862 p<.01) was predicted by only two factors: yearly family income and perceived vulnerability, showing that the less family income people declared and the more vulnerable they felt the more they were willing to keep their own money safe.

*Individual reactions* (R=.170, Rsq=.029 AdjRsq=.022 F(7-976)=4.114 p<.001) were predicted by perceived vulnerability and "fear/frustration". The more people felt vulnerable and the more they feared the more they declared being willing to increase their skills or immigrating.

*Depressive State* (R=.450, Rsq=.202 AdjRsq=.197 F(7-978)=35.192 p<.001) was predicted mostly by feelings of fear/frustration but also negatively by anger/indignation/rage and trust/solidarity/fighting. It was also predicted by grievances in relation to others, reduced income and feelings of vulnerability. From these results, the more people felt frustrated, fearful, sad and helpless and the less angry and combative the more they felt depressed. Moreover, the less family income they declare, the more they think that they are in a worse position than others in Greece and the more vulnerable they feel the more they declare being in a state of depression where the thought to abandon life crossed their minds.

F(7-982)=7.357 p<.001) were predicted by fear/frustration (negatively), anger/indignation/rage, perceived vulnerability and comparison with others in Greece (see table 3 for the betas). Thus, the more people felt vulnerable, angry but also fearless and the more they judged their situation to be in a worse condition than others in Greece the more they were willing to engage in violent actions.

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Table 3: Reactions to the crisis-correlations

	Violent Practices	Activism	Internet Disobedience	Usual Forms	National Consumption	Financial Security	Individual Solutions	Depression
Income				-.093		-.132		-.123
Vulnerability	.099	.256	.132			.102	.150	-.074
Grievances others	-.105	-.073						-.155
Grievances temporal			-.088					
Anger	.152	.279	.121	.093	.195			-.091
Fear frustration	-.158	-.141		.126	.094		.092	.219
Trust fighting solidarity		.108	.123	.080				-.071

Predicting reactions to the crisis: the effects of real and perceived vulnerability, relative deprivation and emotions

A series of 8 hierarchical regressions were performed with the 7 reactions and the variable "depressive state" as outcome variables and family income, perceived vulnerability, grievances and emotions as predictors.

Violent practices (R=.224, Rsq=.050 AdjRsq=.043

anger/indignation/rage and trust/solidarity/fighting. It was also predicted by grievances in relation to others, reduced income and feelings of vulnerability. From these results, the more people felt frustrated, fearful, sad and helpless and the less angry and combative the more they felt depressed. Moreover, the less family income they declare, the more they think that they are in a worse position than others in Greece and the more vulnerable they feel the more they declare being in a state of depression where the thought to abandon life crossed their minds.

Table 4: Summary of the betas for the 8 models tested ( $p < .05$ )

	Violent Practices	Activism	Internet Disobedience	Usual Forms	National Consumption	Financial Security	Individual Solutions	Depression
Income				-.093		-.132		-.123
Vulnerability	.099	.256	.132			.102	.150	.074
Grievances others	-.105	-.073						-.155
Grievances temporal			-.088					
Anger	.152	.279	.121	.093	.195			-.091
Fear frustration	-.158	-.141		.126	.094		.092	.319
Trust fighting solidarity		.108	.123	.080				-.071

#### 4 Discussion

In this paper we aimed to describe the structure of reactions to the economic crisis in Greece and to see whether these reactions are predicted by the real and perceived vulnerability, emotions towards the crisis and sense of grievances.

The analysis showed that reactions to the crisis can be ordered from violent actions and radical forms of activism to individual solutions. The three more radical forms of reactions were violent practices, activism and using the internet to call for political disobedience. The most popular form of reaction was "national consumption", in other words the preference for national and the boycotting of foreign products. This mild, individually acted, form of collective reaction was followed by individual solutions that included personal development and immigration to a wealthier country. Another set of reactions that could be considered individualistic was to keep one's money safe abroad or withdraw them from the banks. However, these options were not very popular.

Although these reactions could give the impression that people choose individual solutions to face the crisis, this would be a wrong conclusion. Indeed, the third most popular reaction is activism that included many radical actions of public demonstration and disobedience. These set of reactions differed from the factor "violent practices" mostly on the target of the actions. The actions included in the factor "activism" concerned the public space and society at large whereas the actions included to the factor "violent practices" were mostly directed towards politicians. This latter factor, however, was given the least support. People were also keen to use the internet to call for political disobedience and act through political

organizations, unions and NGOs. Finally, this sample did not claim high levels of depression due to the crisis.

These reactions were differently predicted by real or perceived vulnerability, sense of grievances and emotional states. The more radical actions were not predicted by levels of family income (real vulnerability) but by the threat of future vulnerability. Moreover, violent practices and activism were predicted by sense of grievances in relation to others in Greece whereas the use of internet to call for political disobedience was predicted by temporal sense of grievances (position a year ago). It is important to note that it is not the actual position of people that leads them towards radical actions but their perception of this position in relation to others which relates to a sense of relative deprivation. In addition, new forms of influence using internet technologies are predicted by temporal relative deprivation which might mean that people performing these actions are newly impoverished. On the contrary, what we called "usual forms of action", referring to organized practices through unions, political parties and NGO's, are predicted by family income and not by perceived future vulnerability. Thus, the less people's income is, the more they are willing to perform these traditional forms of political participation. This finding might suggest that these forms of action relate to people's actual position.

Regarding emotions, anger (indignation/rage) was related to all actions that have a collective character, including national consumption, that although individually acted intended to have a collective impact. In addition, it was negatively connected to depression and unconnected to the more individualistic reactions (financial security and individual solutions). This result confirms other findings in the literature that show that anger can be a trigger of collective action (Van Zomeren et al. 2004). In our case anger was also related to radical actions of non-normative character (Tausch et al. 2011)

Fear and frustration (and other negative emotions) were negatively related to the most radical actions such as violent practices and activism. It is noteworthy, though, that these emotions were positively related to usual forms of political participation, national consumption and individual solutions. Thus, being afraid and frustrated may lead people to choose milder reactions or individual options. At this point it is important to note that the factor of negative emotions (fear/frustration) is the most important predictor of depressive state. The more people feel afraid and frustrated the more they declare having negative thoughts including the loss of their own life. Characteristically both the factor of anger and the positive emotions were negatively related to depression. Besides these emotions, depression was predicted by three variables expressing people's position: by income and grievances negatively and by vulnerability positively. Thus, the lower is people's family income and the worse they judge their situation in relation to others in Greece and the more vulnerable they feel the

more depressed they declared to be. Importantly it is not the fact that they lost suddenly their income (change of situation in relation to a year ago) that leads people to declare a depressive state.

The more positive emotions such as trust, solidarity, optimism and fighting, are negatively related to depression confirming that if people manage to believe that there are alternatives, even through fighting, they will not get depressed (Crosby 1976). These emotions were also positively related to collective forms of action (activism, internet and usual forms) but not to violent practices. This is the only predictor that differentiates violent practices from activism. Because these factors both include radical actions and although highly correlated they differ in the orientation of their actions, it is important that further research specifies which other variables differentiate them.

Looking for financial security was not predicted by emotions but only by income and vulnerability. It seems that people's actual situation and fear for being vulnerable in the future pushes them to look how to secure a financial situation. Importantly, individual solutions through education or migration are also predicted by feelings of vulnerability but also by fear/frustration. These findings could indicate that some emotions lead to collective action and other to individual solutions or inaction and depression. Further research should clarify these issues.

To summarize the findings of this research we could say that people facing a major crisis have multiple ways of reacting that go from radical and even violent practices towards individual solutions and depression. These reactions are differently predicted by people's position, feelings of vulnerability and sense of grievances and by different emotions. Several issues are noteworthy and need further attention. It is not people's actual position (as measured by their income) that impacts on the different reactions they have. Feelings of vulnerability seem to be the major predictor of these actions and therefore financial threat should be taken into serious consideration when researching political participation in times of crisis. Moreover, sense of grievances is linked to more radical forms of action but also to depression. Further research should try to disentangle when these feelings would lead to actions or inaction and helplessness (depression). However, it is important to note that it is deprivation in relation to others and not a sudden loss of income that lead people to react when facing a crisis.

Finally, emotions play an important role in predicting reactions to the crisis. Anger is confirmed as a predictor of political participation and collective action whereas fear and frustration are a major predictor of depression. Positive emotions also predict collective action with the exception of violent practices. Given that research seems to confirm the role of emotions it would be interesting to investigate the factors that would generate these different emotions.

This research was conducted in Greece during a period of major economic crisis when everyday events contributed to a changing and threatening socio-political environment. This constitutes both the strength and a weakness of this research. These findings, give some indication as to how people react to the crisis and which emotional factors influence their choices. They have to be understood within the socio-political context in which they were collected. We hope that this research will create enough interest to be pursued in other countries in crisis, it could contribute to our understanding of the factors that lead people to react differently when facing a crisis. Further research should disentangle the determining causes of each form of reaction.

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Claudia Gross, Andreas Jacobs

## From Tahrir Square to Open Space: Practical Experiences with Open Space Technology in Egypt

### 1 Introduction

The Egyptian revolution started literally with an open space: at the Tahrir Square in the heart of Cairo. Here it was where many Egyptians for the first time in their lives made the experience of freely talking about politics in public. Since January 2011, many young Egyptians are trying to keep up this "Tahrir experience" by experimenting with new forms of political debate and civic education in Egypt. It was this spirit that resulted in the idea of introducing the Open Space Technology (OST) as a new format of civic education in Egypt. In March 2011 the authors of this article, both working in Egypt for many years, organized the first Open Space in the country. This event encouraged many other national and international institutions and initiatives to adopt and further develop OST in Egypt and other Arab countries. The unexpected popularity of OST in revolutionary Egypt proved that it is in fact the right methodology at the right time in the right context and the right place. OST is a meeting format that fosters dialogue and exchange in a democratic way. It is easy to organize and non-costly. It invites for sharing opinions, discovering common ground, discussing and tackling differences. It helps generating ideas and reflecting about their implementation. This article argues that Open Space (OS), therefore, is a format that perfectly fits the transforming political environment and the socio-cultural setting of Egypt and – most probably – other Arab transformation-states.

### 2 Egypt after the revolution: political debates on high demand

Egypt is currently facing a very difficult transformation period. After thirty, some might even say after sixty years of authoritarian rule, new and old political actors are competing for influence and power. The culminating confrontation between the new Islamist government and its liberal and secular opponents is characterized by a general lack of a political debate culture. This comes with no surprise. For many years the Mubarak-regime systematically oppressed free speech, public political debate and independent political interest-aggregation. 'Divide and command' was the main

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principle of governance.

Authoritarian rule was supported by a strong tradition of hierarchies and social classes across the whole Egyptian society. Egyptian children are not brought up in the spirit of free thinking but rather in a tradition of dependence from and of subordination under people of higher status. Many younger Egyptians are frustrated with events in which they are only asked to listen (which often enough is used equivalent to "obey"). In governmental schools and universities, knowledge is often simply passed from the elder to the younger. Education is synonymous to rote learning and memorizing. In religion, politics and as well in the families, it is similar: Leaders, authorities and heads have to be respected and should not be put in question – they have the last word. Egyptians are now free to talk and discuss their personal and political opinions and the current political and religious developments and day-to-day life offer enough material for engaged and often heated discussions and debates – and again the general lack of a culture of dialogue and exchange is prevalent since two years. Still, in the majority of cases, open spaces for debates over differing opinions and controversial issues are not provided for.



The consequences of these underlying political and social conditions are even more negative if the strong oral tradition of Egyptian culture is taken into account. Since its very beginnings, the Arab-Islamic culture is very much based on the spoken word, as e.g. in the tradition and reliability on verbal contracts. Public speaking skills and respectful verbal sparring are highly appreciated in Egyptian media and academia. How an argument is presented becomes sometimes more relevant than the argument itself.

When a strong oral tradition meets strong political and traditional constraints on free speech then frustrations, polarisation and dissatisfaction are inevitable. Therefore, the Egyptian revolution itself was based on the desire to speak up. The desire to express themselves on topics like politics,

religious diversity, social norms, gender and environment remains and seems to be increasing. It is channelled in arts, graffiti, jokes, songs, Facebook-pages, blogs and many other formats.

No surprise, that since the revolution any format that provides opportunities to talk and exchange fell on fruitful ground. Since February 2011 numerous NGOs and social initiatives were established. Universities, Think Tanks and cultural institutes organize discussion panels, "Tahrir-dialogues" and public debates. Institutions like the Goethe-Institute established so called "Tahrir-Lounges" in several parts of the country. Here, young people can get together, discuss and exchange freely.

However the lack of a public debate culture is still evident. The recent clashes between the Islamist government and its opponents clearly indicate that Egypt still lacks a sense of community. In this critical phase of political transition, the country is in dire need of a culture of dialogue. For many Egyptians it is still a learning experience that disagreement does not mean the end of a friendship, marriage, co-operation or co-existence. OST might serve as a tool to provide this experience.



### 3 Open Space at work in Egypt

"This is like on the Tahrir Square" says 24 year old Kazem and looks at a painted poster with the slogan "Whenever it starts, is the right time". Kazem who additionally to his job as pharmacists is engaged in a youth initiative which creates political awareness amongst young Egyptians, is one participant of the

supposedly first Open Space in Egypt. "This was unknown to us: No agenda, no speakers. I had never believed that this would work". After three days of conversations, discussions and collection of ideas, he is amazed. As the majority of the youth activists who have met in March 2011 following the invitation of the Egyptian Youth Federation (EYF) and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS) for the first OS in Egypt he is keen on applying this new format in his own initiative. "We young Egyptians have done this revolution because we had enough of others dictating us what to do and what to think", says May who works in her semester break in a political youth initiative in Alexandria. "The Open Space method suits us since it demands and fosters creativity, openness and initiative".

### 3.1 The idea of open space

What is Open Space about? Open Space is a simple form of group facilitation originated in the US in the 1980s by Harrison Owen<sup>1</sup>. After having organized a conference over a period of months, the evaluation of this event revealed that the participants appreciated most the part he did not plan at all: the really interesting talks took place during the coffee breaks. So why not creating an event out of the coffee break and drop anything else? Owen called his idea Open Space since his main concern was about literally creating open space in which movement and action are possible and in which topics can be defined without constraints, issues can be talked over and solutions can be developed.

Open Space is a simple method to run productive meetings in any kind of group and organization, in every day practice and ongoing change. It enables self-organizing groups of 5 to 2000 people to deal with hugely complex issues in a very short period of time. What does not exist in Open Space are speakers, group facilitators, defined talking times and predefined topics for conversation. Only a proper introduction by a facilitator who opens the space, and practical support by a core team are important. The facilitator also explains the few principles. However more important is voluntariness, openness, concern, heterogeneity and a broad and complex guiding theme. The few principles painted on big posters are explained fast: Everyone comes and goes, no one is forced or obliged to do anything. There is no fixed timeline but time slots which provide room for conversations and discussions. One poster close to the door sends the participants on their way with a well-intentioned admonition: "Be prepared to be surprised".

How does it work?<sup>2</sup> In contrast to usual events, all participants are sitting in concentric circles of chairs; this event has neither a key-note speaker, nor power point presentations, nor a pre-set program. A white wall is titled "agenda" and the only information it contains are time slots. The facilitators briefly introduce the theme, process and guidelines of the Open Space. Then they invite the participants to come to the middle and to announce the issues or

questions they would like to discuss in the following breakout sessions. Participants then choose those issues which, individually, are of most interest and importance. These topics become the focal point for all the subsequent break-out sessions, dialogue and action planning.



Open Space operates under five principles and one law. This "Law of Two Feet" says that "If you find yourself in a situation where you are not contributing or learning, move somewhere else where you can." In conventional meetings you might have experienced that your mind has already left the room while you had to stay seated, in Open Space you would follow this call and move to a more productive place. In contrast to other situations where this behaviour would be considered impolite and even rude, in Open Space it is regarded as disrespectful if you stay in a group although you actually do not contribute or learn from it anymore.

The four original Open Space principles are:

- Whoever comes is the right person.
- Whenever it starts is the right time.
- Whatever happens is the only thing that could have happened.
- When it is over it is over.

Inspired by the Arab Spring and the demonstrations on Tahrir Square, Harrison Owen has developed a fifth principle:

- Wherever it happens is the right place.

In many Open Spaces in Egypt the street sign of the square is used as a symbol to visualize this new principle.

The conveners of the breakout sessions take the responsibility that the outcomes of their discussions are captured on documentation sheets by themselves or participants of their sessions on documentation sheets. Those are displayed on a Breaking News Wall close to the coffee break table so everyone can have a look at the points discussed and outcomes generated in the different break out sessions that have already taken place. Based on the discussions and the ideas of all participants, potential next steps are identified and discussed in groups of people interested in contributing to the realization of the respective idea. All sheets are

collected in a report called "Book of Proceedings" which will be handed over to the participants or made accessible online. Follow-up meetings are scheduled and participants continue cooperating and implementing their ideas and initiatives long after the Open Space has been concluded. So the end of an Open Space event is actually a starting point.

Harrison Owen says Open Space always works – provided certain conditions are present: For an Open Space meeting to be successful, it must focus on a real business issue which is of passionate concern to those involved. OST works best in situations characterized by a diverse group of people with a rich variety of opinions who must and is ready to deal with complex and potentially conflicting issues of concern in innovative and productive ways. It is particularly powerful when nobody knows the answer, and the ongoing participation of a number of people is required to deal with the questions.

The 5 preconditions for an OST are:

- There is a real business issue,
- a great deal of complexity,
- lots of diversity in terms of people and points of view,
- real passion (people care!) and probably also conflict and
- a decision time of yesterday (genuine urgency)

### 3.2 Debating the revolution: the first OS in Egypt

The idea for the 1st Open Space in Egypt was created in fall 2010. At this time, an authoritarian machinery of power had lock on the country. Hereby but also by traditional thinking and structures, civic education rapidly had reached its limits. Hierarchy, seniority and surveillance were order of the day. In the front, professors, teachers or experts lecture, the often young listeners are allowed to ask questions, all of this in most cases carefully monitored and observed by employees of the abhorred state security service "Amn Dawla". So why not introducing a new format that attracts young people, overcomes hierarchies, encourages self-organization and opens space for creativity? In the middle of the preparations, the Egyptian revolution of January 25th barged in. Suddenly, the Egyptians could say what they thought and were called upon to reshape and reform the future of their country. It was quite plain: The Open Space method matched the revolutionary atmosphere to a tee. The motto was obvious: "Egypt at the Crossroads". Less than two months after Mubarak stepped down, 20 young Egyptians and ten young Germans sat together in a Middle Class Hotel some 120 kilometres east of Cairo to test the format for the first time.

To begin with, the participants were introduced in the Open Space Technology. Then every participant had the opportunity to write down her/his burning issues and to announce them together with a chosen time slot on a wall called "Community Bulletin Board". After the first round, the participants had

defined 22 issues, some more were added later.

With every round of conversation sessions, the Breaking News Wall located close to the continuous break buffet was filling more with new documentation sheets. While having a cup of coffee or tea, the participants read what was discussed so far. Additionally a contact list was developed. Every morning and evening, the participants gathered to speak about the daily news and announcements. After three days, 22 documentations of the conversation sessions were on hand, 13 new project ideas were born and their next 3 steps are recorded, a video clip was taped, a facebook group established and many new friendships were gained.

What were the outcomes in detail? Analogue to the "Model United Nations" one participant wanted to develop a "Model Tahrir" with the aim of representing and reflecting the positions of different political and social groups and associations in Egypt in a role play. A female student from Alexandria wanted to use the idea in women's rights projects: "Open Space is ideal to tackle taboo issues and to train gender equality, especially in Upper Egypt". And an NGO activist from Cairo planned to use the method particularly with regard to the reduction of prejudices.

"We Egyptians believe too often in conspiracy and hidden agendas. But a format which by definition has no agenda does not have a hidden agenda. This must be convincing for everybody. By this method, we can also reach people having a fundamental scepticism towards everything new or foreign". Three weeks after the event, the idea of freeing a Cairene rooftop from its waste and to create a space for leisure assumed already a concrete shape.

The first Open Space in Egypt in March 2011 clearly indicated that a discussion method which focuses on mentioning own issues and their discussion falls on fertile soil. Supposedly, the Open Space method would have worked out before the Tahrir demonstrations. But after the revolution with the gained freedom and the drive to test new things, it seems even more as a fitting format.

### 3.3 Following up: A new format is gaining ground

The first OS, organized by EYF and KAS, showed the way forward. The very general title "Egypt at the Crossroads" was intentionally chosen in order to capture the atmosphere present in Egypt right after Mubarak stepped down. And it provided space to identify more concrete topics for follow-up events. Here, two issues were immediately obvious: the role of women in the Egyptian society and the need for jobs. Consequently, the following OS targeted exactly these issues.

During the first Open Space a small group of participants showed interest in learning more about the technique and its backgrounds. They were interested in spreading the method and the OST know-how all over Egypt and in facilitating Open Space events in Arabic. After having attended the first three Open Space events facilitated in a row by

Claudia Gross, one of the authors of this article, some of the participants organized and facilitated their own Open Space events in English and in Arabic. This happened in cooperation with social initiatives or international and local NGOs on themes that were relevant in the respective contexts such as: Interfaith dialogues, refugees in Egypt, voluntarism, informal areas – just to name a few.



Open Space Learning Exchanges (OSLEX) were organized regularly as a common practice in order to share experiences and learn from each other. One of the main outcomes of the OSLEX was not only the need for Arabic material and Arabic speaking facilitators but also for sponsors. Given the limited financial resources of average young Egyptians it proved to be of high importance to make OST attractive for international donors. All together, eleven Open Space events in English and in Arabic have been organized in 2012/3. Over 400 young women and men from over 20 Egyptian governorates have participated in the events. They are still in contact and are now working on the next steps initiatives they have identified.

Eslam Erman, one of the participants of the first Open Space, joined and supported Claudia Gross during the set-ups and coordination of the coming two Open Spaces and documented all steps by photos and text. Additionally he created a website to serve as the platform of the internet-based social initiative Open Space Egypt (OSE) which he together with a group of Open Space enthusiasts and Claudia Gross founded in mid 2011/3. OSE basically wants to establish a network amongst Open Space facilitators to further promote Open Space Technology in Egypt and the Arab region. All services and materials related to an Open Space event, such as Open Space posters, checklists, forms, etc. are provided by this network on their internet platform. Of particular importance for the work of OSE are the translation of manuals and posters to Arabic and the training of Arabic speaking OST facilitators.

As already mentioned, the first OS had already highlighted the need for trained facilitators who are able to hold an OS in Arabic and under basic conditions. Therefore in December 2011, Claudia Gross designed and facilitated a Train-of-Facilitators (ToF) workshop held before an OS event that was

facilitated by participants of the ToF in Arabic. The theme of this OS was "Informal Areas", a topic that by principle called for participants who would feel more comfortable to discuss in Arabic, their mother tongue. This Open Space was documented by the first clip on an Arabic Open Space and can be found on YouTube under the key words "Baladna Kullina"<sup>4</sup>. The ToF was followed by regular coaching sessions for the whole group of 13 new Egyptian OS facilitators during and after the OS event. After this ToF workshop, Claudia Gross was frequently asked for recommendations for OS facilitators and was happy to recommend the participants of her training. In 2012, the newly trained moderators facilitated successfully 19 OS events for clients such as the Swedish Institute in Alexandria and German Agency for International Co-Operation (GIZ).

In 2012 OST gained further ground, even beyond Egypt. The year 2012 started with an Open Space on Dec 31st, organized by Khalil El-Masry, a newly trained facilitator, who invited a group of activists to discuss the perspectives for their work in 2012. Two months later, in February, Khalil El-Masry, Eslam Erman and Claudia Gross travelled to Jordan for a company retreat in which an Open Space day was embedded, supposedly one of the first OS to be held in Jordan. The company had invited all team members, from senior managers and advisors to the driver. During this day, the unexpected happened: Right after the introduction of the Open Space principles, when the participants were invited to come to the centre to write down their issues and then create the agenda, the driver Moussa stood up, walked slowly into the middle of the circle, wrote down his issue and there it was: the topic that was just naming the Pink Elephant, the main issue dominating the company's performance which no one else would have mentioned so clearly, focusing on the allocation of management responsibilities in the company. He was applauded for bringing this issue up. Later the driver convened his session which was attended by all company owners, the senior management staff, discussing frankly and in depth this really existential topic.

In September 2012 Claudia Gross went to Lebanon for an assignment and used the time to present OST to a group of representatives of Lebanese youth initiatives and NGOs. The reaction was very positive and triggered a lively exchange about first hand experiences with OS and their possible application in Lebanon. With some concrete plans to train the first Lebanese facilitators and to run a first OS in spring 2013, Lebanon seems to be the next country in the region where the Open Space Technology could be spread. Or it might be in a refugee camp in Jordan where starting on the International Women's Day on March 8th, 2013, an OS will be held with female Palestinian refugees.

Until December 2012, the newly trained facilitators have facilitated 17 Open Spaces by themselves after their training with more than 550 participants: Over 420 young Egyptians from all over the country have participated in OS events facilitated by the newly

trained facilitators. Additionally, around 130 participants joined OS events in Germany, Spain and Jordan facilitated by the newly trained facilitators. They covered a variety of clients of the development sector, Egyptian Institutions, NGOs, social initiatives. Even Egyptian and international companies started to make use of OST and the services that are provided by the internet platform OSE.

Albeit the deteriorating political conditions the plans of the Egyptian OS community for 2013 are ambitious. The main focus is on a broad campaign to introduce OS as a method for local NGOs and initiatives all over the country and on the establishment of a community of OS practitioners. Eventually they will repeat the OS at the New Year's Eve for an outlook to the year 2013. A far more ambitious idea is to organize several OS events parallel in various Egyptian regions or even governorates. Additionally, more facilitators will be trained to cater for the high demand of OS events all over Egypt and in the whole Arab region.



However, OS activities do also have to adapt to the changing political environment. With the crackdown on several international and Egyptian NGOs, including the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, at the beginning of 2012 the Egyptian authorities again marked the red lines of independent civic education activities. The OS community reacts to this increasing political pressure with a double strategy. On the one hand, more and more OS events will be organized for national and international institutions in "safe" places and within social initiatives and NGOs private places. On the other hand, many activists try to establish OS as a technology that also caters for the needs and aims of official and governmental organizations, with some success. By the end of 2012, the Egyptian Social Contract centre, which is affiliated with the Think Tank of the Egyptian government, asked for the facilitation of an Open Space related to the development of the National Youth Policy and an OS facilitators training.

#### 3.4 Lessons learned. OS in practice

The almost two years of rich experiences with OS in Egypt and some neighbouring countries showed a couple of promises and constraints. After all,

it made clear that OS works very well in a non-Western environment and can be easily set-up under different political conditions; however some limits and adaptations of the technology have to be considered.

### 3.4.1 Promises

The experience with using Open Space Technology in Egypt has clearly shown that the equation of the revolution "The people want ... The people decide ... The people lead" can simply happen by creating an inviting theme, attracting the right people (in Open Space, whoever comes is by principle the right one), and creating the proper space. In an Open Space environment, diversity is welcomed, expression of personal and political opinions is encouraged, exchange and discussion is fostered, and common ground is discovered jointly in dialogue. The whole Open Space is governed by self-management and self-responsibility in action.



Discussing beyond hierarchies and borders

Characteristic for Open Space events is the Circle (or in bigger groups many concentric circles) in which all participants come together for the opening of the event and the smaller circles in which they gather during the breakout sessions. The circle itself has no top and no bottom, no beginning and no end, and it symbolizes the equality amongst the participants. They all have in common their interest in the theme of the event, their readiness to take responsibility for their issues and to convene a session, talk about and contribute their ideas which they are truly passionate about. So coming together in a circle (in contrast to a U shape or a normal theatre style conference seating format) lays the fundament for the conversations without hierarchies or borders and within the group of people who really care about the theme.

This particular format fosters networking amongst all participants who pollinate and cross-pollinate their ideas while bumbling from one group to the other. Women and men use the chance to bring up their deep problems to the surface. The participants' moves connect the different participants and symbolize the network of interests and talents present in the room. Diversity is discovered as a rich

asset necessary to jointly find solutions for complex issues. The freedom to choose the sessions they want to convene and to participate in and the bumble-beeing foster the establishment of professional and community relationships across sector and age groups. Many participants report to experience this freedom and connection for the first time. To keep in touch after the event, all participants are provided by with a list of contact details of everyone who's joining the event.

Open Space Technology transforms the control by one leader to self-management by all participants themselves, including the organization's or community's traditional leaders then being part of the participants' group. Everyone is considered the right person who can contribute important experiences, information and opinions. Therefore an Open Space event describes a deeply democratic meeting experience. "I have been heard", is how Egyptian participants often comment after Open Space sessions, realizing that the group they were discussing with really seemed to understand. The participants often feel a deep sense of peace, gratitude and reconfirmation, as participants often state in closing circles of OS events "I am so happy to have met you all and to be part of this community. I feel relieved that this kind of conversations is still possible, even given the current political situations. I thank you all."

In Open Space people work together across hierarchal, historical and group-related lines, and indeed when everyone gets back to work it is probable that they will continue to work and communicate in a way that is different than the on-paper organizational structure or the ways a society has been set up, historically. Experience, also in Egypt, shows that participants of Open Space events integrate this unique experience and insects it into their day-to-day life. They keep on referring to them and find them supportive in their professional and private life.

### Experiencing (religious) diversity and common ground

In contrast to other forms of meetings usually practiced in Egypt, in an Open Space event, all participants share their individual opinions. All voices are valued and appreciated. While there are no keynote speakers, no experts, no leaders speaking from the podium or panel in a one-way communication to a mainly passively listening audience, all participants are invited to convene and actively participate in the session on topics they consider important. By principle multiple facets of a theme are represented by the issues proposed by the participants and discussed during the sessions where they discovered common ground. Meaningful conversations take place in multi-way dialogues. Often enough this safe space is used to discuss openly and freely about issues the participants are passionate about, but normally wouldn't speak-up about. Especially with regard to religious diversity, experience has shown that participants of different

religious backgrounds and orientations, sometimes for the first time in their life, took the chance to speak with each other instead of about each other.

In July 2011, an OS with the title "Unity in Diversity" was organized in Wadi-Natrun, close to Cairo. One of the telling stories of this event is the following: Due to the variety of religions present in this event, the young organizers had taken special care regarding the list of who is going to share the sleeping room with whom. A sophisticated list was developed before-hand – and ignored by the receptionist once the bus with the participants arrived. Ahmad Khallaf, the facilitator of the event, was shocked when he realized that people were now mixed in a random order. When he asked Claudia Gross, who supported him in the set-up of the venue, for an advice she referred to one of the Open Space principles "Whatever happens is the only thing that could have". Then they focused further on the preparation of the Opening Circle. During the event the organizers realized that during the situation in front of the reception, a young Coptic man had been looking around for a partner to share the room with. He chose someone shaved. They later they realized that the one he had chosen had just shaved his beard to present himself to the military service, but actually belonged to the so called "Salafists", an ultra-orthodox Islamist grouping. Without the receptionist ignoring the organizer's list, both participants would have never shared a room with each other for two nights, seizing the opportunity to really talk with each other and eventually become friends.

Another example of this Open Space event is related to the acceptance in diverse religious groups of participants: In this event the usual closing exercise of any OS was almost dropped. Since this exercise included all participants holding hands, the organizers considered it to be inadequate given the variety of religious backgrounds and the presence of women and men. However, after a while of thinking, another idea came up: Holding hands maybe would not be possible but holding something else would be okay. And what if the "something else" were pieces of a ribbon in the colours of the Egyptian flag? An exercise that was close to be dropped turned out to be a real symbolic closing: in spite of their diverse religious backgrounds, all Egyptian participants were united by their national flag.

Taking the initiative, overcoming stagnation

The principle "Whatever happens is the only thing that could have" formulates a general acceptance of everything that happens. And it also includes an invitation to the participants: they are responsible for what is happening in the event. Everything they bring in will be discussed and shared amongst the participants. If they realize after the event that certain topics they had expected to be mentioned where not addressed, it has been in their sole responsibility to raise them. This principle is an invitation to take initiative and be responsible for what they consider important. After the facilitator

has explained the Open Space process and the principles, she/he invites the participants to come to the center to write their issues and names on a piece of paper. After joining the OS event at the first place, standing up and coming to the center symbolizes the second step of taking responsibility and being part of the solution.

Taking the initiative and contributing whatever the participants consider important is also basic for the breakout sessions. Instead of sitting passively on their chairs and receiving information while being stuck and mute, they have the chance to bring themselves in. During the agenda creation and the breakout sessions they feel that they are moving forward, increasing their connections with like-minded people, generating new energy and creating a new momentum. This process continues when the participants take responsibility for the documentation of the topics discussed by typing it down in the newsroom and in the action planning session at the end of a two and a half or three days Open Space event.

A lot of surprising learning happens in Open Space in Egypt. This required and generated creativity: New solutions are found as in the ribbon exercise described above. Issue and documentation sheets need to be clipped on laundry ropes in rooms where the walls cannot be used (or in bedouin huts where the "walls" are made out of straw). Also, an Open Space event in a historical mosque, where nothing could be stuck to the columns, lead to the realization that the posters can also be laid on the ground. Seeing ideas facing the open sky created another connection and frame for the whole event.

### 3.4.2 Constraints

Need for spaces and sponsors

In Egypt after the revolution, those who wanted to organize events for 50 participants and more had to realize that there are very few appropriate places to rent. Social initiatives and NGOs experience a lack of public space for gathering and events. Apart from governmental facilities, there seems to be only expensive options left: renting halls in hotels. Downside of this option are the high price, the lack of enough breakout areas, the inappropriateness of the formal setting of hotels for events such as e.g. an Open Space on informal areas, and the usual lack of daylight in the meeting rooms.

In general, finding a sponsor for an Open Space event and being invited to facilitate one is a major constraint. Therefore, Eslam Erman from Open Space Egypt developed another proposal for Open Spaces on education in Egypt which luckily was accepted and supported by the Swedish Institute in Alexandria in May 2012. The team of Open Space Egypt has again prepared a proposal for an Open Space against sexual harassment in Egypt and is currently looking again for a sponsor. To tackle this issue, a broader marketing campaign to promote the Open Space Technology and sharing its success stories in Egypt might be needed. Another experience shows

that inviting potential sponsors as participants of one Open Space event can convince them successfully to sponsor an event within their scope of work in the future too.

Defining the event's theme and not its outcomes

Harrison Owen always stresses that "The only way to bring an Open Space gathering to its knees is to attempt to control it. Emergent order appears in Open Space when the conditions for self organization are met" and he continues "Open Space requires real freedom, and real responsibility." Therefore finding sponsors and potential clients needs to take the spirit of Open Space into consideration. There is no room for manipulation and interfering into the agenda creation, the topics to be discussed will be brought in by the participants.

Consequently Open Space is not the right technology when the organizers/participants have a certain target/agenda in mind! Also, like in Egypt, a highly charged political situation and a lack of trust in the sponsors needs to be taken in close consideration when planning an Open Space and eventually be the reasons why another format will be chosen first. Another problem emerges when people who hold power and authority try to control the way that people work together. In this case OST is not an appropriate approach. Experience shows that if key leaders believe they are the only people necessary for the organization to do its best work, the space for "best work" never really opens. As a result, whenever sponsors think they know the answer, have an agenda, wish to control outcomes and be in charge, and are not prepared to change as a result of the meeting, the facilitators won't be able to facilitate such an event and will recommend doing another meeting format.

Assuring the event's follow-up

In the planning phase of an Open Space event, the follow-up needs already to be integrated and scheduled for 6-8 weeks after the event. Ideally these dates are already announced at the end of the Open Space event so the transfer and follow-up is eased. In practice, this need for a follow-up often seemed to be not attractive for external sponsoring. Donors usually perceive OS as a one off event, rather than part of a value-creating process. If the outcomes of an OS event are not taken into consideration and business-as-usual continues, the opportunity for change is missed. Participants carrying the experience of having opened up and spoken up in the Open Space event and then finding themselves back in their closed NGO, company or community will face a high amount of frustration and de-motivation. Once the staff feels resigning and desperate, it will be a lot more difficult to motivate them again and to start another change management initiative or event.

Therefore the commitment from the group, community and/or management to continue the spirit of the Open Space and make room for the

newly developed ideas is decisive for the events success after the participants returned back. The group', sponsor's and/or management's readiness to support the projects that emerge is crucial including the provision of sufficient time, energy, influence to realize the project discussed, identified and created in the Open Space. They cannot be solved by a few people; they will need the contribution of a whole team.

Technical and practical challenges

When setting-up an Open Space, a relatively big room is needed, ideally in a shape that allows establishing concentric circles easily. While organizing OS events in Egypt it surprisingly appeared to be a problem that staff of venues is "not able" or even reluctant to prepare a real circle of chairs. Although told otherwise (and sometimes having received a sketch of a chair circle in advance), they often prepare a setting with tables in the beginning. Once the facilitator arrives and asks for a circle, first they make a big square with round corners, then an oval/egg-shape, always leaving space in front of the imaginary screen, expecting speakers and presentations – which of course does not happen in Open Space. When finally following the instruction to form a circle of chairs, they establish a real circle, shaking their head full of doubts and disbelief about the nature of this event.



It might also happen that the budget does not include the renting of computers for the Newsroom where all participants would type their



documentation sheets. A potential solution is to ask the participants to bring their laptops, to provide them with the form and ask them to share their laptops with other participants. Another situation might be that the event takes place in a remote area without copy shops to copy the Book of Proceedings. Possible ways to deal with this is taking pictures and/or scanning the documentation sheets and uploading them when back in Cairo.

Certainly the high rate of illiteracy could be a problem for the written documentation which is normally used. Potential solutions include e.g. using drawings, sketches, and role plays, taping interviews or videos, using symbols for the different issues raised when developing the agenda by participants, as e.g. a water bottle for water problems, a book for education issues, etc. All these measures are also ideas when facilitating Open Spaces with children who cannot read or write.

#### Acceptance and cultural challenges

The authors of this article have often been confronted with the argument that Open Spaces might work in Western but not in Muslim countries. After two years of practicing OS in Egypt and some other Muslim countries, this assumption was empirically proved to be wrong. OS activists can now refer to these experiences where participants of mixed religious backgrounds came together, where Arab women were particularly invited to join and where even a peace initiative comprising of members of all religious backgrounds was established as an idea of an Open Space event. Just recently the authors were addressed by a colleague who plans to organize an Open Space event in Somalia. Unfortunately, the sponsor of this event rejected the OS idea because he believes that it does not work in a Muslim culture. Immediately, one experienced Egyptian facilitator offered to act as a reference person.

Another problem is time and punctuality. Especially in cultures with a polychronic time concept the principle "Whenever it starts is the right time" might be very well known and practiced. Unfortunately, the issue of punctuality regarding the beginning of the events and its consecutive days is of high relevance for the event's success: Ideally when all participants who care are there during the opening, the discussions can start. Events in Cairo started up to 1 hour late since participants just dropped in within the first hour of the event, cursing the traffic, while others were there in time. Therefore, scheduling the event one hour earlier than it is planned to start might be a measure of self-defence. A registration time with a coffee and tea buffet might be the culturally accepted answer to this issue. When the event is taking place in a remote area and all participants arrive together in a bus, the event can start in time and with the majority of people.

On the other hand, experience shows that when the OS takes place in Cairo or wherever the participants live, this measure of staying there / not

travelling and not staying overnight increases the number of female participants, especially from more traditional backgrounds. Women can often only participate if they can sleep at home. Therefore it is highly recommendable that Open Space events are not organized in remote places when you want to increase the number of participants, especially of girls and women participating.

#### 4 Conclusions

The consent regarding the first OS events in Egypt is a thought provoking impulse for political and civic education in transforming Arab societies. Especially in phases of political transformations with an uncertain outcome it seems to be important, not only to reflect topics, but also forms and methods of their implementation. "Conventional" conferences, seminars and workshops are without an alternative when specific knowledge shall be imparted and exchanged. This is nothing an OS can do. However, where creative potentials shall be awakened, soft skills trained and the structural issues of a society reflected, OS is on a new and cost-effective way. It was a stroke of luck that in Egypt quasi a whole nation had its Open Space on the Tahrir Square. Here, the new democratic rules of the game were tested and practiced. And what works in Egypt can also function in Tunisia, Libya, Jordan, Lebanon and hopefully soon in other Arab countries too. At present nowhere else will open spaces for discussions of societies' political future be of more need than in the Arab world.

#### Endnotes

1 For a detailed description of OS see Owen, Harrison (2008) *Open Space Technology: A User's Guide*. 3rd edition, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, San Francisco

2 For OS online resources and databases see [www.openspaceworld.org](http://www.openspaceworld.org), [www.openspaceworld.com](http://www.openspaceworld.com) and [www.openspacetechnology.com](http://www.openspacetechnology.com).

3 This OS is documented on [www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_I7iZ955QH8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_I7iZ955QH8)

4 See [www.youtube.com/watch?v=u9v5qjRFJ2k](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u9v5qjRFJ2k)

Henrique Vaz, Orquídea Coelho

## Relocating Social Justice to the Axis of Citizenship—For a Deaf Mediation

Based on the tangible relationship of strangeness seen in the lines of communication between a deaf and a hearing individual, in which full comprehension of the (gestural) linguistic metaphors used among the deaf is not always assimilated, and vice versa, we will from the beginning put emphasis on the differences and ruptures between the fields of representation and communication. We will thereupon approach deafness as a relationship by deconstructing the view of disability, i.e. by granting privilege to the differences yet underscoring the equality of intelligence (the wise hearing individual versus the profane deaf). It is from this standpoint (the recognition of difference) that so-called profane knowledge gains visibility and importance in the upward climb to the expertise acquired by the deaf. Nevertheless, it is fundamental to know how to coordinate this recognition with the conquests of redistributive social justice. Finally, we explore the central role of the (deaf) mediator in the construction of meaning and citizenship, especially when dealing with the isolated deaf, with the objective of underpinning situations of marginality that, perhaps unintentionally, are shaped by the social project.

### Keywords

Deafness, communication, citizenship, social justice, equality of intelligence, mediation

### 1 Strangeness in the Relationship is a Two-Way Road: Power and Communication

“(…) I confess to having difficulty in understanding how may hearing individuals provide an accurate representation of a car’s carburetor if they may not illustrate it linguistically in threedimensional space” (Correia 2010, 173). Thus runs a deaf’s speech. The deaf individual, member of a research group on French Sign Language (Langue des Signes Française [LSF]) headed by Cuxac (cited in Correia 2010), was describing the strangeness that took over him while trying to understand how could a hearing individual grasp the idea of a given object without having access to its representation. This strangeness, however, does not reflect the nonrecognition of the oral language (or its characteristics) but rather conveys its limitations—thus perceived by the deaf—in the

hopes of better understanding the idea communicated (indeed, communication of a given idea in oral language is subject to prior knowledge, from both sides, of the meaning of that idea, given the abstract nature of the word). As for the rest, the existence of “iconicity between sign and referent allows (...) the hearing observer, who is unfamiliar with any sort of sign language, to more or less successfully ‘guess’ the meaning of a gesture, or to find a connection—at least to some extent—between the object and the gesture, action, or event that it represents” (Silva 2010, 115).

The ‘representational’ potential of an object, expressed through gestural communication itself, seems to reflect the act of naming—in this case, gestural naming—and, simultaneously, of identification/acquaintance of the object itself, that is, “the possibility to simultaneously grasp the linguistic object and the speech about that object” (Correia 2010, 191). Still, it is central to distinguish between representation and communication, i.e. the representation as “the meaning that I wish to realize, to make material” (Kress 2010, 71) and the communication as “interest of the recipient of the sign. My sign needs to be shaped for the person or group for whom I have intended it to be a sign”, (...) which demands “for transparency in communication” (Kress 2010, 71). This transparency is all the more explicit because the subject, through the process of analogy, “translates interest [in communicating] and selects what is to be represented as the signified into apt means of representing it, the signifier”, thereby giving rise to the “sign, formed on the basis of the relation of analogy” (Kress 2010, 71).

If ‘object’ has been previously used to refer to ‘idea’, also in this case the gestural languages,

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contrary to common sense perception, “by adopting the visual image of a concrete object or activity” (Silva 2010, 121) to describe another, perhaps less to describe another, perhaps less evi-dent, potentiate the metaphorical sense of the iconic language. Indeed, “sign language, by nature an iconic language, will be naturally suitable to express, through metaphors, an idea for which there is yet no sign” (Correia 2010, 184). In this way, “students may understand the metaphor through analogical reasoning; they may not realize that language can be used metaphorically, but that has nothing to do with their capacity to actually use metaphors, which are a form of figurative language” (Correia 2010, 185). According to Van Leeuwen, “the essence of metaphor is the idea of ‘transference’, of transferring something from one place to another, on the basis of a perceived similarity between the two ‘places’” (2005, 30). In this perspective, there is nothing better in the context of sign language than making interpretative sense of the relationship between two ideas. According to the above-cited author, this means that the metaphor is built up “on the basis of our concrete experience: (...) new metaphors, and hence new ideas and new practices can be founded on the affordances of direct, concrete experience” (Van Leeuwen 2005, 33). Furthermore, Kress strengthens the concept according to which “all signs are metaphors, always newly made, resting on, materializing, and displaying the interest of the maker of the sign” (Kress 2005, 71).

Another question to be raised is whether the hearing individual, not being able to understand the sign language, is able to understand the metaphors used among the deaf “on the basis of our interactions with people in our culture, in terms of social, political, economic and religious institutions” (Van Leeuwen 2005, 33). This is the same as asking whether the deaf and the hearing individuals share a common culture when living in the same social context or, on the other hand, “at least some cultural differences can be bridged by tracing the metaphors back to their experiential basis” (Van Leeuwen 2005, 34). The apparent relationship of power that might be established between a linguistic mode representative of the majority (the oral communication) and a mode representative of the minority (the gestural communication) is not essentially number-based but rather is anchored in the communicational process itself; “the more powerful the maker of the sign, the more she or he can ignore the requirements of transparency—that is, attention to the communicational requirements of others” (Kress 2010, 72). In the end, this situation is frequently experienced by the deaf as those who “have to do the semiotic work that makes up for the neglect of the privileged” (Kress 2010, 72).

At the core the question raised here is not the impossibility of sign language being a learning channel whose contents could even be of abstract nature, in the assumption of being unable to communicate them. Rather, it suggests that sign language, by working in an operating mode other than those of oral languages, conflicts with an

orality-based education/learning model, which does not lend itself to the other learning modes. In other words, “neither sign language is like vocal language, nor the deaf individual is similar to the hearing is exactly the opposite: it is because the deaf and the hearing are alike that they can develop a language and a culture that take into account the vital and social singularities of the relationship between the man and the world” (Benvenuto 2010, 110). Ultimately, and assuming the different modes of assimilating information—both through vocal and gestural language—the principle of universality of the means of verification of learning, i.e. the evaluation procedures, tends to deny legitimacy to those singular, learning-effective modalities.

Here, we depart from standard practice of the means and modes of learning as well as of confirming and evaluating learning: if we consider the possibility of representation of the knowledge acquired by the deaf (“signs made in gesture are culturally shaped as are all signs in any [communicational] mode” [Kress 2010, 76]), the globalization of a rule representative of the majority tends to become standard gauge, a learning measure that denies intrinsic properties from the different modes of learning.

If “human universality relies on the ability of generating a set of rules, which allow the individual to singularize himself” (sic) (Benvenuto 2010, 110), the globalization of a rule issued by the majority (in this case, oralist) will constitute an obstacle to diversity and composite-interpretative sense, both associated with learning and a result of the different modes of building of meaning.

## 2 Deafness as Relationship and the Equality of Intelligence

By stating, “deafness is not an hearing disability, neither a one-person problem. It relies on the relationship between at least two persons”, Mottez (cited in Coelho 2010, 33) emphasizes the concept of “deafness as relationship”, invoking the communicative function of language and its inherence to both the symbolic nature of language and the social nature of the human species. After all, it is not about strictly “living with” but rather about sophisticatedly “living in the fullest sense with” (or better yet, the previously discussed distance between representation and communication), to which communication and its complexity provides an increasing range of equally complex possibilities. The debate around deafness, historically documented and working chronologically from oralism (“a discourse on a medico-pedagogical disability that focus on the impaired ear and the teaching of oral words” [Benvenuto 2010, 108]) to gesture (“a socio-anthropological discourse focusing on sign language and the deaf culture” [Benvenuto 2010, 108]), does not contend against the dominant learning model. Rather, it largely reflects the role of essentiality in the construction of meaning, the latter of which acquires a structuring relevance, for it is the language as the preferred communication medium

among social as well as cultural communities that herein we shall discuss. It is in this sense model might become problematic. "Humans have propensity to express themselves and communicate through signs" (Coelho 2010, 33). In the case of the deaf, this propensity is less of an accessory and more of a necessity, since signs are a central resource for those with total or partial hearing loss.

The relational dimension of deafness, according to Mottez, wraps up the concept of "relationship with the world", which is the result of a unique yet socially and culturally determined project. The deaf, as well as the hearing individuals, construct their own unique perception of the world. What actually counts "is what results of this relationship; deafness is shaped by singular life experiences lived in certain environmental circumstances and contexts" (Benvenuto 2010, 111). In this line, sign-mediated communication would reflect a perception of the world with which one interacts, whose characteristics would be determined by the framework of socially accepted opportunities rather than by the framework of resources that the individual is able to accumulate. The resistance that the deaf individual and the deaf in general have been upholding over the course of history in the face of the mainstreaming of deafness—initially as an atrocity, abnormality, or deviation, "calamity that should be repaired, no matter what" (Fusellier-Sousa & Coelho 2010, 120)—tends to be expressed by what Touraine (2005) defines as communitarianism or the result of a discrimination that, by bringing together the individuals who share that same singularity, grants them with an unusual force: "in fact, the ones who are excluded or neglected seek for a place outside the social scale where they are misplaced, and confront their opponents with a qualitative assessment of themselves" (Touraine 2005, 201). It put into question; it is the discussion that bridges the community's identities under the influence of some force or imperative that drives the advantage of the stronger over the weaker. "This occurs when the collective action is defined by being or having, and not in the light of an universal value; to establish the latter, the first condition is that the actor or the fighter recognizes in the other the universal. In a sense—and this is a key issue—those who are at the receiving end of discrimination can better understand its effects than those who are at its origin. In failing to understand deafness as "a disease that can be treated and cured, (...) but yet adopting another point of view, which considers deafness as a state rather than a discriminating condition, it is possible to approach a universe in which the difference is valued otherwise" (Fusellier-Sousa & Coelho 2010, 120). The space for affirmation of the deaf and their relationship with the world involves "feeling that the construction of the subject is acting in the other the same way it is acting in themselves. This construction is governed by the establishment of universality from a particular social or cultural experience" (Touraine 2005, 176).

The notion of subject set in motion by Touraine in the sense of the singular, i.e. of the singular

experience ("the individual's willingness to be an actor in his own existence is what I typically call the subject" [Touraine 2005, 238]), is to an equal degree at the basis of the beginning of a new paradigm, the cultural paradigm, or the claim for cultural rights, which "always represent particular attributes, albeit universally" (Touraine 2005, 238). The affirmation of difference, whose axis is singular experience, actually distances us from a communitarianism view as something "put above citizenship, which would mean recognizing cultural heritage over national identity" (Touraine 2005, 201), remitting us to a universal not defined by the dominant rule—liable to confusion with universal rule—but by a meaning susceptible of being generalized; not through the imposing character of the rule, rather through the singular nature of meaning.

We refer to the principle of equality of intelligence proposed by Rancière (1987) as a "principle that implies the description of interactions, for this is the only means to think of emancipation, yet on the other hand it is unbearable in a regulatory system" (Verstraete 2010, 67). In the view of knowledge as a vehicle to social emancipation, we here refer to its learning processes. Namely, we refer to the learning modes of a regulatory system driven by individual success, not to be confused with the value of singular experience. Indeed, the principle that "the individual is accountable to no-one but himself or his merit" (Poulette 2010, 48) hides a reality, that of "a meritocracy that implies competition, comparison and, consequently, unequal distribution of performances and intelligences (Poulette 2010, 48). The regulatory principle of equality of opportunity, a key aspect of educational politics, grotesquely transforms inequality in legitimate equality: "each subject is, from the beginning, compromised to the individualization, founded in comparison and competition. Consequently, mirroring the other person is a form of relative construction of identity that refuses, from the start, the idea of a master individual, full of desire. It is structurally impossible to be the self without being modeled according to the others" (Poulette 2010, 49).

The idea of being modeled according to others, a principle that would ideally be based on an order of autonomy—one that would reclaim the value of singular experience at the expense of individual success—tends, nonetheless, to be externally determined (namely by the qualification market) and virtually inaccessible to the deaf individual. The appreciation of (one's) differences would, on the other side of the coin, create the necessary conditions for granting access to the sovereign right of equality of opportunity, hence obligatorily disrespecting the singular nature of meaning (for oneself).

Comparison- and competition-based individuality hardly enables one to understand that "the deaf use a novel and complex visual-gestural language, the sign language, which allows them to behave in any personal or social domain on a par with the other ones" (Fusellier-Souza & Coelho 2010, 120).

It is this difference that founds diversity; it is the difference that best helps understanding human

universality, which enters in conflict with the generalization of the rule as (apparent) equality principle: “when we commit to real exchanges with the deaf, considering them as full interlocutors in a relationship of equality of intelligence, our feeling of frustration and failure to communication gradually makes room to surprise and wonder before everything that, step by step, we discover about ourselves, about oneself, and about human kind in general” (Fusellier-Souza & Coelho 2010, 120).

### 3 Citizenship Based on Wise and Profane Knowledge: How to Reconfigure Social Justice?

It is the distinctiveness of this deaf knowledge, accessible to the hearing individual as expertise (Charlot, 2002) but inseparable of a unique way of perceiving the world (as unique as the visual-gestural mode of perception), that calls for the principle of equality of intelligence as a way to respect experience-based knowledge: “some modes, gesture or moving image for instance, combine the logics of time and of space”, whereas “time and the sequence of elements in time supply the underlying ‘(semiotic) logic’ of speech [as well as] writing, [the latter of which is] not dominantly and finally organized by the logic of space” (Kress 2010, 81). The conception of intelligence, as highlighted by evaluation and assessment procedures, can hardly ensure through measure alone the comprehension inscribed in its growth and construction; in the case of deaf individuals, the difference concerns modes of representation and communication that, once not recognized, cannot have an expression in formal systems and, therefore, cannot grant the deaf person a recognition equal to that of the hearing individual. As an extreme situation where cognition may be misinterpreted, it highlights the importance of inscribing experience-based knowledge in any conception of equality and democracy. It is in a perspective parallel to this that Gorz (2008), reporting on ecology, speaks of a lived world as a world in which “the result of the activities social individuals see, understand, and dominate the result of their own acts” (Gorz 2008, 49). Here, experience is the result of everyday culture, the “set of intuitive knowledge, vernacular know-how (as understood by Ivan Illich), customs, rules, and learned conducts, due to which individuals can interpret, understand, and assume their reintegration into the surrounding world” (Gorz 2008, 49). We may generically subsume this knowledge under the designation of profane knowledge as opposed to expertise-based knowledge, “which hampers individuals from judging, and subjects them to an ‘illuminated’ power, which in turn is claimed based on superior interest of a cause that far surpasses their comprehension” (Gorz 2008, 48). This wise knowledge tends to deal with the ecological issue and associated bottlenecks “in the framework of industrialism and market logic, through extension of techno-bureaucratic power” (Gorz 2008, 47), playing down the political issue as “constantly renewed public mediation between the rights of the individual, based on his (sic) autonomy,

and the interests of society as a whole, which founds but similarly constraints those rights” (Gorz 2008, 48). In its opposition to the sacred, the profane represents the public sphere and, in this sense, the legitimacy of the sacred itself: “Reciprocity here is active: those who remain in the public place do not know what is transpiring in the temple, but those who have the right to go into the temple do not necessarily know what is being said and is happening outside in the public arena” (Battagay et al 2012: 20). Back to knowledge, and its opposition to the expertise, the profane knowledge is, as we have previously emphasized, knowledge from experience. The association Gorz establishes between knowledge and power concerns “models which brutally or gently and pragmatically deny the layperson any competence for participating in the production of the only valid knowledge: that which may be described as scientific” (Battagay et al. 2012, 18). To talk about knowledge from experience is to emphasize, then, “a model of coproduction of knowledge which tends to surmount limits by actively involving laypersons in elaborating knowledge that concerns them” (Battagay et al. 2012, 18).

Analogously, deaf ecause, by stooping over an approach for perceiving the world that nonetheless does not set aside the deaf’s world, it is subjected to regulatory and universal rules therefrom derived. Citizenship is, in this case, a profane exercise not because it is so understood by the deaf, but because whatever depends on experience-based knowledge (predominantly inscribed in space) is not recognized by socially accepted knowledge (predominantly inscribed in time) as wise knowledge. Interpreting deafness as disease contradicts the legitimacy of its knowledge; instead, interpreting deafness as difference acknowledges what is unlike, albeit not instantly legitimate.

The association between profane knowledge, on one side of the balance, and profane citizenship, on the other, opens the way for the political as regulator of the lived world and everyday culture(s). Simultaneously, it blocks the way for wise knowledge, which, by replacing this political by techno-bureaucracy, in its turn denies the principles of social justice, which govern the objectives of the former. In agreement with Touraine (2005), Fraser invokes “[this] new notoriety of culture over politics, hence over the prospects for social justice” (Fraser 2002, 8). According to the author, “another defining feature of globalization is the widespread politicization of culture, especially in struggles over identity and difference—or struggles for recognition<sup>1</sup>, as hereinafter referred to—which have boomed in recent years” (Fraser 2002, 8). The above-mentioned contour defines redistribution, which denotes class politics, and is to a certain extent replaced by recognition, by the supremacy of statutory politics: “the hegemonic grammar of political contestation, the claims for economic equality are less evident today than during the Fordist heyday of the Keynesian welfare state” (Fraser 2002, 8). In this line, politics and its main interlocutors, the political parties, “once identified with projects of egalitarian redistribution,

now embrace an elusive 'third way', whose truly emancipatory contents, when existing, more closely relate to recognition than redistribution" (Fraser 2002, 9).

This wayward trend of political contestation, of redistribution for recognition, represents "a new understanding of social justice, (...) no longer restricted to questions of distribution, but now encompassing questions of representation, identity, and difference" (Fraser 2002, 9). It is in this sense that profane knowledge seems to acquire some visibility, although one does not recognize that "current struggles for recognition are contributing to complement and strengthen struggles for egalitarian redistribution" (Fraser 2002, 9), which is what the author identifies as the problem of displacement. Instead of reflecting the wayward trend of political contestation according to a bi-dimensional logic, the problem of displacement does so according to substitution logic. Under this threat, the temporality with which "the identity conflicts reached a paradigmatic status, [concurrent with] an aggressively globalizing capitalism led by the United States, radically exacerbating economic inequality" (Fraser 2002, 10) is not surprising. It is in this contemporaneity that one understands that "the turn to recognition perfectly colludes with an economic neoliberalism that wants nothing more than to repress the memory of socialist egalitarianism" (Fraser 2002, 10).

If the affirmation of recognition appears important in the upward climb of deaf knowledge to the status of legitimate knowledge, its conquest at the expense of the conquest of redistribution (as the conquest of redistribution at the expense of recognition previously did) results at the long term in a loss from the viewpoint of justice: "from the distributive perspective, injustice appears in the guise of class-like inequalities, rooted in the society's economic structure. (...) Maldistribution, in the broad sense, [involves] not only income inequalities but also exploitation, deprivation, and marginalization or exclusion from labor markets" (Fraser 2002, 11). The capital gains added to redistribution by recognition—"to encompass not only reforms aimed at promoting disrespected identities and the cultural products of discriminated groups but also efforts to recognize and valorize diversity" (Fraser 2002, 12)—would tend to be reflected, because of the exclusivity of recognition, in what Sen (2009) describes as the identification of individuals "as belonging to one social category to the exclusion of all the others. (...) Individual human beings with their various plural identities, multiple affiliations and diverse associations, are quintessentially social creatures with different types of societal interactions. Proposals to see a person merely as a member of one social group tend to be based on an inadequate understanding of the breadth and complexity of any society in the world" (Sen 2009, 247). Based on Marx's citation, the author still emphasizes, "What is to be avoided above all is the re-establishing of 'Society' as an abstraction vis-à-vis the individual" (Sen 2009, 245).

recognition and the renewed gains of (re)distribution, under the view of their outcomes around the legitimacy of deaf knowledge as well as deaf citizenship, that is, under the spotlights of social justice, seems better explained through the concept of capability proposed by Amartya Sen: "The capability approach focus on human life, and not just on some detached objects of convenience, such as incomes or commodities a person may possess, which are often taken, especially in economic analysis, to be the main criteria of human success. Indeed, it proposes a serious departure from concentrating on the means of living to the actual opportunities of living" (Sen 2009, 233). Contrary to Rawls (2001), whose equity justice policies lay on a concept of fair inequalities, emphasizing a compensation to unequal access to fundamental rights, rather than the suppression of such inequality (enhancing, thus, mainly the (re)distribution perspective), Sen's concept of capability, focusing on actual opportunities rather than simply means of living, undeniably enhances contexts where this living becomes possible, hence emphasizing also the recognition perspective. The landscape of recognition becomes rugged when it comes to the importance of recognition for identity politics. Indeed, "what requires recognition in globalization is not group-specific identity but the individual status of its members as full partners in social interaction" (Fraser 2002, 15), instead of facing it as a matter of social status, a model that "implies a politics aimed at overcoming subordination through establishment of the misrecognized party as an absolute member of society, capable of participating on a par with the other members" (Fraser 2002, 15).

#### 4 By Way of Conclusion: For a Deaf Mediation

We have so far tried to emphasize the dual meaning of strangeness in deaf-hearing communication, but equally the other position of power based on which one deals with strangeness. We dissociate the construction of deafness as a disability to be overcome from deafness as privileged difference, a privilege that is justified only based on the presumption of the equality of intelligence. Finally, we distinguish between wise and profane knowledge in drawing-up a well-rounded agenda for social justice, the only reward for the full exercise of citizenship, while conciliating recognition and redistribution. We are left to discuss the affirmation modes of this citizenship with cases of isolation—not only geographic but also communicational. The isolated deaf, subject of empirical research within the scope of the PROFACITY<sup>2</sup> project, is symptomatic of what we translated above as "acknowledge [of] what is unlike, albeit not instantly legitimate". The isolated deaf, sometimes integrated in the urban context, lacks an official language—being the Portuguese language or the Portuguese sign language—and at best resorts to so-called emerging language, that is, "spontaneous linguistic systems in the process of training and organization in interaction with the environment" (Coelho 2010, 33). Regardless of the

importance of these emerging languages for the understanding of “how sign languages arise and develop” (Coelho 2010, 37), the convening of that situation was called for based on the creation of access to, and the establishment of communication with, these individuals, even in the absence of a common language. It is this experience that, in the context of figure of the deaf mediator. The deaf mediator, who complements the work of the interpreter in communicating with the isolated deaf, establishes, on the one hand, the accessibility to their world and that of an emerging language, by ensuring that the representation of the meaning, as defined by the isolated deaf individual, be converted to effective communication. On the other hand, the deaf mediator needs to understand the role of the researcher as well as the aim of the research study in order to be able to properly explain it to the isolated deaf individual. Without overshadowing the work of the interpreter—who centrally guarantees the conversion of one form of predominantly tempor-allogic communication to another, predominantly spatial-logic (and vice versa)—the mediator does not translate but rather builds meaning, and not between two languages based on distinct communication modalities—oral and gestural—but rather between languages (gestural and emerging) whose repertoires, from the point of view of building of meaning, are substantially different. Plus, it is the compliance with the principle of the equality of intelligence that allows both the accessibility and the comprehension of citizenship of the isolated deaf. rare opportunity for communication—that determines the repertoire of an emerging language, not the conditioning of profane knowledge, which comes face to face to the (apparent) wise knowledge of the researcher.

Insofar as the isolated deaf configures an extreme expression of deafness, it helps highlighting the concept of mediation as one that presupposes, on one hand, the recognition of a difference that must have a (comprehensible) social expression; on the other hand, the recognition of an equal in that difference as to favor social integration. Mediation is raised upon tensions in the social sphere to overcome misunderstandings that rely, in this case, on the absence of a communal language, thus on both a linguistic and a semiotic concern. In other cases, also approached within the scope of the PROFACITY project, a wider concept has been developed—the translation milieus’ concept—in order to overcome situations where either profane knowledge or profane citizenship were not recognized as legitimate appropriations: “Translating milieus are more like processes in which meaning is sought out and created, in which complexity is produced, in which objects are rendered visible, or in which perturbation takes place, and spaces in which narratives are constructed and invented. These processes produced paradoxes and contradictions, or allowed those paradoxes and contradictions to emerge...” (Battegay et al. 2012, 433). The PROFACITY project, less a comparative study and more one whose “aim was to explore cross-cutting aspects depending upon non-homogeneous situations approached with a view to

specific problems, raising issues of both the citizenship of non-citizens and the non-citizenship of citizens” (Battegay et al. 2012, 9), allowed the approach of this citizenship issue in such disparate situations as: the erased residence rights in Slovenia; the problematic citizenship of migrants in Europe; the cultural dimensions of citizenship, expressed by the kebab businesses in France and Holland; the biometric identity checks and the “citizenizing” of bodily marked citizens; the undocumented migrants and their rights; the refugee experience. It is not the purpose of this paper, of course, to render full expression to these studies—for that, the work of Battegay et al. should be considered—but rather to witness the process of building an analyzer category where the major issue of mediation inscribes itself, and also to fully explicit the approach under which mediation is here understood.

While still on the issue of the work of the deaf mediator and his centrality in the process of building mediator and his centrality in the process of building of a meaning, this work is defined, as suggested by Tricoire (2002), less of an answer and more of a question, less based on the principle of problem solving, and more based on the principle of problem finding: “there is no situation-independent answer, (...) the entire space of mediation is built around the uncertainty of the meeting, under the condition of becoming (the problem finding) (Tricoire 2002, 45). In this situation, the mediator, “trapped in a While still on the issue of the work of the deaf mediator and his centrality in the process of building permanent dilemma in which answers have to be delivered to the recipients, risks compromising what he actually ... does not know to open avenues to a virtually nonexistent possible prior to the encounter”, a task that the author identifies as (auto)-mediation, “which paradoxically requires preparation and training to state what we are unsure of” (Tricoire 2002, 45). In this perspective, it is the event of mediation that, somehow, builds the mediator: “if the event exceeds our capabilities by its contingency and impressive power, it requires our fidelity and perseverance, especially in the face of (and in relation to) what we fail to grab” (Tricoire 2002, 45).

The brief discussion here started around the figure of the deaf mediator somehow brings us back to the first lines of this reflection, that is, the strangeness that might exist between two languages, which, although developed in a common social and cultural context, are at odds because they are unknown to each other. The central issue of the development of the exercise of citizenship—notwithstanding the diversity of obstacles identified over the course of this reflection—far outweighs the problem of deafness per se when it comes to identify, in a shared social project, the power of generating situations of isolation. On top of discrimination (based on the language), these situations will add on marginalization (based on the lack of an official language). At this point, the problem does not end with the issue of deafness, but rather with the difficulties encountered by the social project in embracing the diversity that is the social project itself; the problem ends with

the fact that the social project is not able to cope with situations of marginalization that, perhaps unintentionally, are shaped by the social project itself.

The deaf mediation is certainly a possible universe, from the point of view of the understanding and improvement of quality of life of the isolated deaf, citizens with full rights who will not demand justice but nonetheless have the right to have rights.

The potential that the approach to deaf mediation entails as social intervention policy is far beyond the short example given here. More broadly, it refers to the context of “production of new sociabilities [that] allow the reactivation of a concept of citizenship inseparable of the production of the city itself, (...) a political-cognitive context in which the mediation devices are thought as construction devices, spaces for the exercise of warm and dense social relationships, where the mediator is the craftsman in the building of cities and the relationships that brings it life” (Correia & Caramelo 2010, 26).

To conclude, we would like to convey the urgency of relocating social justice in the axis of citizenship as it underlies the production process of a social project whose deeper democratic understanding, particularly perceived in the case of the deaf, and while stressing the importance of recognition—of the individualities and the individual—is obtained based on the idea of social link. Historically speaking, the social link is binding on novel concepts of distribution, which, as proposed by Amartya Sen, are not exclusively anchored to the means of experiencing, but to the effective opportunities of experiencing. The claim for singularities, which would be expressed through recognition, cannot make invisible the social links that tie the social project itself. On the other hand, if distribution was closer to this social link as it provided the individual a social inscription, it no longer renders a full expression of social diversity and does not suffice as a tool for social justice. It appears that the co-existence of these two processes and especially the tensions between their diverse natures should cope with a discussion that effectively deepens the subject of social justice. The testimony we brought here—the one concerning deaf people—sought precisely to highlight this perspective.

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Endnotes:

1 Emphasis added.

2 "PROFACITY" is the acronym for "Profane Citizenship in Europe", whose subheading is "Testing democratic ownership in hybrid situations". This project is funded by the Seventh Framework Program (FP7), area "8.5.1. Participation and Citizenship in Europe", topic "SSH-2007-5.1.1. Democratic 'ownership' and participation", coordinated by Professor Marc Derycke in collaboration with academic institutions from France, Belgium, The Netherlands, Slovenia, and Portugal.

Irina Ilisei<sup>1</sup>

## Education of Roma Women between Feminism and Multiculturalism

### Case study: Roma Women in Romania

In the present paper I analyse the way gender relations and women's rights are negotiated inside Roma communities in Romania. The paper highlights the intersection between ethnicity and gender, and the struggle between conserving the identity as well as norms and values of the traditional Roma communities. My main theoretical approach is based on Okin's (1998, 1999) view that there is an existent tension between feminism and multiculturalism, between collective rights and individual rights. I analyse the way the state's decision to protect the identity of a community (in order to give groups the total freedom to decide their private sphere of life) affects the rights of the individuals who are part of that community. The paper investigates how access to education is negotiated between traditional Roma communities and the Romanian state, and looks closely at how such negotiations affect the Roma women in their decision making. Concerning these issues, I analyse the situation of Roma women's rights in the context of the intersection between patriarchal societies and Romanian society in which gender inequalities have been minimalized and women have won rights and freedoms equal to those of men. Finally, I offer suggestions for public policies through which individual rights and collective rights should become compatible without harming the former.

#### Keywords

Individual rights and group rights, intersectionality, multiculturalism, feminism

#### 1 Introduction

Roma women in Romania live on the crossroads of gender, ethnicity, race and class discrimination and marginalization. Considering that social inequalities reproduce themselves over the generations, Roma women represent "the most deprived category of the Romanian population" (Surdu & Surdu 2006, 5) and "the most underserved social category of our society" (Vincze 2006). A United Nations Report describes the multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination faced by Roma women: "as a member of the Romani population, she (the Roma woman) has few advocates and is the target of constant hostility. She is marginalized within her community because of her minority status and within her family because of her gender" (UNDP 2001). They face multiple types of discrimination, especially in the field of education, health, employment, and participation in public and political representation.

Raising Roma women's level of education is therefore a key instrument to combat social exclusion and create social and economic growth. Considering that Roma women are among the social groups most vulnerable to poverty in Roman society (Iancu 2007, 139), the risk of extreme poverty could be decreased by raising the educational attainment of Roma women to a comparable level as the one achieved by the majority society.

In order to encourage Roma women to access educational opportunities, a series of new educational and social policies need to be created and implemented. Raising the educational level of Roma women might be a good state instrument for decreasing the dependency of Roma women on

both men and state financial assistance. Still, it must be investigated how education policies for Roma women should be formulated in the context of the existence of several cultural disparities between the majority of Romanian society and some of the traditional Roma communities. The differences observed pertain to social norms in particular, and these disparities are also reflected in gender relations and social roles.

Before going further with the investigation, it has to be mentioned that concerning the situation of Roma women and the gender relations in Roma communities in Romania, I base most of my analysis in the present paper on the results of the research presented in the work "Broadening Agenda. The Status of Roma Women" made by the Surdu and Surdu, 2006. The research consisted of both qualitative and quantitative parts: a survey of Romani women, between the ages of 18 and 73, based on an 80 item questionnaire; and a series of focus group discussions with Romani women, based on a 58 item interview guide. The quantitative research was conducted in 13 localities across Romania. The 717 respondents to the questionnaire were from different areas of Romania, both urban 61% and rural 39%, and were selected using the random route method. At the qualitative level, there were also fourteen focus group discussions conducted in the same localities. The respondents were Roma women who have at least one daughter. For the discussions, they were divided in groups of either 25-35 year olds or 35-55 year olds. For more information concerning the methodology please see: Surdu and Surdu (2006, 19).

#### 2. Right to Education between Individual Rights and Collective Rights

In order to improve the socio-economic situation of Roma women their educational attainment has to be raised and adequate educational policies have to

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be made. The challenge appears when access of Roma women to education is considered incompatible with Roma traditions and with the values of Roma communities<sup>2</sup>. Further, I will analyze the situation of women's rights – especially rights to education – in the context of the intersection between patriarchal societies and societies in which gender inequalities have been minimized and women have gained rights and freedoms equal to those of men<sup>3</sup>.

In the case of traditional Roma communities, access to education is negotiated inside the dilemma of choosing between individual rights and collective rights. In traditional Roma communities the education of girls beyond puberty is considered not compatible with the values and life style of the community – the social role of the young girls is to prepare for being “good housewives” “Not much value is placed on schooling, because the most important thing is the family and women must tend to the family twenty-four hours per day. Especially as a young girl one has to learn to tend to the household: to cook, to clean, to take care of husband and in-laws, to serve guests, to go shopping with the husband and through it all not to forget to smile” (Xhemajli, 2000). Inside such communities, formal education is perceived as being not useful for girls as men are supposed to be the only breadwinners. Secondly, attending school might stigmatize the girl because it is considered not good for a girl to be in the public space without the supervision of her family. Low educational attainment of Roma girls is often caused by the phenomenon of early marriage (Bițu & Morteau 2006, 83). School attendance is considered unacceptable in traditional communities after a girl is ‘promised’ or married<sup>4</sup>. This situation is encountered in most cases only by Roma girls. In the case of Roma boys, education expectations are higher, the marriage age is also higher, and they do not have household duties that could impede them from going to school (Surdu & Surdu 2006).

There were attempts<sup>5</sup> by leaders of several communities to invoke the need of implementing special rights for the Roma, on the grounds of their different cultural norms. Such requests came into the public sphere when the media showed cases of early marriages inside traditional Roma communities and, as a consequence, the leaders of those communities tried to explain that their communities need special laws that could enable them to maintain their ‘traditional values and life style’ – preserve marriage under the legal age<sup>6</sup> and having the right to not send their girls to school unless they want to. Moreover, on this issue: “Roma Organizations supported the (the value of) ethnicity and justified collective rights in disfavor of individual rights” (Bițu & Morteau 2006, 97). Nevertheless, inside the Roma communities the opinions are very diverse. There are also leaders who argue that the state laws concerning marriage and education should be respected, and there are Roma

women activists who promote the educational rights of Roma girls and argue that the marriages should be made only after the age of 18 years old (Bițu & Morteau 2006, 97).

The presence of the Roma population – in terms of non-negligible percentage inside the Romanian society – questioned the universality of law implementation concerning the obligation to attend formal education. In most cases, this discrepancy between the position of Roma men and women is interpreted to be a particularity of the Roma society, and the Romanian state has not so far applied the legislation that already exists:

Unfortunately, by invoking “tradition”, authorities do not intervene effectively and efficiently for preventing or eliminating the violations of the rights of the child which are constituted by early marriages. The lack of institutional response leads, in most cases, to the lack of social protection of the young couple and to the denial of protection offered to the family by the state. (Bițu & Morteau 2006, 40)

When state laws come in conflict with the laws of a minority group, a process begins that attempts to make the rules of different cultures compatible.

As Okin (1998, 667) observed, most cultures have among their goals the aim of men controlling women. When ethnic groups represented by this kind of patriarchal society exist inside countries more advanced<sup>7</sup> in terms of gender equality, an incompatibility between the way one sees the situation of a woman in ethnic groups compared to the majority is shown as an incompatibility between feminism and multiculturalism (Okin 1998, 664). This type of tension between feminism and multiculturalism can be identified in the case of some of the Roma communities living in Romania who claim to have specific rights and freedoms characteristic to ethnic cultures and may also invoke a particular legal framework to exercise a particular culture in order to conserve their identity.

Kymlicka (1995) considers that cultures are an important asset and serve as a context of choice. Individual freedoms demand that there should be options from which to choose and there are different cultures that can ensure the existence of these options. Starting from a liberal perspective, Kymlicka (1995, 105) argues that if we are to deal with representatives of minority groups as equals, then the majority of the population must provide a regulatory context in which the minority is able express their choices in the lifestyle they want to have. A number of commentators have criticized such a position, considering that the enlargement of collective rights would have a negative impact on individual rights. Considering that in some cases special collective rights may affect rights of women as individuals, an incompatibility can be identified between multiculturalism and feminism.

Both multiculturalism and feminism developed

from the desire to protect oppressed groups and thus, on the surface, it seems illogical that they should come into conflict. Okin has noted the existence of a tension between feminism and multiculturalism and has suggested that the overall interests of ethnic groups are not always compatible with the interests of women within the ethnic group (Okin 1998).

Before analyzing the tension that exists between feminism and multiculturalism there is the need to define the meaning of these concepts as used in this paper. Therefore, Okin's definition of feminism will be used, as will the belief that women should not be subject to gender-based discrimination—that women must be recognized as having equal dignity with men and that women should have the opportunity to live a fulfilling life and to have free choices the same as men (Okin 1998, 661). In the context of the discussion of this paper, I will refer to multiculturalism as being the way diverse ethnic groups live together within the parameters of a nation-state.

The conflict between feminism and multiculturalism has its origin in the perception that the members of ethnic groups have identical and homogeneous interests, while the gender dimension of that group is ignored. Okin (1998, 1999) has several critical reflections concerning the special rights for minority women, highlighting the fact that special rights for minority groups – group rights – should not destabilize women's rights. Okin criticizes the notion of special rights for minority groups because it overlooks the implications of the minority women. Spinner-Halev (2001) observes that special rights for minority groups appear at an abstract level as being fair and convenient, but on the practical level these rights in the end give rights mainly to the leaders of the groups. When patriarchal societies are taken into consideration, the leaders will be men with a traditional view on the world and the collective rights can be used to oppress the women. The claims of leaders of traditional Roma communities would generally affect the situation of Roma women. Claiming the right of the community to keep the children (mostly the girls) out of school – even when school is mandatory – would affect the rights of the children to education and their future as individuals. Claiming that a special group should allow early marriages would again affect the rights of the children and would have a dramatic impact on the girls' lives, limiting their possibilities of choosing their own way in life. According to a Roma NGO report, "Are the Rights of the Child Negotiable? The Case of Early Marriages within Roma Communities in Romania" (Bițu & Morteau, 2006): "most of the times early marriages impose especially on girls not to benefit of fundamental rights such as the freedom to choose, the freedom of expression, the right to a harmonious physical and mental development, to educational and vocational training, etc."

The main dilemma refers to the case of an ethnic group with different values and traditions: should the state impose upon the members of the ethnic group a legislation which is not compatible with the norms of the group or should it, on the grounds of

respecting special group rights, allow the group to benefit from a separate legal system? The main debate centers on the question whether the state should be sensitive to some of the voices<sup>8</sup> inside the Roma communities who consider that the Roma have different values and thus it should be acceptable and legal for the Roma women to have fewer rights than the majority of women.

Access to education has become one of the rights that Roma girls enjoy less fully than the girls who are part of the majority group; consequently, Roma girls are leaving school at rates generally higher than all other ethnic groups (Schultz 2003, 46). Roma women who do not benefit from education in the same way as women who belong to majority group are deprived of a right: they are denied the possibility to choose to leave their community when they come of age and the ability to integrate themselves into the majority group. This type of multiculturalism takes into consideration only the rights between the groups but not the rights inside the groups (Spinner-Halev 2001, 84).

The protection of cultural differences (as for example the tradition that girls should leave school at an early age) should not prevail over the individual rights of Roma women to have access to education. As Băluță observes, "putting an emphasis on cultural differences and overvaluing cultural diversity is against the value of individuals and it has created a disservice for girls and women" (Băluță 2007, 27). In the case of a patriarchal minority living in a country with a less patriarchal majority, the women in the minority are not enjoying the same rights and freedoms as the women in the majority. As a consequence, the women in the minority may be deprived by some rights offered to the majority group. Therefore, it can be argued that the public policies in Romania should be readjusted to show sensibility for respecting the traditions of Roma culture but without sacrificing the education of Roma women. Moreover, the latter aspect should prevail over the former.

Okin observed that from the desire to protect the wishes of minorities, it is consented for a community to manifest its culture but it is prevented the development of self-esteem and respect of the person itself, the capacity of autonomy, meaning the ability to decide or choose what kind of life is appropriate (Okin 1998, 664). The problem of education of Roma girls can come in conflict with ethnical traditions specific to the communities they belong to. The private sphere in this case comes into conflict with the interest of the public sphere, "the personal is political" (Hanisch 1969).

Taking into consideration that gender is a social construct, the way gender roles are distributed differs from one culture to another: "culture and gender are in a complex way interrelated" (Halev 2001, 84), being an important part of the identity of a group. Therefore gender inequality that exists in some ethnical communities is frequently perceived as a cultural and group identity characteristic: gender inequality is seen as a shallow particularity of most existing cultures (Okin 1998, 666).

The education that Roma women receive in the school system contradicts, to some extent, the tradition of some Roma communities that these women come from. Specifically, the private sphere enters into conflict with the interests of the public sphere. It can be argued that it is the common benefit of the majority – and also the individual interest of Roma women – for the Roma to be able to integrate themselves more easily into Romanian society through a high level of education and professional qualification. Because the Roma traditions prevent women from enrolling into the compulsory school system, the discrimination of Roma women – which exists within the traditional communities they belong to – is tacitly accepted and perpetuated. By ignoring the discrimination inside a community, it is not the individual who is protected, but the collectivity where the individual rights have no more justification (Băluță 2007, 25).

Cultural minorities have a highly developed gender dimension, thus it should be expected that not just the minority groups should be politically represented, but also the subgroups within those minorities. This situation emerges because the needs of that subgroup inside the minority differ fundamentally from the interests of the minority group as a whole. Therefore, it is desirable to hear the voices of minority women as well, and not just the voice of the general Roma community transmitted through their male representatives. Roma women are not present in the political arena<sup>9</sup> and civic involvement is very low: “only 26 percent of the Romani women surveyed said that they were involved in political, civic, or community-based organizations” (Surdu & Surdu 2006, 45). Nevertheless, many Roma women would like to be involved in politics and 48% of them believe that the increase of involvement of women in political life would change things for the better. The lack of presence of Roma women in the public sphere has also been observed by representatives of Roma women<sup>10</sup>.

However, in order to increase the political participation of Roma women, the basic needs of the minority group should be satisfied to a certain extent before public actors can effectively participate and achieve other significant goals (Lister 1997, 29). In this specific case, in order to ensure that women have representation in public life, their level of education needs to be high enough, considering that participation within public and political life is one of the most important citizen rights.

### 3 Education as a Citizen's Right

As far as citizenship rights are concerned, Lister identified that one of the most important approaches concerning “the accommodation of diversity and difference in the conceptualization of citizenship rights” is “to recognize that rights can be particularized to take account of the situation of specific groups” (Lister 1997, 29). Therefore, when it comes to Roma women's right to be involved in public life, it is not just the freedom to get involved in

public life that should be taken into account: Roma women must have the proper conditions to make use of this right, in this case to be properly educated. As Lister mentions, particularization of the rights means, among other things, to “counteract past and present disadvantages which may undermine their position as citizens” (Lister 1997, 29). In the case of participation of Roma women in public life, their past and present limited access to education should be taken into account.

### 4 How Much More Liberal Are Special Group Rights?

Arguments for special collective rights for group minorities are based on the liberal perspective, which considers that individuals should be allowed to live according to their specific traditional cultural lifestyle. The special rights for group minorities' point-of-view indeed gives powerful recognition to members of a minority from a legal and formal perspective (Shachar 1998, 287). The liberal perspective takes into consideration autonomy and equality, but when we talk about minority groups, this autonomy – especially on the legislative level – has to be limited in order to not affect the autonomy of a category of individuals who form another group, in this case the women (Spinner-Halev 2001, 84). It appears to be a paradoxical situation when collective rights that function illiberally in their interior are defended with liberal arguments.

As Okin observed, “a liberal should be preoccupied especially about the well-being of individuals in communities and to assure that they can choose to go out of the community if the communities become oppressive” (Okin 1998, 673). When special rights and rules for minority groups are taken into discussion, it has to be taken into consideration that jurisprudence is one of the targeted fields as it concerns private sphere, including all the rules that concern marriage, divorce, the individual's control over his/her life. All of these laws have an important impact on the women from minority groups. The fact that women who belong to minority groups have their rights limited in terms of education, administration of their possessions, or divorce, show that women lack the possibility to choose to live outside the communities. Therefore allowing Roma communities – on the basis of special cultural particularities of the community – not to send the girls to school might mean offering more rights for the community, yet this would infringe on the individual rights of the girls. Not going to school would mean that those girls would have fewer opportunities to develop qualifications necessary to earn a living and become economically independent; there would be less likelihood that they would know their rights and thus fewer chances to act as citizens. Therefore, they would never have the possibility of choosing to leave the community.

Moreover, in the same way that the gender dimension should be taken into account by the supporters of cultural minorities' rights, the

environment in which cultural elements are transmitted should also be highly considered (Băluță 2007, 27). There are important implications. For example, the unequal treatment of girls and women within their communities probably makes them less prepared than men to leave their group of origin at the age of adulthood. Any theoretician of group rights should pay close attention to this inequality. The fact that certain individuals are not able to choose an alternative way of life, while other members of the group have the capability of doing so, represents a serious violation of the rights to equality of individuals (Okin 2002, 205).

##### 5 State Intervention in the Private Space for the Protection of Individual Rights

Always subordinated to a larger and nobler unit than herself (such as family, community, ethnic group or nation), a woman's legitimacy to question her subordination is disputed (Vincze - Introduction, in: Bițu & Morteau 2010, 8). Not applying the existing legislation in what concerns right to education is an effect of the fact that state institution interpret the discrepancy between man and women as a characteristic of the Roma society that has to be respected even if it harms a basic right. Family relations are often seen as an issue of the private space. Furthermore, when the family belongs to an ethnic group with its own practices (which imply certain inequalities between the family members), these practices are considered more of a cultural particularity of the group and are tolerated on the basis of the collective rights. However, this perspective reinforces the discrimination among the group members and accepts violations of human rights.

When we analyze the situation of women who are part of a minority group the formal constraints and discrimination are not the only elements that have to be taken into account. Gender is a construct which is formed on the level of the private sphere in the intimate space of every family and has to be considered even if it is rather not that visible in the public space as ethnicity is. In addition, we must consider proponents who - on the basis of liberal precepts - defend the rights of minority groups and thus act illiberally in their interior and neglect the private sphere of childhood and the processes of socialization. They create bigger problems from the points of view of both feminism and liberalism (Okin 1998, 665)

The context in which cultural elements are transmitted is represented in the largest proportion by the family and school. But constraints on making decisions concerning their own life characterize these (patriarchal) cultures (Băluță 2007). Not only are some Roma girls discouraged by their families from going to school, they are even forbidden from doing it. The research for *Broadening the Agenda* found that in many Roma families girls are raised to be hard working and obedient and to focus on domestic activities inside the household (Bițu & Morteau

2006, 38). There is a need for Roma girls to be encouraged to raise their education level by taking advantage of sources outside their community. Policies can promote the importance of education in today's society, and the communication between school, state institutions and Roma communities has to be improved. The state should find solutions so that the poverty would not prevent children to go to school, the discrimination of Roma girls in schools to be abolished and finally, after all these would be implemented, case functional constraints policies can be done, by means of which it should be made mandatory for Roma girls to obtain at least the compulsory level of education.

Regarding building the design of policies for communities that discriminate towards their members, there appears the question of whether the state has the right to intervene in the private life of the citizens or not. To be more specific, should the state intervene in the private life of the families and communities in order to ensure that the basic rights of Roma women are respected? Or should public policy address situations in which women are abused inside the community and maintain that these situations should not be tolerated under any circumstances? Every intervention implies an unacceptable involvement in the private life of the community and family. Shouldn't the state impose policies and legislation and create mechanisms in order to ensure that girls of any ethnicity are not dropping out of school before the 10th grade?<sup>11</sup> Should the state ensure that Roma women are free and have access to qualify and to get jobs?<sup>12</sup> Should the state intervene in order to ensure that Roma women are not subjects of domestic violence, early or forced marriages? In most of these cases an abuse of authority can take place inside the family and intervention implies intrusion in the private sphere.

Indeed, the non-intrusion of the state into private life is an important liberal belief, but from a feminist perspective, "the non-intrusion of state is a way in which the state ignores the abuses and domestic violence. In this way, the state does not protect the individual as a person but protects a collectivity in which individual rights are ignored" (Miroiu 2004, 113). It may be argued that formal education obligativity is in the common interest of the majority but also in the individual interest of Roma women who otherwise will not be able to integrate themselves more easily into society due to the lack of formal education and of a professional qualification. By arguing that one has to respect the traditions that forbid women to follow the compulsory school classes, the discrimination of Roma women that exists inside the society in which they belong is tacitly accepted.

A dramatic infringement of individual and community rights that happens nowadays in the Roma communities is the phenomena of early/forced marriages; it has been estimated that 6.6% of school abandonment is due to early marriage (Surdu et al. 2011, 66). The girls are the ones who are most affected by this phenomena, as 10.99% of school abandonment among girls is caused by early

marriage (Bițu & Morțeanu 2010, 22). The gendered division of labor inside some Roma communities likewise has an important impact on school abandonment among girls: "the percentage of girls not attending school because they have to look after their younger brothers and sisters is 17.58%, while among boys the percentage is 8.09%, revealing how domestic duties are very clearly and unevenly divided between school-aged girls and boys" (Bițu & Morțeanu 2010, 22). The data show that gender roles in Roma communities have an important impact on preventing access to education for Roma girls.

Early marriages mainly affect the school attendance among girls, since the social norms of some traditional Roma communities forbid young girls to enter a public environment where boys can also be found. Invoking "tradition" in the case of early marriages, either done by Roma or by state institutions, is nothing but a violation of individual rights in favor of collective ones. Do individual rights (cultivating a lifestyle allowing the best physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social conditions, the freedom of expression and of choosing one's partner, or each individual's educational and professional development) have precedence over preserving the traditional aspects of a group? The Romanian legislation contains no specific provision regarding the condition of Roma girls and women, least of all regarding early marriages (Bițu & Morțeanu 2010, 42).

Under the comfortable umbrella of "cultural tolerance" the Romanian state institutions tolerated inequalities and discrimination against Roma women, an attitude of the state that has even criticized by Roma women<sup>13</sup>. The existing legislation and policies concerning the Roma people have turned a blind eye to the gender dimension. Also, the existing legislation has not been applied in many cases due to what has been called "intercultural understanding."<sup>14</sup> The most important source of the problem is that the Romanian government's policies treat the gender and ethnic dimensions separately and do not deal directly with the social exclusion faced by Roma women (Bițu & Morțeanu 2010, 38). Therefore, one may say that in Romania there is a noticeable indifference of the state towards issues such as early marriages, dropping out of school at early ages, or the absence of Roma women in the public sphere. In this context, the indifference of the state towards these problems was explained as a form of "cultural understanding" of the Roma lifestyle. It has been considered that Roma families rely on different values that have to be protected in the name of cultural diversity.

Last but not the least, access to education is one of the basic human rights. The difficulties of Roma women to access education have to be discussed inside the framework of human rights discourse. By limited access of Roma girls and women to education, not only individual rights, women rights and children rights but also human rights are hindered<sup>15</sup>. On the surface, the right to education is guaranteed to everyone in Romania, as in most parts of the world. However, the tacit acceptance and the unquestioning of patriarchal cultural practices

represent an infringement on the right to education. Further, it has to be mentioned that if we look through a gender perspective on the access of Roma to education, as mentioned in a position paper of the United Nations Children's Fund: "Roma education gaps also have an important gender dimension" (2011, 16). In what concerns the educational attainment, the ration of Roma girls to Roma boys is 0.94 for primary education and 0.72 for secondary education. These gender differences are not simply related to the socio-economic situation, as the girl-to-boy ratios for the population living in close proximity to Roma are 1,00 for primary education and 1,06 for secondary education (UNDP 2005, 55). Several Roma activists and Roma women organizations signaled that Roma girls and young women encounter much more difficulties in order to access education than boys do: "The boys have it somewhat easier in their schooling and professional training than the girls. They don't have to abruptly interrupt their studies at marriage, but because they are neither encouraged nor supported, few finish high school" (Xhemajli 2000). While boys and young men encounter other pressures, such as the one to become "real man," to be the breadwinners and take decision about their family members (Xhemajli 2000), their gender roles inside the community do not conflict with going to school. On the contrary, they are the ones expected to have better education in order to "uphold their roles as family leaders" (Surdu and Surdu 2006, 46). Moreover, both the qualitative and quantitative studies done by Surdu and Surdu show that there are higher educational expectations for boys than for girls (2006, 47): "Romani girls are generally expected to complete lower levels of education than Romani boys. The percentage of Romani women who believe that basic, primary school education is enough for girls (21 percent) is two and a half times higher than the percentage of those who share the same opinion for boys (8 percent)" (Surdu & Surdu 2006, 11). Moreover, viewpoints towards boys are different than for girls: "Most of the Romani women surveyed also expected boys to have finished school and learned a profession by the age of 21, thus enabling them to financially support their families" (Surdu & Surdu 2006, 35).

This shows in what measure the patriarchal values are present in Roma communities. While the state can hardly control the preferences of a community in what concerns educational expectations, it has the institutional instruments to disentangle this educational disadvantages that Roma girls face by rejecting any form of request to tolerate collective rights that would hinder Roma women's access to education. One important aspect is that many of the difficulties faced by Roma women are interpreted as a cultural particularity of the Roma community and not a problem in itself, and that Roma women are subsumed within the larger ethnic group and are treated by state authorities just as Roma belonging to communities with different norms and not as women with equal rights. Such situations should no longer be tacitly accepted or encouraged by state authorities. The conservation of identity of a

community should not infringe upon individual rights.

In conclusion, when the protection of an ethnical/cultural minority through special legislation and special collective rights is discussed, the gender dimension must not be neglected. Women living in democratic societies should all enjoy the same rights and liberties, despite differences in ethnicity. Furthermore, policies have to be implemented to encourage women who are part of minority communities to make use of their rights and to be an active part of society in what concerns education, access to the job market, and political participation.

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#### Endnotes:

- <sup>1</sup> Beneficiary of the project "Constructing and implementing an interdisciplinary innovative doctoral programme concerning Roma issues", co-funded by the European Union through the European Social Fund, Sectorial Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007-2013, National School of Political and Administrative Sciences, Bucharest, Romania.



<sup>2</sup> Concerning gender roles in Roma families, researches through focus groups showed that Roma girls „are raised to be obedient and to focus on domestic activities inside the household” This training is considered to be necessary for becoming a good wife (Surdu and Surdu 2006, 38).

<sup>3</sup> The research data showed that, as compared to the majority of women in Romania, the Roma families follow a more patriarchal model, in which the man is mostly the breadwinner. Thus, men are the ones who have the power and are the decision makers inside the families (Surdu and Surdu 2006, 42).

<sup>4</sup> The age at marriage differs from one community to the other, being divided between traditional and modern. If in the case of modern communities we can say that girls get married at the age of adolescence or first youth (17-21 years old), in the case of traditional ones girls get married at as early as the age of early adolescence (12-14 years old) (Bitu and Morțeanu 2006, 22).

<sup>5</sup> During the Round Table on "Early marriages within Roma communities: rule of law, cultural autonomy and individual rights" leaders of Roma communities have divided opinions. Referring to the early marriages, some participants argued that Roma traditions have to be kept (Bitu and Morțeanu 2006, 114-119).

<sup>6</sup> "In traditional leaders' view, increasing children's sense of responsibility by conferring them the status resulting from marriage, within the community, is the only way to preserve the healthy moral, unaltered traditions and live spirit of the community, as well as the sure way to resist to the <<ills of the modern society>>" (Bitu and Morțeanu 2006, 11).

<sup>7</sup> "The challenges that Romani women face often differ from those of Romani men, and from those of majority women. Romani women and children are disproportionately affected by the poverty that shatters the lives of many Roma; Romani women usually work longer hours than Romani men, and for significantly less pay. The gap between Romani women and majority women is significant in respect to employment, education, reproductive health, and general well-being" (Surdu & Surdu 2006, 24).

<sup>8</sup> The research consisting of interviews and focus groups with Roma women sustain that most of the Roma women consider that girls inside of the community should benefit of their individual rights considering education and choosing a partner: "Qualitative data from the current research is consistent with these findings. Most respondents stated that girls should marry when they are older than 18. The main reason why Romani women think this is an appropriate age for a girl's marriage is that they expect her to finish school by then, be able to get a job, and secure relative financial independence" "Some Romani women noted that traditional gender roles exert pressures on women to stay home and take care of the children, and thus prevent them for seeking work outside the household" (Surdu & Surdu 2006, 33).

<sup>9</sup> There has been no (declared) Roma woman in the Romanian Parliament in the last 21 years since fall of socialism.

<sup>10</sup> Letiția Mark (President of the NGO Association of Gypsy Women for Our Children) declared that the problems of Roma women result from the fact that Roma women, compared to women of other minority groups, are not represented in the political space. She added that there are not enough and not at all Roma women in the political space. [<http://www.mediafax.ro/social/femeile-rome-discriminate-nu-se-afirma-politic-din-cauza-complexului-elena-ceausescu-7755778/06.2011>]

<sup>11</sup> According to research conducted through interviews and focus groups "Romani women in generally wish for a higher level of education for their children than what the data show they can actually expect. The evidence of high aspirations for school achievement contradicts the widespread stereotype that Roma do not want to receive education (Surdu & Surdu 2006, 45).

<sup>12</sup> "Some Romani women noted that traditional gender roles exert pressures on women to stay home and take care of the children, and thus prevent them for seeking work outside the household" (Surdu & Surdu 2006, 45).

<sup>13</sup> Joint Statement of the European Romani women activists, Bucharest, May 3rd, 2006, with the occasion of the European Conference on Harmonizing the Policies on Roma: "There is no sole absolute definition of what a genuine Romani woman is. Roma women are diverse throughout Europe. The concepts of genuine Romani woman and not Romani woman enough do not exist. We are aware of our differences and we accept and appreciate them as such; We wish to preserve our Romani culture but at the same time we acknowledge that there are practices in breach of human rights in the case of Romani women; We, Romani women activists, acknowledge the fact that these practices harm both young women and men and need to be eliminated. These practices are not "Roma practices" exclusively, but they exist and have existed in all patriarchal societies/communities. Although these practices are present in the midst of the Roma community, it does not bear the exclusive responsibility to surpass them. We, human rights defenders for Romani women, believe that the law should take precedence and that culture should not be used as an excuse when these practices are used."

<sup>14</sup> The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe expressed in Resolution 1468 on Forced marriages and child marriages 2005 the concern about the violations of human rights and the rights of the child which are constituted by child marriages. The attention is drawn on the fact that, under the cloak of respect for culture and traditions, there are authorities who tolerate forced marriages and child marriages, although they violate the fundamental rights of those involved (Bitu & Morțeanu 2010, 39).

<sup>15</sup> "One of the most significant achievements of the global women's movement over the past decade has been to convince the countries of the world that women's rights are human rights. This recognition has made it imperative that women's concerns be part of any national development agenda" (Shultz 2003, 12).

## Mehmet Fatih Yigit, Bulent Tarman

### The Impact of Social Media on Globalization, Democratization and Participative Citizenship\*

It is crucial to increase the civic and political participation during the process of democratization and globalization. There are several effective ways of achieving it in our time. Social media and networking tools have been one of the most effective tools to direct political elections and social changes. In this study, researchers discuss how social media tools have been used in the process of democratization and globalization, where those initiatives were successful, how they affected civic and political participation, and what kinds of variables in social media are important and affect people's attitudes and behaviors in Iran, Syria and Egypt.

#### Keywords

Social media, citizenship, democratization, Middle East

#### 1 Introduction

Today, globalization, democratization and participative citizenship are current debated phenomena in all around the world as countries continue to develop more and more. The main reason of these topics' being discussed in the world is the increasing level of education in almost all societies. According to the UNESCO (2006), the world's average literacy rate for males is 84 % while it is 75% for females. Moreover, huge economic changes have taken place all around the world and both the developing and developed economies have become dependent on each other as a result. Apart from these changes, the notion of democracy that had already been adopted in Europe ages ago has started to spread all around the world, specifically to the Arab nations. The latest examples can be given from Syria and Lebanon where ordinary people started to think about having their voice within their governmental departments. Even though the desire for democratization and the process itself is not painless, the choices of masses have been in that line (Lipset and Lakin 2004).

Civic and political participation are the two important aspects of developed democracies. While civic participation is defined as the actions by individuals or groups to identify and address public concern issues (Civic Engagement 2012), political participation is defined as actions conducted voluntarily to influence elections or public policy

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(Johnston 2012). It is crucial to increase the civic and political participation during the process of democratization and globalization. There are several effective ways of achieving it in our time. Social media and networking tools have been one of the most effective tools to direct political elections and social changes (Cook 2010; Marandi et al. 2010; Shaheen 2008; Guobin 2010; Smelter and Keddy 2010).

In this study, researchers discuss how social media tools have been used in the process of democratization and globalization, where those initiatives were successful, how they affected civic and political participation, and what kinds of variables in social media are important and affect people's attitudes and behaviors. Authors, apart from focusing on the successful social media movements, argue about the failures around the world within this scope.

#### 2 Method

This paper is based on qualitative method design. Data collection for this research was collected by using document analysis method and typical case sampling procedure was used to collect documents related to the Iran, Egypt, and Syria. The data that was the subject of this study was chosen from documents written in English. Documents from other languages were not taken into consideration within the scope of this study. Content analysis was used for this study. The reason of choosing content analysis as the unit of analysis is that the terms such as social media, participative citizenship, and globalization might be used in different meanings that may not work for the aim of this study. Therefore, the contents of documents were analyzed and the most appropriate documents were chosen.

Source of data for this study are Facebook pages and twitter accounts created by activists in the countries that are the subject of this study. Besides, academic papers and governmental reports are included in the data analyzed for the purpose of the study. The data was collected between December 2011-April 2012. There were several keywords and tags used to reach the correct data source. They were: 'citizenship and social media', 'Arab spring', 'Internet freedom', 'participative citizenship', 'Middle East democratization'. The sources collected were

categorized based on those keywords.

3 Literature Review

The modern telecommunication tools, including Internet and cell phones, enable people from almost all around the world to share ideas, information, pictures and sounds more easily and with affordable price compared to the traditional media tools, like newspapers (Figliola, Addis & Lum, 2011). Taking the advantages of new media tools, it has been easier to participate in political organizations, demonstrations, and gatherings whether in person or with ideas spreading through Internet.

After the late 1990s, the impact of Internet on culture and commerce has been extensive. As more technological developments occur, newer tools, such as blogs, video sharing sites, and social networks, are being used more commonly among people. As more people start to use this technology in pursuing their rights, some governments restrict freedom on the Internet in order to maintain their authority. In figure 1, it is showed which countries restrict freedom on the net to what extend. The ratings are determined by taking three categories into consideration: Obstacles to access, limits on content, and violations of user rights. The subcategories are as follow:

*Obstacles to Access:* assesses infrastructural and economic barriers to access; governmental efforts

to block specific applications or technologies; and legal, regulatory and ownership control over Internet and mobile phone access providers.

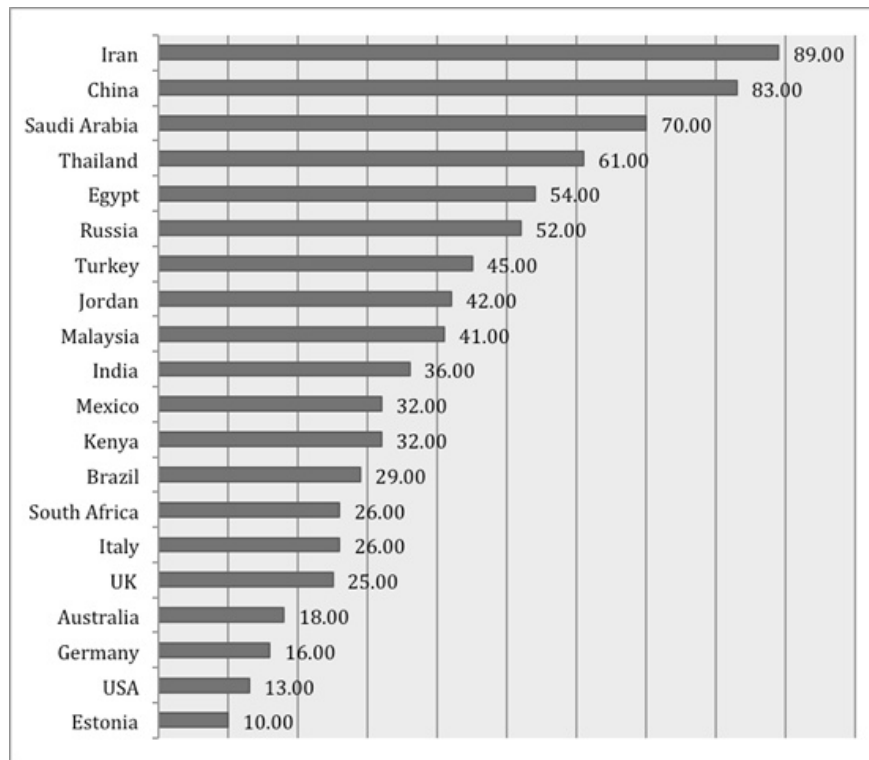
*Limits on Content:* examines filtering and blocking of websites; other forms of censorship and self-censorship; manipulation of content; the diversity of online news media; and usage of digital media for social and political activism.

*Violations of User Rights:* measures legal protections and restrictions on online activity; surveillance; privacy; and repercussions for online activity, such as legal prosecution, imprisonment, physical attacks, or other forms of harassment (Kelly & Cook 2011).

As shown in Figure 1, Estonia is the country where people face least restrictions while using Internet. USA, Germany, and Australia follow it. When we look at the bottom of the list, we see that China and Iran are the countries where restrictions on Internet are at high level. People in these two countries are not that free compared to people in Estonia, USA, or Germany when trying to access information and to seek for their own rights.

Beginning from 1990s, the population of Internet users in all around the world increased from millions to billions. It became an important part of life for civil society, activists, nongovernmental organizations, software providers, and governments (Shirky, 2011). However, while some governments looked at the Internet usage as freedom of speech, which is

Figure 1. Freedom on the Internet (0 best, 100 worst)



Source: "Kelly & Cook, 2011. Freedom on the Net: A Global Assessment of Internet and Digital Media.

defined as 'the political right to communicate one's opinions and ideas' (Freedom of Speech 2012) and freedom of expression, some others tried to block the usage of it in order to control people living in their territories (Zuckerman 2009; Shirky 2011; Smelter and Keddy 2010).

The Internet is an important tool that people use to express themselves and share ideas. It has become a tool that democracy and human rights activists organize real or virtual demonstration for political, social, and economic reform. It is the power of the new technologies that make authoritarian states to think about filtering, monitoring, or manipulating the Internet (Freedom House 2012). Internet and especially social media have become an important actor in demanding civil rights for people around the world. Positive examples include the protests in Philippine by people to demand change, the demonstrations organized in Spain in 2004 against the Spanish Prime Minister, who had inaccurately blamed Basque separatists about Madrid transit bombings, and the lawsuits that the Catholic Church faced over its harboring of child rapists. However, there are examples of failing of activists over the world trying to get organized using social media tools. The street protests against President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, in 2006 ended by leaving him to have more strict control over social media usage. Also in 2010, the protestors who came together to occupy downtown Bangkok were dispersed by Thai government and also killed dozens of people (Shirky 2011).

#### 4 Social Media In Syria, Iran and Egypt

On the other hand, social media has started to play important role in political unrest in several Arab nations, including Syria. Even though Syria is one of those countries that have strict control over social media sites, people living there seem to overcome that barrier somehow. One important means of transmitting information regarding illegal actions on citizenship rights has been cell phones with cameras.

Due to the barriers on using social media tools, reporting issues through that link living in Syria has been difficult for people who wanted to inform the world about what is going on in Syria in terms of violations of citizens rights. Abdi Hakim Ijburi, one of the refugees, who has escaped to Lebanon, says that they started to use social media tools, like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter to get young people and activists together to protest the government's actions. He states that they came together and started to write anti-government graffiti on walls. However, he continues, after he was captured and tortured by Syrian soldiers, he escaped to Lebanon. But he continues to organize online oppositions in Syria from Lebanon (VOA 2012).

The role of social media cannot be underestimated in organizing people in Syria. Many people who do not know each other came together to protest the government and to get their voice heard by other countries in the world. Abdi Hakim Ijburi is one of

those protestors who says that he met people from his town in the opposition movement and indicates that he did not know them before coming together for protesting (VOA 2012). The social media tools played an important role in transmitting their voice to the world whether from Syria or other countries. There are many examples of posting the voice of Syrian people to the world via social media tools. In a Facebook profile created in Egypt, it is shown how Syrian soldiers beat up a Syrian young boy with a stick (Picture, 1). Internet filtering in Syria is so strict that in 2008, the Ministry of Communications ordered the owners of Internet cafes to keep identification information of all customers and their times of use. The ministry also ordered the owners of those cafes to report documents regularly to them (Committee to Protect Journalists 2009).

Picture 1



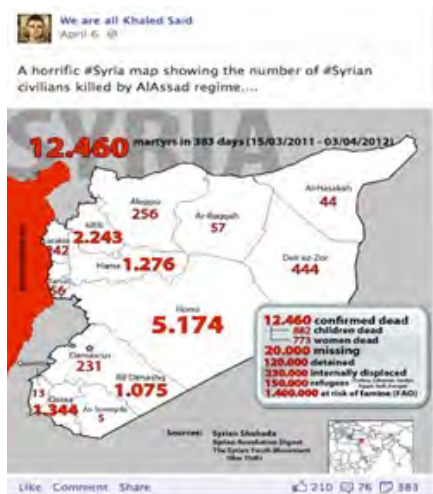
Source: We are all Khaled Said. (2012, January 5). Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/elshaheed.co.uk>

As we have said above, social media tools have been used intensely to inform people in all around the world about what is going on in a region. Even though people living in Syria do not have enough chance to use those tools whenever they want, people from other countries, like Egypt and Lebanon, have played the role of passing information to the world by using the social media tools in their cities. Also by using photographs and drawings, the images spread to the world easily and they become more effective in terms of getting attention. This is another power of social media. As shown in Picture 2, the number of Syrian people killed during the protests is eye catching that it delivers the information directly without any other details that might cause coming down the importance of that information.

In such situations, new concepts might exist as a result of the difficult conditions people live in. Citizenship journalism can be considered as one of those concepts. Citizenship Journalism is defined as the report of information by ordinary people usually using online tools that professionals do normally (Rogers, 2012). The term 'Citizen

Journalists' might be considered as the outcome of usage of social media tools to spread information about something happening in somewhere in the world. They play important roles in providing information especially when traditional media tools become ineffective. In places like Egypt, Iran, and Syria, where the strict controls over traditional media do not allow people to reach objective news, 'citizen journalists' take the place and allow the spread of information by using their own resources.

Picture 2



Source: We are all Khaled Said. (2012, April 6). Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/elshaheed.co.uk>

Iran is one of the countries that apply strict control over printed and online media tools, like Syria. When we look at the increase in the number of Internet users in Iran, we see that while the number of Internet users were under one million in 2000 (International Telecommunications Union 2000), this number has increased to twenty three million users in 2008 (International Telecommunications Union 2008). The increase at such a sharp rate shows its effects on the number of blogs in Iran. It has been calculated that approximately 60,000 blogs were written in Persian language in 2008, which is a large number considering the censorship implemented by the government (Kelly & Etling 2008). As a result of this governmental control over media, it becomes very difficult to reach reliable and necessary information about what is going on in that country. However, people using technology effectively can somehow overcome these barriers as in the case of Iran. In 2008, the Iranian government strictly banned the use of social media in order to stop the flow of information about the protests in different cities to the world. However, Iranian or people from other nations in different countries have become successful in providing information about the unrest in the country by using Youtube, Facebook and Twitter (Zuckerman 2009).

It is also discussed by several authors that social networking has impact on political and social life

in all around the world (Cook 2010; Marandi et al. 2010; Shaheen 2008; Guobin 2010; Smeltzer and Keddy 2010). In the case of Iran, we see that the government have noticed the possibility of uprising before and after he presidential election of June 2009 and took precautions accordingly. After the elections, the Iranian authorities have waged campaign against Internet freedom by not only filtering content to be shared online, but also they have also hacked opposition websites, monitored dissenters online and arrested them, ordered blogging service providers in Iran to remove posts and blogs, and filled the web with propaganda and misinformation (Kelly & Cook 2011). The technology that Iran uses to filter and block web sites is also produced domestically because the government does not rely on Western technologies (Country Profile-Iran 2009). In such an atmosphere, it becomes difficult to look for citizenship and human rights to be at work. When we look at how the Iranian government has established control over Internet usage, we see that usually pervasive filtering is implemented in areas like political, social, security, and Internet tools (Figure, 2).

Considering the ratio of Internet users in Iran, which was 31.9% in 2009, succeeding on filtering Internet is not an easy task but it seems that Iranian government has succeeded it till now. However, for the Iranian expatriates, the situation changes. Because the government does not have the ability to control Internet access abroad, Iranian people living in different countries have used Internet to publish their opinions in opposition to the government (Country Profile-Iran 2009). However, it should be kept in mind that as people have problems with someone, they might provide misinformation about him/her. In the case of Iran, one should be aware of the possibility of misinformation both from opposition groups and government.

Figure 2: Internet Filtering In Iran

Filtering	No evidence of filtering	Suspected filtering	Selective filtering	Substantial filtering	Pervasive filtering
Political					<input type="checkbox"/>
Social					<input type="checkbox"/>
Conflict/ Security				<input type="checkbox"/>	
Internet tools					<input type="checkbox"/>

Source: Country Profile. 2009. Iran, OpenNet Initiative, (<http://opennet.net/research/profiles/iran>)

Freedom of speech is among the rights that each person should have regardless of his race, religion, gender, and social position. In Iran's constitution it is declared, "the media should be used as a forum for healthy encounter of different ideas, but they must strictly refrain from diffusion and propagation of destructive and anti-Islamic practices" (Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 1979). However, it seems that it has been difficult to apply the principles written in constitution to the Internet (Country Profile-Iran 2009).

Egypt is considered as one of the freest countries

country in Arab world in terms of freedom of speech and freedom of Internet. When we look at the figure 3, we see that there is almost no evidence of political, social, security, and Internet tools filtering in the country. However, it is also known that several politically sensitive web sites have been blocked in the past and in 2009, the country was chosen among the ten worst countries to be a blogger in (Country Profile-Egypt, 2009). Even though the country profile of Egypt does not show any Internet filtering, it is known that authorities monitor Internet activity on a regular basis. The Internet service provider in Egypt is owned by a state-controlled company that sells bandwidth to customers (Kelly & Cook 2011). As a result of regular monitoring, critical bloggers are usually detained for open-ended periods. In 2008, more than 100 bloggers were detained for their activities and sharing in Internet (Committee to Protect Journalists 2009).

Although the authorities in Egypt monitor Internet usage regularly, Egyptian online activists have somehow managed to organize street protests and reveal human rights issues in Egypt. In 2008, the postings of those online activists about two government officials torturing prisoners resulted in their being arrested and imprisoned (Reporters Without Borders 2008).

Figure 3: Internet Filtering In Egypt

Filtering	No evidence of filtering	Suspected filtering	Selective filtering	Substantial filtering	Pervasive filtering
Political	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Social	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Conflict/ Security	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Internet tools	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Source: Country Profile. 2009. Egypt," OpenNet Initiative, (<http://opennet.net/research/profiles/egypt>).

Despite the restrictions and monitoring, social activists have been using social media tools, like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to post their content, share information and connect with large audience. Although the use of those social media tools are usually for entertainment, over the last two years, they played important role on political and social activism in Egypt (Kelly & Cook 2011).

Controlling the Internet infrastructure, the Egyptian government has enormous power on social media. Even though the country report says that there is no evidence of filtering, from January 27th to February 2nd 2011, the government shut down the Internet nationwide in order to control actions of people. This shows that during the times of political and social unrest, authorities in countries like Egypt may lay human rights aside (Kelly & Cook 2011).

### 5 Conclusion

Web 1.0 was only one-way interaction where the producer of the content could send the material to the Internet users and not received any feedback on the production from users. However Web 2.0

has changed this situation dramatically where many users can participate in the production and consumption of contents in Internet (Musser and O'Reilly 2006). Besides corporate and private use of social media tools, it becomes common to see those tools, like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter used by governments especially in developed countries. Britain is one of those governments that plan to use Facebook to establish and make social services better by the participation of citizens on Internet (Bovaird 2007).

A quick literature review on the effects of social media tools on social relations shows that "...social use of the Internet [rather than 'antisocial' independent browsing] is positively related to interpersonal connectivity" (Zhao 2006). This study tells us that people using Internet and social media tools to communicate with others have more social ties compared to those who do not use them or who use them in a unidirectional way.

Social media tools, like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have played a strategic role in getting citizens in developing countries together to fight for their rights that each person in democratized nations enjoy having them from birth. However, for those who are under strict control from a centralized point, it becomes very difficult to reach what they want.

Freedom of speech, Internet, voting, protesting, organizing, sharing, criticizing, and being opposition part should be normally to right of each person without any objection. However, in authoritarian countries, it is usually up to a person to decide to what extend people should be free.

One should keep in mind that freedom of using Internet and social media tools are restricted mainly as a result of the dictatorial practices. In countries, where dictators control every aspects of daily life, not only Internet but also other tools, like TVs and newspapers, are under the control of the central government. Those governments restrict the use of such tools by all people regardless of race, color, and religion. Only those pro-government people might have access to those tools easily compared to ordinary people. In Egypt, for example, the use of Internet was restricted both for Muslims and Christians. In Syria, no matter from which religion people are, they are not allowed to use Internet and Newspapers freely. However, even though those governments restrict the use of those tools, people have achieved to a certain level to benefit social media channels that spread their words to other people within those countries and also to the world.

Measuring the effectiveness of social media tools on citizenship rights is not an easy task especially if the units of analysis are countries where having reliable information about social media is difficult. One should rely on the information given by national authorities or the international organizations. But both sources might be misleading as one might try to show the system transparent whereas the other part might try to show it as problematic as possible. This point should be taken into consideration while analyzing social media tools and citizenship activities.

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## Endnote

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