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The American University in Cairo
School of Global Affairs and Public Policy

**Cyber-activism: Engendering Political Subjects within New Logics of
Resistance in Contemporary Egypt and Yemen**

A Thesis submitted to
Cynthia Nelson Institute for Gender and Women's Studies
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in
Gender and Women's Studies in the Middle East / North Africa

Specialization in Gendered Political Economies

Submitted by Fatma Mansour

Under the supervision of Dr. Martina Rieker

August 2015

ABSTRACT

Cyber-activism: Engendering Political Subjects within New Logics of Resistance in Contemporary Egypt and Yemen

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The American University in Cairo

Supervised by Dr. Martina Rieker

The purpose of this thesis is to study cyber-activism as a new social phenomenon in the context of the Arab revolutions particularly in Egypt and Yemen from two different perspectives. The first one is a global perspective in which I intend to situate this new social phenomenon called “cyberactivism” in its spatial-temporal context in order to explore the following questions: What are the possibilities and the limitations of cyberactivism as a new site of resistance particularly in the context of Egypt and Yemen? To what extent can cyberactivism challenge the dominant logics which enabled the emergence to these possibilities within communicative capitalism? Are there new possibilities of resistance that exist within or outside these hegemonic logics? This thesis postulates that linking cyberactivism with capitalist production and labour relations is crucial to answer the previous questions given that the same production and reproduction processes structure define both social relations and these new technologies. Hence, cyberactivism, this thesis argues, constitutes a new site of resistance that has emerged out of these new hegemonic cognitive and immaterial practices of laboring. Secondly, this thesis explores cyberactivism as a new social phenomenon through a New Social Movements (NSM) perspective. It asks the following questions, can cyberactivism in the context of the so-called “Arab Spring”, particularly in Egypt and Yemen, be a new kind of social movement that can be studied and traced within the NSM framework? What are the potentials of such a perspective particularly in constructing new political subjects? In order to answer these questions this thesis engages and compares the NSM logics and theories with the nature and dynamics of the cyberactivism in an attempt to conceptualize a theoretical framework for this new phenomenon in order to further our understanding as well as capture its possibilities and limitations.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Research methodology and literature review.....	7
 Chapter 1: Global contextualization of cyberactivism.....	14
The Internet usage in the Arab region and the emergence of cyberactivism.....	18
Cyberactivism and social movements.....	22
Cyberactivism through the NSMs perspective.....	26
Identity and ideology of the participants.....	29
Individual and collective action	31
Leadership and Resources mobilization.....	32
 Chapter 2: Cyberactivism in Egypt...an emerging new social movement.....	35
New social movements in Egypt and the emergence of cyberactivism.....	36
Egypt...cyberactivism is there to stay	42
Mosireen	43
No military trails for civilians.....	46
Kazeboon.....	51
The framework of their action.....	53
From direct to diffused adversary.....	58
New relationship with the conventional politics.....	61
Culturally loaded movements.....	63
Their subjectivity/ies.....	65
 Chapter 3: Cyberactivism in Yemen...new hopes for social change.....	68
Tribalism, Islamism and State Politics.....	70
Cyber activism and Yemeni revolution.....	82
Citizen journalism in the absence of independent media.....	83
Qat...the opium of Yemeni nation...chewing itself to death.....	86

Yemen without Qat...dreaming grow into reality	91
Their framework of action.....	98
An emergence of new political subjects.....	99
Their adversary.....	102
 Chapter 4: The cyber-space...a global site for liberation and subjugation.....	103
Cyberactivism within and beyond the Arab revolutions.....	106
Everyone wants to be there: Cyper publics are the extension of our realities.....	109
Policing and securitization of the cyber space	112
Political transformations and Cyberactivism.....	120
Activism and Personal commitment.....	122
What to do next.....	123
 Chapter 5: Conclusions.....	125
Cyberactivism in Arab revolution.. An emerging New Social Movement.....	125
Liberation of the cyber-space.....	130
Immaterial, Material, and Immiserated laboring powers in global struggles.....	134
 Bibliography.....	137

INTRODUCTION

The so called Arab Spring began with the first breeze of 2011. It is the year of the rupture of boundaries of social and political struggles with revolutionary ambitions and desires for change in the Arab region. Nothing will stay the same after this year; it is like a tsunami that hits one country after the other: Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria, Bahrain, and many others. Although revolutions and political struggles are not historically new phenomena, what is special about these contemporary revolutions is their extensive use of new communication technologies and social media which enable them to transcend the space and place boundaries as if they are taking place in a timeless time of a placeless place. These revolutions are escalating, achieving progress and moving at a quicker pace compared to their precedent forms of struggles. Although the region has reached warning levels of serious social, economic and political crises, no one including political analysts could anticipate where and how the rupture of all these crises would take place.

As we witness a global transformation from industrial and post-industrial society to a more techno-informational society, with the tremendous improvement of Information Communication Technologies (ICT), one major factor that characterized the so called “Arab Spring” is the use of mobile and social media technologies for planning, mobilizing and organizing. Although the Internet was first introduced to the world for military and scientific purposes in the late 1960s, its dominant use in the contemporary period is in forms of social networks such as blogs, Facebook, and Twitter. Thus, the term cyberactivism was coined to express what has become a social phenomenon in the

contemporary moment to describe the use of virtual channels for social and political activism. Some studies trace the use of cyberspace for activism back to the 1990s with the Lotus Market Place case where thousands of people protested against Lotus Software for releasing a product that made names, addresses, and purchasing behavior data for millions of their consumers available on CD-ROM. The use of social media by grass root movements as well as individual activists as a tool for social and political change has made social media an important site for understanding contemporary activism (McCaughey and Ayers, 2003). Movements against global neoliberal capitalism in the 1990s were featured by the increased use of online activism through Internet communication networks which created what Cleaver (1994) calls an “electronic fabric struggle”; this was indicated in many movements back then such as the tri-continental linkages of anti-NAFTA movements; “Zapatistas in cyberspace”; international campaigns supporting the East Timorese and Ogoni; anti-sweatshop struggles and boycotts; “McLibel”; the networked communication of anti-bioengineering movements; the Jubilee debt abolition campaign; the transnational mobilizations against the WTO, World Bank, IMF, OECD, APEC; the multinational opposition spun from Canada to Malaysia, against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment; the “Battle of Seattle” All have been movements in which cyberactivism, autonomous media, and infiltration of mainstream channels have been an integral feature. Internet use in particular has profoundly affected their organizational form and the convergence of their demands, not to mention catalyzing a lively discussion of countermeasures and “net wars” in the think tanks of Empire (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1993).

A rich body of scholarly work has attempted to define cyberactivism; for instance,

Sandor Vegh (2003) attempted to classify online activism into three categories: awareness/advocacy, organization/mobilization, and action/reaction (p. 72). Other scholars, such as the influential work of McCaughey and Ayers (2003) have cautioned against such a structural reading; any definition, they argue, will remain limited in capturing the dynamics of activism. Defining cyberactivism, they contend, is as difficult as defining activism itself. The Dubai School of Government's Governance and Innovation Program, highlights and specifically analyzes usage trends of online social networking across the Arab region based on data collected in the first quarter of 2011. This part of the research initiative focuses on social engagement and explores "the use of social networking services in governance, social inclusion and entrepreneurship promotion" (Dubai School of Government, May 2011). The research explores how social media tools have continued to grow in popularity throughout the first quarter of 2011. Facebook and Twitter, for example, have expanded their user base and platforms significantly. The research has found that Middle East mobile users have exceeded 250 million. Regarding Facebook it has over 677 million users as of April 2011, with the Middle East contributing the largest number of new users. The number of Facebook users has risen significantly in most Arab countries, most notably in the countries where protests have taken place. Twitter users also exceeded 200 million users at the end of March 2011, these 200 million users tweet about 4 billion tweets a month. The demographic breakdown of Facebook users indicates that they are a youthful group. Youth (between the ages of 15 and 29) make up around 70% of Facebook users in the Arab region, indicating a slight increase in the number of users over 30 years old since the end of 2010. The gender breakdown of Facebook users shows an increase in the percentage of female users, rising from 32% at the end of 2010 to 33.5% in the first

quarter of 2011. This is still significantly lower than the global trend, where women constitute 61% of Facebook use. (Dubai School of Government, May 2011)

In the context of the Arab revolutions, Egypt is considered as the utmost example of cyberactivism that produced a revolution. Egyptian bloggers who engaged in political activism for years prior the revolution succeeded in planning, gathering and mobilizing through their social media networks for the protest on the 25th of January, which was the onset of 18 days of sit in leading to the overthrow of Mubarak. Coined “the Facebook Revolution”, the year 2011 has ushered an intense awareness and analysis of social media and political activism. Many conferences have since been devoted to the increasing role of social media in political activism. Certainly the year 2011 has witnessed a massive transformation in the nature of the activities and the materials that have been circulated through social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter. Facebook users in the Arab region became interested in political and social struggles. Posts about celebrities, fashion, sports, or dating have diminished. This emergent of individual and collective consciousness, the thesis contends, is a new form of social movement with its diffused individual collective action networks that gather all kinds of sharing ideologies and experiencing common struggles. Social networks have become the activist’s weapon to disseminate information, plan, mobilize and lead to a critical engagement with the political present.

The purpose of this thesis is to study cyberactivism as a new social phenomenon in the context of the Arab uprisings particularly in Egypt and Yemen, from two different perspectives. The first one is a global perspective in which I intend to situate this new social phenomenon called “cyberactivism” in its spatial-temporal context in order to

explore the following questions: What are the possibilities and the limitations of cyberactivism as a new site of resistance particularly in the context of Egypt and Yemen? To what extent can cyberactivism challenge the dominant logics which enabled the emergence of these possibilities within communicative capitalism? Are there new possibilities of resistance that exist within or outside these hegemonic logics? Secondly, this thesis explores cyberactivism as a new social phenomenon through a New Social Movements (NSM) perspective. It asks the following questions: Can cyberactivism in the context of the Arab revolutions, particularly in Egypt and Yemen, be a new kind of social movement that can be studied and traced within the NSM framework? What are the potentials of such a perspective? In order to answer these questions, this thesis engages and compares the NSM logics and theories with the nature and dynamics of the cyberactivism in an attempt to conceptualize a theoretical framework for this new phenomenon in order to further our understanding as well as explore its possibilities and limitations.

The thesis explores cyberactivism engagement in the sociopolitical contestation in both Egypt and Yemen due to my personal affiliation to both countries and for other reasons that I will list here. First, I am more familiar with the situation in these two countries in specific as I am from Yemen and lived there for long time before I moved to Egypt in 2007. Second, statistically speaking Egypt is considered one of the top countries in the region in terms of Internet and social media users while Yemen lies in the bottom of the ranking. Many sociopolitical and economic factors are behind this Internet use gap between the two countries, which motivate me to ask if the youth populations in both countries in the context of the Arab revolutions and their aftermath are using cyberactivism differently. Egypt was one of the first countries in the region to

establish itself within the information age in 1993 but the number of the Internet users was limited until the end of the 1990s. In January 2002, the Egyptian government launched the free Internet initiative that resulted in rapid growth in the number of Internet users despite high illiteracy rates. The government intended to introduce a wide range of Internet customers in order to take advantage of this digital revolution in the field of economic development. However, the use of cyberspace moved beyond its financial interaction purposes and provided people with a relatively free space to express social, political, and religious opinions that lead the government to introduce new security unit to police the Internet content since 2003. Therefore, cyberactivism engaged in the social and political movement in Egypt nearly a decade before the revolution, making Egypt a good example to trace its implications via the social movements' perspective.

While in Yemen cyberactivism has recently been introduced as a site for political contestation by youth population within the recent revolution its impact is still limited due to many reasons. The thesis claims that the majority of the youth in Egypt prior the revolution were excluded and not organized or engaged in political parties as much as the Yemeni youth. The government's heavy policing of any kind of dissent or opposition allowed people to organize and breathe around specific channels such as sport, cinema, and music which lead youth to become more distant from traditional political apparatus. Ultras football fans for instance represent one of the strong communities belonging of men in Egypt. The Ultras have certain kind of organization and mobilizing rhythm around football matters but they became engaged politically during the revolution. Likewise, social media is another space that provided youth great channel to draw their

aspirations that later became a dominant space for political activism. Unlike Egypt, the thesis suggests that youth in Yemen are heavily organized around political parties, religious and tribal affiliations. All these affiliations intersect in a very complicated manner which will be explained in the chapter about Yemen. Thus, cyberactivism in Yemen was dominated and led by activists from the upper middle class who can afford Internet access from both inside and outside the country. Youth activists especially after revolution have resorted to using cyberactivism as a tool to challenge the current social structures rather than using their cyber activism to directly challenging the political situation as evidenced in the case of the Anti-Qat Initiative as I detail in chapter 3.

Research methodology and literature review

This thesis is based on both a theoretical analysis trying to understand cyberactivism within the contemporary debates on activism and fieldwork in Egypt and Yemen. This thesis traces cyberactivism since 2005 where the Internet has played a political role during the legislative elections in Egypt focusing on the cyber initiatives that emerged post-25th of Jan. 2011 revolution until the end of SCAF rule on the 30th of June 2012. While in the context of Yemen, cyberactivism is traced from the 3rd of Feb. 2011 revolution until the implementation of the Gulf Initiative on the 23rd of Nov. 2011 which led to a presidential election in Feb. 2012. I focus on an Anti-Qat campaign that emerged within the Yemeni revolution by cyber-activists in and outside the country. The thesis situates cyberactivism in its temporal global context as well as the local context of Egypt and Yemen in order to explore its limitations and its potentials as a new kind of resistance in the contemporary.

Regarding the theoretical and textual analysis, this thesis engages with contemporary theoretical material concerned with ongoing global transformations. In Hardt and Negri's (2000) "Empire", and the "information society" theory of Castell (1997) interventions constitute starting points for the theoretical scaffolding of this thesis. The second aspect of the thesis, which is the study of cyberactivism through New Social Movement perspective, relies on theoretical and textual analysis of the New Social Movements theories possibilities and limitations for understanding cyberactivism in Egypt and Yemen resorting to Buechler (1995), Wieviorka (2010), among others. I also, rely on scholarship regarding on the role of social media in political activism- Cyberactivism- using the contribution of McCaughey and Ayers (2003) as a starting point and I conducted online fieldwork across diverse local social networks that closely followed and observed the interactions of some of the key activists online through their blogs and other social networking accounts such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube in order to capture the cyberactivism logics and influence as a site for political activism. Additionally, completed open-ended interviews with some of these activists in order to explore how cyberspace enables the emergence of new political subjects in the realm of online activism comprehended through observing the performance of different activists online in the context of Egypt and Yemen.

My field work in Egypt happened in three different phases. First, I conducted physical field visits and face to face meetings with members of these groups. I also, conducted virtual meetings through online correspondence, and following and observing different initiatives offline and online. I will use pseudonyms for all my interviewees instead of their real names. Mosireen was the only group with premises that is located downtown so I managed to visit them in September 2011 and I took advantage of joining

one of their photography workshops in December 2012, where I got to know the group's members and work dynamics in addition to closely interviewing four of the group's members whom, Lamia, Kareem, Salwa, and Eman who joined the groups later in 2013.

Salwa, a 26 years old activist, was raised in highly political environment where her family has been part of the leftist movement. She has been involved in political activism since she was 15 when she joined Kefaya movement in 2005. During that time blogging was the new means of radical activism so she started her own blog as part of the "Egyptian blogosphere" a group of bloggers who worked for different social and political causes such as the campaign for "minimum wage" in Egypt in 2007. With the onset of the revolution in 2011 she was part of the activists who used to collect the photos and videos that were made by the protests in Tahrir Square to upload them online to counter the false stories projected by the state's media and that was the birth of Mosireen. Kareem, a 30 years old Egyptian/ British filmmaker, producer and actor who was born and grew up in the UK, became known internationally for his roles in three movies United93 2006, The kite Runner 2007, and The Square 2013. Kareem joined the Egyptian revolution in January 2011 and continued to become a prominent activist in Egypt where he was one of the founding members of Mosireen. Eman, a 33 years old activist and independent filmmaker who graduated from the High Cinema Institute in Egypt. She won the Muhr Award for best documentary director at Dubai Film Festival in 2013 for her film "Underground On the Surface" where she documented the "Shaabi" music as kind of underground art and its relation with the revolution. Although she was among the protesters from the beginning of the revolution and she is a close friend with other members of Mosireen, she joined the group officially in 2013 when she felt that it is the

best place where she can use her filmmaking skills to document everything about the Egyptian revolution since its start in 2011 to be part of the historical archive about the revolution different events. Salwa also is an active member of other groups such as “Opantish”. Finally, Lamia a political activist and one of the founders of Mosireen and member on other groups such as Kazeboon and Opantish. Mosireen

I tried a different approach with No Military Trials as I choose to contact their members through twitter and Facebook and eventually was able to contact one of the main founders Manal and through our online correspondence we discussed issues related to the role of the social media, her motivation, and how she got involved and how she describes her activism. Manal, a 25 years old biologist, active human rights defender and one of the founders of No military trials for civilians. She was raised in a family of activists and Human Rights defenders. Regarding Kazeboon it was difficult for me to contact certain people who can be defined as members of Kazeboon because they intentionally spread the notion that everyone and anyone can be part of this initiative. Therefore, I choose not to contact one person rather to follow the decentralized spirit of the group and follow their overall events through their online website, Facebook page, and twitter account; reading people’s testimonies and reactions about their activities, looking at the circulated materials, and watching TV interviews with some of their members. I also attended one of their screening events and observed the dynamics of their activism where I managed to talk with one of the groups’ members Rania, a 30 years old journalist, a prominent activist and member of No Military Trails and an active member of “Kazeboon”

Regarding my fieldwork in Yemen, I opt for selecting individual cyber activists

particularly from the urban, middle and upper middle class for my field work rather than studying group initiatives as I did in the Egyptian chapter due to many reasons. As stated earlier, cyberactivism has recently been introduced as a tool for social and political contestation in the country. In addition, Internet access is hindered by many structural problems such as the weak telecommunication infrastructure and the high cost of installing the service that can not be afforded by everyone. Thus, cyberactivism in Yemen was dominated and led by activists from the upper middle class who can afford Internet access from both inside and outside the country. Youth activists especially after the revolution have resorted to using cyberactivism as a tool to challenge the current social structures rather than using their cyber activism to directly challenge the political situation evidenced in the example of the Anti-Qat Initiative. Furthermore, the whole country is suffering from electricity crises where people have to survive without electricity for long hours every day and sometimes for days. Thus, people resort to using generators, which are not affordable to everyone. That is why although the number of Internet and social media users has noticeably increased after the revolution to reach 4.3 million users in 2012 which is almost the double number of users in 2010, it is still low compared to other countries in the region. Therefore, political engagement through the net was mainly done by Yemeni people who have the privilege of Internet access and who were previously engaged in civil society efforts or who were living abroad to get updated on what is going on in the country and seeking regional and international recognition. That is why I included Yemeni cyber activists who live abroad and who are active members of the Ani-Qat Campaign; these are Hind, Noor along with the activists who live in the country Amal, and Ahmed.

Amal is 37 years old blogger and researcher based in San'a who belongs to an

upper middle class well known family in Yemen. She studied abroad and earned her masters in International Relations in the US. She used to communicate through different social media channels writing about many different personal and public issues until the onset of the Yemeni revolution when she dedicated her blog “Woman from Yemen” to document the revolution and educate the world about the Yemeni affairs. Hind is 34 young blogger studying abroad. Inspired and motivated by the tide of revolutionary movements in the Arab region and specifically Yemen, she started to follow seriously the Yemeni social and political matters and constantly blogging and tweeting about them. She specifically became well known after the #shameonReuters online campaign and her heavy participation in the anti-Qat campaign. Ahmed, a 23 years old activist who has participated actively during the revolution, joined many events in the change squares, and conducted many interviews and he strongly believes in the power of the social media to make change in the society. Noor, one of the dominant Yemeni online activists who works intensively to spread the awareness about Yemen social and political affairs. Through the different online forums, she keeps her identity and even her face unrevealed in another political stance to say that her personal life is not what matters here, rather the news she keeps analyzing, reporting and posting.

During the process of my research I have faced obstacles in trying to define the categories of my study. Here I’ll explain the process I’ve been through to figure out various aspects of the study. My first intention was to study cyberactivism in the context of what has been called the Arab Spring, specifically, in Egypt and Yemen. Yet the term ‘spring’ that coined the Arab revolutions described my feelings at its outset and changed due to its overuse. It became a term heavily westernized with colonial orientalist

agendas, which romanticized and simplified the political struggles and the people's aspirations for a better life. Therefore, I refer to the social movements at this particular moment in the Arab world as the Arab revolutions because all these movements were demanding radical social and political changes rather than just bunch of reforms. Another challenge was locating the space of cyberactivism, given the fact that cyberactivism takes place in virtual channels that transcend geographic localities. The virtual nature of this phenomenon which functions through defused interactive networks enables the activist to communicate and stimulate debates and actions in a seemingly placeless and timeless space. This challenges the notion of local boundaries that characterized the previous social movements or collective actions for social change. However at the same time, these actions are taking place in certain geographies even if their effects transcend the boundaries. Furthermore, the selection of the interviewees and the criteria that my selection would be based on was quite challenging. I found it problematic to try to define who is active and who is not in this cyber realm. In fact, trying to define the activist is as hard as trying to define activism in itself. In that sense, unlike other theorists who try to describe cyber activism in specific set of words, McCaughey and Ayers (2003) refused to define it, as they don't want to determine an exclusive definition of what is and isn't legitimate activism online. I personally agree with them as online activism is an evolving social phenomenon and it acquires its logics through the different ways people use online spheres and new technologies as tools for social change. So the best thing I can do to narrow down my focus in this research is to trace the cyber activism in the context of the Arab revolutions giving examples of influential online activists and initiatives that are being created within this temporal context in both Egypt and Yemen and analyze it in relation to with the other elements of this thesis. These initiatives constitute actors that

are not necessarily confined to specific geographical locations but are working for a certain cause; in other words, different actors from different places are working for a certain cause that can be shared globally though the actions are taking place in certain localities.

Chapter 1: Global Contextualization of Cyberactivism

The revolutions in Egypt and Yemen have renewed and depolarized debates over the role of the Internet in mobilizations for political and social change. In fact, despite the media hype about “Facebook Revolutions,” the Egyptian activists I interviewed reject claims that technology somehow caused the 2011 uprisings, and they say it undermines the agency of the millions of people who participated in the movement that brought down Hosni Mubarak. Given the inordinate attention given to cyberspace as an effective site for activism, questions emerge concerning the simplistic causalities and linkages articulated between cyberactivism and political resistance. We shouldn’t forget the larger neoliberal capitalist context in which such channels were found where our identities and activities are being subjected, constructed and subsumed subtly by such hegemonic systems. Thus, my intention in this chapter is to situate this new social phenomenon “cyberactivism” in its spatio-temporal historical context in order to study its possibilities and its limitations in an attempt to explore new possibilities of resistance that might exist within or outside these hegemonic logics. I will do that by exploring cyberactivism through a new social movement perspective. Therefore, this research is based on theoretical and textual analysis of the new social movement’s theories and their possibilities and limitations for understanding cyberactivism. Most importantly, the chapter aims to enrich the literature of the new social movements’ theories by adding the logics and the values concluded from the investigation of the dynamics of cyberactivism.

During the 1970s, there has been a great transformation in the laboring process that was characterized by the shifting from “manual” to “mental” labour as a result of the introduction of new means of communication technologies within capitalist production

processes that require rich knowledge and “intellectual labour”. This mass involvement of intellectual labour has produced new forms of productive activities in which the traditional distinction of labour as manual and mental, material and immaterial, productive and unproductive has become blurred. The organization and the production of the immaterial labour process are not obvious or restricted to the borders of the working place as they are taking place in the society at large in forms of social communication and network flows. Thus, we can conclude that immaterial labour directly produces social relations when it is seized by capitalism it produces capital relations, which create the productive subjectivities and the “ideological” environment in which these subjectivities live and produce. Negri argues that in the capitalist modern societies, it is difficult to make distinctions between "productive labor" and "unproductive labor," between "production" and "circulation," between "simple labor" and "complex labor" as they are no longer in linear relationship rather in more interactive interrelated processes. Therefore, it is impossible to capture the exploitation that is taking place as quantitative measures in which we insist to make distinctions, separations and solid definitions of the different processes of the social modes of production and communication ignoring the “process of subsumption in their totalities” (Negri, 1979: 60)

A perfect example of the modern construction of “productive” subjectivities through immaterial labour, in terms of social communication and networking, is what Mark Coté and Jennifer Pybus (2007) referred to as the construction of “online subjectivities in an open-ended process of becoming” P: 88 through Internet social networks such as Myspace, Facebook and many other virtual networks. As mentioned earlier, immaterial labour takes place in the process of communication and networking, so this cybernetic or digital construction of our subjectivity within such virtual social

networks is a constitutive practice of immaterial labour which constitutes a “new realm for the expansion of capital and thus, surplus value” (ibid: 89) in which we are the active immaterial workers who are subjected to perpetual voluntarily collective learning and training process of becoming the desirable productive communicator/consumer of capital. In the same sense, Manuel Castells (1997) argues that we are witnessing a new kind of global capitalism that is not industrial rather it is “informational” that is functioning through what he calls the “network society”. He argues that the network society historically emerged as a result of three independent processes: the Information Technology Revolution, constituted as a paradigm in the 1970s, the restructuring of capitalism and of statism in the 1980s, aimed at superseding their contradictions, with sharply different outcomes and the cultural social movements of the 1960s, and their 1970s aftermath (particularly feminism and ecologism) (Ibid: 99).

More recently, Hardt and Negri (2000) go beyond the informational part of the capitalism and argue that we are living in a transitional hegemonic system that they call “Empire”. This Empire doesn’t necessarily implicate imperialism rather, it is an “imperial postmodernity” which is characterized by a “deterritorialized flow” of global markets. This global Empire is no longer based on industrial modes of organization in forms of external social discipline and nation-state sovereignty. Rather it governs itself through “biopower” which is defined as "a control that extends through the depths of the consciousness and the bodies of the population and at the same time across the entirety of social relations" (2000, p. 24). It is contemporary capitalism that goes beyond the production of goods to the "production of life" in which its primary task is to “administer life”. They claim that this Empire featured by the emergence of a globalized labour regime that produces a mobile precarious laboring population who is finally

decontextualized as a placeless multitude. The communicative and information tools that have been used to regulate them become weapons for the multitude as a counter-Empire, arming them to demand 'global citizenship' in capitalism's Empire (Hardt and Negri 2000, 400).

So far I tried to delineate a global map in which cyberactivism has emerged using relevant scholarship to capture this transitional historical moment. Through this contextualization, one can conclude that activism online is one great manifestation of the resistance to encounter the global capitalist hegemonic logics of this transitional era. Cyberactivism is the immaterial cognitive labor that political subjects are exerting through these virtual channels; it is the kind of immaterial labour of the social worker which Negri suggests is a generalized form of labour power in which the new communicative and technological competencies while most explicit among "qualified" workers, existed in "virtual" form even within contingent and unemployed labor as the prerequisites of everyday life in high-tech capitalism (Lazzarato and Negri 1994, 87). However, what can be counted as a form of resistance is the consciousness of the online users that distinguish them from being either passive or active agents for change and resistance. It is the individual and collective consciousness that enable them to be and act as political subjects. It is through their awareness of common struggles that lead them to mobilize through these virtual channels, thus, creating space for resistance in the non-space of Empire that is in a perpetual attempt to absorb and subsume all kind of potentialities for struggles and resistance. This is evidenced in the context of the Arab revolutions in the activists' extensive use of the cyberspace which enabled them to gather around common struggles demanding social and political change.

Therefore, the literature on cyberactivism is very important not just to understand

it as significant emerging social phenomenon, but also to enhance our comprehension of globalization and its power relations. As a consequence, that activism online has been integrated into many social movements' activities in the present. As Ayres (1999) has stated the introduction of new communication technologies that enhanced the social interaction is a great manifestation of the impact of globalization. Therefore, it is worthwhile to study cyberactivism in relation with social movement organizations since it has an effect on social change, political transformation and re-conceptualization of social movement theory (McCaughey & Ayers, 2003). However, I think it is important to provide a broader overview about the introduction of the Internet in the region and the emergence of the cyberactivism in the context of the Arab revolutions.

The Internet usage in the Arab region and the emergence of cyberactivism

Although the Internet and other advanced ICTs were first introduced to the world for exclusive military and scientific purposes in the late 1960s, they have been put in the process of commodification and became goods available in the market to be purchased by the masses; thus “being subjected to the purchasing power of consumers and then the will of the ICT owners” (Fortunati, 2011: 13) These advanced immaterial technologies have represented a great “technical, social, and political resource to the domestic life and has a central importance to the expansion of the Empire which led to the “hegemony of immaterial production of the neoliberal economy” (Hardt & Negri 2005: 101)

As capital production has shifted outside the factory walls and expanded to the production of new modes of sociality that allow capital to reproduce and expand itself through the immaterial labour of the masses and communication technologies particularly the social networks; people are being pushed to outsource their “emotions,

information, communication, education, organization, and entertainment and the content generated from their active engagement working and playing in those communicative circuits” (Pybus, 2007: 122) which is not recognized as “work”. This immaterial labor in the reproductive sphere has become “mediated, self-reproductive, self-exploiting and self-disciplinary. Intellective machines have spread in great numbers and variety, by deeply modifying the organization of space and work in houses and also the possibility of cooperation among the members of a family” which subtly entail the subjective formation that capital needs to reproduce itself (ibid: 123) Such concept of immaterial labor is paramount for accounting for new subjective formations. In other words, it lets us see how immaterial production creates not just the “means of social life but social life itself” (ibid: 146). However, such labour today is increasingly marked by the way it combines the bodily and the mechanic in an intensified production of commodities that derive from information, communication and cybernetics, on the one hand, and affect, taste, public opinion, consumption, and art, on the other. Thus this labour is immaterial not because it is less material than any other labour, but because it is more social. Lazzarato, speculates that this kind of social labour will allow “a location of radical autonomy of productive synergies” (1996: 140) The autonomy of the immaterial worker provokes a politics of possibility for labour writ large and synergistic with the movement of movement’s insistence that capital-centric thought should not imprison its potentialities (Harney, 2006) This thesis claims that cyberactivism is one manifestation of the immaterial autonomous potentiality to work against capitalism. Cyberactivism is the immaterial cognitive labor that political subjects are exerting through these advanced immaterial products such as the Internet and its social networks as new kind of resistance in the contemporary to encounter the global capitalist hegemonic logics. The Arab region

was not exempted of this capital expansion although the Internet has been introduced to the Arab region in the late 1990s after almost a decade of its usage in other parts of the world. One reason behind this delay was a technical difficulty to use Arabic language on the Internet and computers in general. As a result Internet usage was restricted to a small percentage of people who can use English or sometimes French. Another factor was the high cost to install Internet connections, which is still somehow relevant nowadays compared with countries worldwide. The main reason behind the high cost is that governments in most of the Arab countries monopolize the telecommunication services charging high prices in the absence of other competitors. Since its introduction in the Arab world, the Internet has been regarded as a threat by Arab authoritative regimes. They claim that Internet access would distort the morality of the conservative Arab society that fear that this cyber platform with its easy access to the world would form as a political tool against them, according to The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (2012). For that, they tend to control Internet access by all means to make it very hard and expensive to obtain Internet connection. For instance, Saudi Arabia used to charge extremely high value for Internet services, while Iraq during Saddam Husain's regime used to make it very difficult to obtain Internet connection with an exhausting bureaucratic process. That is why Saudia and Iraq were that last two countries to provide public Internet services in 1999 and 2000. However, since it was almost impossible to prevent Internet access beside the increase in public demand for cheaper and easier Internet access for educational and economic purposes, Internet access percentage has increased during last decade from almost zero in 2000 to 40 percent of the population in 2010. Internet has introduced and facilitated new logics of communication and networking and not surprisingly youth dominate the Internet usage in the region with

more than 70 percent of social media accounts belonging to users under the age of 29. In the Arab states as well as the rest of the world, Internet has provided people a great chance to express freely their social and political beliefs and ideologies that they can't declare through formal channels specially among minority groups who were deprived of expressing themselves freely for political, social or religious reasons. Therefore, the use of social media such as blogs, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube in the Arab region for social and political contestations preceded the uprisings by almost a decade. Cyberactivism was engaged in the political scene in Egypt since the legislative elections in 2005 as Egyptian bloggers were actively engaging in the election monitoring process and reporting any irregularities. During this period blogging flourished in the region and was translated into Arabic as "tadween" and the blogger as "modawen". A study by Berkman Center that analyzed a snapshot of Arab blogs in 2009 identified "a base network of approximately 35,000 active blogs, created a network map of the 6,000 most connected blogs, and with a team of Arabic speakers hand coded 4,000 blogs"(p:54) Arabic bloggers who were blogging about a wide range of subjects of personal affairs and daily life observations, religion, and politics. Just prior to the onset of the uprisings in the region, there were around 15 million Facebook users in the Middle East and North Africa. As numbers of Facebook users from the region has increased during 2008 and 2009, Facebook administration decided to introduce an Arabic interface beside English and French. This allowed a whole new demographic of Internet users to have Arabic Facebook accounts which added 3.2 million users in 2010. Egypt has the largest Facebook community account of 3.4 million users. Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia and Yemen all have Facebook communities with more than 50% of users below the age of 25 years old. In the same manner, Twitter has witnessed a great

expansion of the number of users in the Arab region from only 3,000 users in 2009 to around 40,000 users in 2010.

Cyberactivism and social movements

The use of media tools and technologies is not new in the history of social movements. Different means of media and communication technologies such as TV, satellite channels, newspapers, movies, and radio have been used by many grass root movements to raise awareness and consciousness of the masses. Online activism or cyberactivism refers precisely to the use of Internet communication technologies in social and political activism. However, since the introduction of cyberactivism there is a controversy about its efficacy in relation to social movements. On one hand, it has been argued that cyberspace has provided the social movements with a new democratic public sphere that is non-hierarchical, free of regulations and boundaries. cyberactivism is immediate and interactive, which enable social movements to reach out and mobilize as many people as they can with cheaper and faster pace than using any other mediums. Also, this interactive feature allows the participants of these social movements to engage and interact constantly in the cyberspace. (Kellner, 2001; McCaughey & Ayers, 2003)

Furthermore, it is being argued that cyberactivism has an inclusive feature that it provides the possibility of a voice for the voiceless that are marginalized or excluded in the social and political publics and the mainstream media (Kellner, 2001). In the context of "Internet politics, space refers to offering a dynamic ability to shape opinion and contribute to the "tipping point."(Aouragh 2011). Nuha Atef, an Egyptian activist interviewed by Miryam Aouragh & Anne Alexander, believes that cyberactivism is

To have a space, an online space, to write and talk [to] people, to give them messages which will increase their anger, this is my favorite way of online activism. This is the way online activism contributed to the revolution. When you asked people to go and demonstrate against the police, they were ready because you had already provided them with materials which made them angry. (Cited in Aouragh, 2011: 1350)

Cyberspace provides activists with an alternative media outlet to be used as a resourceful site available for all actors in political struggles (Carty & Onyett, 2006). Most importantly, cyberspace's strongest criteria is the ability to provide a borderless public sphere that is less regulated than the traditional mainstream media. This enables social movements who are engaged in cyberactivism to diffuse more quickly and transcend physical and geographical boundaries without the need of the presence of the bodies in order to have social change (Ayres, 1999; McCaughey & Ayers, 2003). Thus, online activism is said to challenge the national and international governing systems since cyberactivism transcends the nation-state boundaries (Cleaver, 1999). On the other hand, it has been argued that there are limitations to cyberactivism in social movements, since it requires access to Internet and communication tools that not everybody is able to have. Thus, it is dominated by elite intellectual activists who have the proper knowledge and the access to such online means (McCaughey & Ayers, 2003). Also, they argue that the cyberspace is not exempt from being subjected to the state authority, governing, and censorship. Thus, it does not guarantee a democratic venue for social and political struggles of social movements (Giacomello, 2005).

However, whether the use of online activism is beneficial or not for the preexisting social movements is not my concern. My intention is to explore

cyberactivism in the context of Arab revolutions and the groups of potential political subjects that emerged as a result of using the cyberspace. I will try to study cyberactivism as a new social phenomenon through the perspective of the New Social Movements (NSM). In other words, I will try to engage and compare the NSM logics and theories with the nature and dynamics of the cyberactivism in an attempt to conceptualize a theoretical framework for this new phenomenon in order to be better traced and understood as well as to capture its consequences in further studies. Also, it is an attempt to enrich our understanding of the dynamics and logics of the NSMs.

In the 1960s social movement started by the working class movement was anchored in the industrial society in which all social, political, and cultural aspects were integrated and tied to the nation-state. Working class movement was functioning within the framework of the nation-state as its social struggles and protests in forms of unions and parties were constructed and identified through the nation-state boundaries. Since the factories and working floors were the origin of the working class movements in which the power relations based on the domination of the factory owners and the subordination of the workers they had clear adversary to work against this specific domination. However, as their subjectivity was defined around their social class as workers, their actions were not trying to break the existing power structures rather to enhance their conditions within the same system of domination. This being said despite the fact that there were efforts from other workers to opt outside the whole working space logic, especially in the late 1960s. The second wave of social movements' struggles and actors in the late 1960s and the early 1970s continued to be identified with the same nation-state framework and were anchored in the post-industrial period in which social, political, as well as cultural logics started to shift a bit from the boundaries of nation-state. Therefore,

some actions were beginning to be transnational and tried to challenge the boundaries of the states. For example, in mid 1970s the anti-nuclear movement has brought the attention and support from many countries against the construction of nuclear power stations in Europe. Although the framework of the nation-state was not shattered, struggles were beginning to be global.

The 1980s and the 1990s have witnessed transformation from the post-industrial society to the information and networking society that is dominated by neoliberal global hegemonic system in which capitalist economy plays an important role that transcends states sovereignty. Former social movements have almost disappeared through the institutionalization of these movements or through radicalization of its members. By mid 1990s new forms of social movements with global features started to emerge in response to the globalization historical moment that we still live in which consists of massive flows of information, capital, and even human populations across boundaries of the states (Castells, 1996). These new global social movements are adopting global aspects of dissent using the Internet as one significant tool, cyberactivism. Although states' boundaries did not disappear, beside working through particular territories, the actors of these global social movements work beyond these boundaries seeking global recognition. Cyber-activists rally on different virtual social spaces, to disseminate information, mobilize resources, network with people, construct collective identities and common struggles, and organize protests and events for social and political actions without being necessarily tied to a certain nation or state. However, activism online has brought symbolic relationship with this traditional framework of the nation-state. They evoke their belonging to virtual citizenship in which they can hold electronic protests, public debates, sit-ins, and many other kinds of dissent that are applied in geographical spaces.

Cyberactivism through the NSMs perspective

When talking about Internet activism and its implications, Earl (2010) focuses on exploring to what extent this kind of activism could lead to social change and collective action. For instance, the article shows that totally contradictory findings came up out of different studies on the effect of online activism depends in the first place on what perspective the scholar is using to study any issue; results varied from slight effects to tremendous effects that could lead to collective action and changes in offline activism. This variation in the findings depends on the perspective that the researchers used to study this phenomenon. For instance, some scholars study it from Social Movement's perspective and see Internet activism as a migration of SMs to the online sphere or even the emergence of entirely new social movements on the Internet. Other political sociologists studied online activism as a form of civic engagement while some political scientists and communication scholars analyzed Internet activism as type of politically oriented collective action. Definitely, the researcher's adopted perspective determines the findings of the study. In this thesis, I'm quite interested to study online activism using the theoretical framework of the new social movement theory in order to explore how the dynamics and the logics of online activism could enlighten and add to the existing NSM theories in the future.

Throughout the history of social movements there has been a theoretical split among theorists regarding the socio-historical evolution of the very nature of the actual objects and struggles which constitute the history of social movements. On one hand, many sociologists, political theorists as well as historians have used resource mobilization theory as their paradigm to study different forms of collective action and

they define the social movements as being the “the rational behaviour of collective actors attempting to establish themselves at the level of the political system, maintaining this position and extending their influence by mobilizing all sorts of resources” (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Tilly 1978 quoted in Buechler 1995). This paradigm had significant theoretical and empirical importance on understanding social movements. On the other hand, many sociological researchers such as Alain Touraine used social constructionism theory that emphasizes the role of the framing actions as well as the cultural processes in social activism (Snow and Benford 1992; Gamson 1992; Hunt, Benford, and Snow 1994). This approach sees in the social movements “the action of an actor who is dominated and challenges the established order by opposing a social adversary in an attempt to appropriate the control of historicity, that is to say, the main orientations of community life.” (Wieviorka, 2005: 13)

However, between political sociologists who reduced collective action to a mere instrumental aspect and Tourainian sociology which focuses mainly on the meaning of the actions, the need for an alternative paradigm to study collective action has emerged. Criticism has been raised to question the utility of such approaches to study some social movements that does not fit or can not be covered by the above approaches. For that, new social movement theories have emerged to explain the social movements that were taking place in transitional period from the industrial to the post-industrial era. Buechler (1995) argues that NSMs theory has emerged as a reaction to the inadequacy of the class based Marxist analysis of collective action particularly in two aspects. First, classical Marxism presumes that all significant actions for social change are primarily derived from economic logic of capitalist production and all other social logics are of secondary significance. Second, Marxist analysis of collective action reduces the actors’ identity to

be defined in terms of their class in relation to the process of production and other social actors are of secondary significance to collective action. "New social movement theorists, by contrast have looked to other logics of action based in politics, ideology, and culture as the root of much collective action, and they have looked to other sources of identity such as ethnicity, gender and sexuality as the definers of collective identity. The term "new social movements" thus refers to a diverse array of collective actions that have presumably displaced the old social movement of proletarian revolution associated with classical Marxism" (Buechler, 1995: 446)

As we can see that new social movement theories have emerged in the period between the 1970s and 1990s as a result of the introduction of new forms of collective action that do not fit adequately with the traditional old social movement paradigms which reduced collective action to forms of labour unions or political parties. As Samir Amin argued, "the new social movements have emerged in the 1990s as a defensive reaction to the attack of neoliberalism against the rights of peoples, particularly the attack on the welfare state in the West and on the state protection in the South, etc." (qtd in Buechler, 2000: 240) This emergence of new forms of collective actions within the advanced industrial societies has provoked the need to re-conceptualize the meaning of social movements. In that sense, cyberactivism as stated at the beginning of this chapter, has emerged as a global social phenomenon within this transitional historical moment would indeed need to be conceptualized with paradigm that moves beyond the classic conception of social movements. That is why I argue that new social movement theories have great potential as an analytic paradigm to study cyberactivism through its logics. Therefore, it is important to understand the main criteria of the NSMs in order to be able to see cyberactivism through NSM perspective. However, before that, it's important to

mention that although it is commonly referred to as a new social theory in single connotation as if there is an implicated agreement among theorists, it is more accurate to talk about these new social movement theories in the plural; there are variations in the many theories of the very general concept of new social movements. However, there are a number of common elements shared by most of the new social movement theories that eventually enable us to use the general approach of new social movement theory in the singular.

These elements are the main characteristics of the new social movement theory that I will integrate to analytically study cyberactivism. Here, I will bring some of the fundamental elements of the organizing theories into the debate in order to engage cyberactivism with the NSMs. In other words, I will try to utilize these elements of the organizing theories as comparative standards in order to explore the differences and similarities of the logics and the dynamics of NSMs with cyberactivisms.

Identity and ideology of the participants

According to Laraña et al in their book “New Social Movements: From Ideology to Identity”, one of the main characteristics of NSMs is that they are comprised of a wide range of participants from different social categories and ideologies without being restricted to certain age, gender, race, or social class. Unlike classic social movements whose members used to belong to specific category such as labour workers or belong to certain political group or social class. New social movement theorists refuse the process of constructing common identity for the social movement actors or assuming unified group interest. Rather they acknowledge the existence of conflict of interests among the same social movement groups (Hunt, Benford, and Snow 1994; Johnston, Larana, and

Gusfield 1994; Klandermans 1994; Melucci 1989; Stoecker 1995). Furthermore, theorists argue that unlike the classic social movement such as working class movement and their Marxist class based ideology which suggests a totalizing and unifying element for collective action, new social movements are not based on specific instrumental ideology. Rather, new social movements are associated with symbolic beliefs and values that move beyond conflicts over material resources which promote great sense of belonging and autonomous individuality of the actors who gather for common socially constructed grievances or struggle rather than being restricted to certain group or location (Johnston, Larana, and Gusfield 1994; Klandermans 1992). This is quite similar with the nature of activism online that is based also on defused social structure of wide range of different social categories. For instance, users of different blogs and social networks who gather for different causes are coming from different social, economic, and ideological background but they unite against common struggles.

At this point, it is important to emphasize the significance of ideology and how it greatly influences and interacts with other organizing elements within any movement. This is clearly illustrated in King's (2008) article in which she studied the interaction of factors such as ideology, strategy, and conflicts within the organization of any social movement; giving the example of The Sierra Club environmental movement and its conflict about the immigration issue. Since the 1970s to the 2000s there have been ongoing debates over the club's position about the increasing international immigration to the States as an environmental issue. The Club was divided into two groups, one advocating stricter limits on immigration and the other advocating the opposite. She argued that the ideology and the strategic concerns of the movement's activists are the reason behind their position about the Club policies toward the immigration issue. She

claimed that there is a complicated relationship between these factors that may lead to conflicts in the social movement. However, she argued that the relationship between the ideology and strategy is not always straightforward or predictable. For instance, social movement members could strongly believe in a certain ideology but they decide not to act strategically about it. Ideological differences could lead to conflicts in strategies and in turn, could cause major organizational change and sometimes even split into “radical and moderate” groups. However, this conflict shouldn’t be regarded as always necessarily negative; rather it could lead to positive transformation in the social movement. Organizational changes resulting from conflicts could lead to goal transformation, new coalitions with other groups, strategic transformation, and adaptation of new tactics. Therefore, we could conclude that the diffused nature of the ideology and the existence of different ideological backgrounds of the activists in the realm of cyberactivism could be both an empowering and dis-empowering factor and it is worth more extensive studies and attention from social movements’ scholars in the future. Here, an important consideration to be in mind is that the interaction of these factors is not simple; rather it is complicated by further external and internal challenges and conflicts and there is no one single manual or theory for social change that fit all contexts.

Individual and collective action

Another feature of the NSMs is that they usually start with individuals and then translate into a collective movement. The relationship between the individual and collective become blurred; as we saw in the earlier feature NSMs are initiated through individual actions rather than organized ideological groups. Moreover NSMs are concerned more about the intimate and personal aspects of peoples’ lives instead of

revolving only around public traditional political interests; feminist movements and LGBT groups are a great example (Laraña, 1994). Social networking sites in particular formed “an online public space for political discussion where opinions were shaped and at times decision were taken”.(Aouragh 2011: 1348)The collective nature of dissent is visible in online environments such as Facebook, which also provided tools to facilitate interaction, allowing individuals to get responses to questions they would find difficult to answer offline, and also to ask support for particular lines of argument or causes. “It had the effect of a widening ripple in the water. Facebook became something one had to have” (ibid) This is quite consistent with the nature and dynamics of cyberactivism in which activists start individually writing in their blogs, Twitter accounts, or Facebook walls about different personal as well as public issues then this stimulates individual and collective awareness and actions.

Leadership and Resources mobilization

A third element of the NSMs is the decentralization of the resources and power of the movement; NSM tend to be segmented, diffused, and decentralized in contrast with the hierarchical, centralized organization of the working-class movements and the role of the party organization in the Leninist model (Laraña, 1994: 17) New social movements recognize the existence and the importance of temporary defused networks as a significant element for mobilization and collective actions rather than just assuming centralized organizational forms of mobilization and social change (Melucci 1989; Gusfield 1994; Mueller 1994). This is exactly the essence of the cyberactivism in which the mobilization and organization of any event or activity is going on through defused decentralized networks and collective leadership. Everyone involved is functioning in a

non-hierarchical manner within decentralized power relations of the different actors.

The importance of leadership and the role of leaders in a social movement are tackled by Morris and Staggenborg, and Nepstad and Bob (2006). They argue that leaders have a central inspirational and directional role in the movement “offering frames tactics and organizational vehicles that allow participants to construct a collective identity and participate in collective action” (Blackwell, 2006: 180). Furthermore, the authors emphasized the role of the leader creating an institutional frame for the movement in which people who share a collective identity are engaging. This institutional framing by the leaders is crucial in conveying the message to the media, which is extremely important for the movement's survival and external appeal.

“Many activists are highly conscious of available Internet tools, using different ones to reach different audiences and for different purposes” (Aouragh, 2011: 1349) Amr Gharbeia, another Egyptian activist and web developer who worked in many civil and Human Rights Organizations, interviewed by Miryam Aouragh & Anne Alexander, sees his primary audience online as his own social network:

This is how content propagates. How content is seeded and virtually spread. You talk to the people you know, and the people you know talk to the people they know, and this is how the word gets round. On Facebook, I'm talking to personal contacts, people I actually know, because this is how I build my social network. On Twitter, it's a bit more like a mini-cast, so I'm more like making statements to strangers, with some people I know in between.
(cited in Aouragh, 2011: 1349)

Although I agree with the authors about the significant role leaders are playing in social movements, I think they are all talking about leadership from a traditional perspective. They are all talking about the sole powerful leader who inspires the whole movement and directs its orientations. They overlook the existence and the efficacy of

other kinds of leadership that is comprised of multiple leaders, “collective leadership”. This is clear evidence in the context of the Arab revolutions; movements all over different Arab countries revolting against the sole dictatorship in their authoritarian countries. What distinguishes this movement from older ones is its decentralized nature and the absence of the leadership in its traditional form and the existence of collective leaders who motivate and mobilize the movement. Whether we see this feature as strength or weakness in the context of cyberactivism, I think scholars should pay more attention of this new kind of organizing and leadership in their further studies. Finally, the whole point of this humble attempt to put in comparison the NSMs theory and cyberactivism is to draw the attention of academic scholars to the idea that cyberactivism is worth studying as a significant social phenomenon that needs to be placed in a theoretical framework, rather than just enacting extensive descriptions and narrations of online activism. Thus, capturing its consequences as a new form of resistance in the contemporary. For that, the next chapter puts some initiatives of cyberactivism within the context of the Arab revolutions to be studied through the above mentioned paradigm of new social movement theories.

Chapter 2: Cyberactivism in Egypt.. An emerging new social movement

“If you want to free a society, just give them Internet access.” These were the words of 30-year-old Egyptian activist Wael Ghonim in a CNN interview on February 9, 2011, just two days before long-time dictator Hosni Mubarak was forced to step down under pressure from a popular, youthful, and peaceful revolution” (Khamis and Voghun 2011: 15) These new media avenues enabled an effective form of subjectivity and activism. However, the attempt to capture this ongoing defused and decentralized process of cyber activism that is taking place within an unstable sociopolitical context of the Arab region is quite challenging. It is almost impossible as the attempt to hold the water flow by your bare hands without using a container to collect the falling water. For that, the previous chapter was an attempt to construct this theoretical framework which will hopefully enable me to explore the logics and the dynamics of cyber activism as new social movement in the contemporary using the same elements and paradigms provided by social movements’ theorists. My main purpose is to highlight its strengths as a new site of resistance and social change in the contemporary without overestimating its abilities, especially with all the current praise about the role of cyberactivism in the Arab revolutions and at the same time, reveal its limitations without underestimating its potentialities.

Generally speaking, cyberactivism refers to the use of Internet and new media technologies for social and political contestation. However, its emphasis on functioning through virtual publics does not mean that it has nothing to do with the offline activism. Rather, it is better understood as “a mode of contentious politics that relies on new media technologies for information dissemination, networking, and the construction of collective identities and joint grievances, organization, and mobilization.” (Radsch, 2012:

17). Cyberactivism's basic working principle is similar to standard physical activism: to initiate a citizen-based movement toward a specific goal, cause or objective. Cyberactivism uses social networking tools and platforms to share and broadcast mottos and messages, and to enable a space of interaction among activists. Depending on the cause or need of the e-activist, cyberactivism is used for different purposes, such as awareness raising, gathering and organizing followers and initiating reactions, which were witnessed during the Egyptian revolution. This chapter explores the logics and the dynamics of cyberactivism in the context of the Arab uprisings and its aftermath exploring three post revolution groups and initiatives that have emerged from the heart of the Egyptian revolution. These were as examples of the cyberactivism movement in Egypt during this particular time frame who mainly work on exposing the violations of the authorities and those affecting the mainstream media. These are Mosireen, No Military Trials for Civilians, and Kazeboon. These movements in particular were founded around the same time. They have gained credibility among the social media publics and the general publics by proving their ability to affect and form different cultures, as the chapter discusses below, and they work in synchronization with each other so they are suitable to be included as a case study of cyberactivism in Egypt.

New social movements in Egypt and the emergence of cyberactivism

During the 20th century, Egypt has witnessed a rise of different forms of social movements including labour, civil and religious movements. The question that is raised here is they fill into the category of social movement? The structuralist's understanding of social movements involves "political actors, processes, and institutions" (Polleta, 1994: 106). Yet, Kurzman refuses the structuralist approach to social movements

denying the essential existence of leading figures in social movements and emphasizing the significance of culture and social aspects in peoples' life that could drive to social actions (Kurzman, 2007: 111) Following this preposition, tracing back social movements, in this case the labour movement in the Egyptian history will return us to 1818 with the introduction of modern industries by Mohammed Ali and the establishment of more than 29 factories with the capacity of 30.000 workers. However, one of the very first manifestations of this movement was during the 1919 revolution where workers of different sectors have played an important role in promoting change such as the Metro workers, Governmental Print House workers, and customs workers (Khalil, 2005). Decades later, nationwide demonstrations of workers from different sectors were triggered as a reaction of the government's violence against the workers of Helwan's industrial city in 1968 when they demonstrated to refuse the official justifications about the defeat in the war; which according to some scholars is the real birth of the labour movement. Demonstrations were not the only manifestation of the movement. There were major strikes that have took place such as in Kafr El Dawar, Railway, and steel factories in 1984, 1986, 1989 respectively where workers faced government brutality (Yahia, 2007). The labour strikes have reached their peak in April the 6th, 2008 where the workers of Mahalla Textile factory organized a series of strikes demanding their rights to have better working conditions (Marghani, 2008). What is special about this strike is that it was held in solidarity with different sectors of the society which eventually escalated and led to nationwide strikes and defiance that Egypt has not witnessed in a long time. This strike, which lasted for 45 days, led to the emergence of new group named after this strike, the 6th of April Movement. Thus, the previously discussed movements have the potential to move from the structuralist to the

post-structuralist understanding of the social movements, evidenced in the absence of leaders, and institutions in the process.

The labour movement was not the only form of a movement. During the latter years of the Mubarak regime, Egypt witnessed a rise in different forms of protest movements as the government continued its human rights violations and failed to address people's needs that led to change in the political climate which encouraged the emergence of political opposition movements that were prohibited or difficult to raise before, such as Muslim Brotherhood political participation. Although Muslim Brotherhood was established in the 1928 led by Hasan El Banna and spread into many Islamic countries, their activities were restricted and limited after their attempt to assassinate President Nasser in 1954 as most of its leaders and members were arrested or followed by the security police. However, their activities flourished again during Sadat era where they worked to counterbalance the socialist and Nasserite movements in Egypt (Egyptian organization for human rights, 2007) Muslim Brotherhood is considered a perfect example of a religious social movement in modern Egyptian history with their ability to infiltrate and influence different social categories through their social and economic activities in the name of Islam.. The movement had a significant impact on the society and formed as potential political opponent to the ruling National Democratic Party. They managed to win around 20 percent of the seats of the parliament during the 2005 elections and eventually ruling the country after the 2011 revolution for one year because they were the only organized group in the political scene who were able to take advantage of the moment.

Beside the labour and religious movements, the recent decade has witnessed the emergence of different kinds of public social movements such as The Egyptian

movement for change (Kefaya), People's Campaign for change, March 20 movements for change, Change for the Literati, Youth for change, Women for change, The Street for us, Shaifekom, and 6th of April movement. The experience of trade union movement can also be included such as Democratic Lawyers movement, the Democratic Engineers movement, the March 9 Movement of Faculty members, University students movement, and strikes of professionals such as civilian pilots, the doctors at Ahmed Maher Hospital. There were also other kinds of mobilization such as the protests of unions of farmers, workers of Asbestos- Easko at Qalyoubi Textile, Telemasr, Mahalla Textile, Cadbury, and finally peasants' protests such as Sarando, and Bahot protests. Most of these kinds of mobilizations were focusing initially on regional and Arab issues such as protesting in solidarity with the Second Intifada in Palestine, against the American invasion of Iraq and its expansion and influence on the region. Later on they turned to national issues such as demonstrating against the Emergency law, low salaries, workers' rights, and other issues (Arab African Research Center, Social Movements and the Development of Protest in Egypt, 2011). Some scholars believe that Kefaya movement for instance, which was established in 2004, emerged as a reaction to the American plans in the region or what were known as the Greater Middle East (Zahran, 2007). The word Kefaya which means enough in Arabic came as a protest against regional as well as local issues such as saying enough to the monopoly of the National Democratic party on the power and the legitimacy of the continuous rule of President Mubarak for three decades and his plan to pass on the power to his son Gamal, the emergency law, the corruption, and the torture in police stations and many other issues that Egyptians have suffered for decades. This was exemplified during the demonstrations in Tahrir Square during the Second Intifada in solidarity with Palestine. Demonstrators held banners bearing a variety of slogans other

than related to Palestine such as calling for abolition of the emergency law, socialist and liberal slogans, which proves that society was ready to explode with political and social activism that was waiting for the right or the most convenient moment.(Zahran, 2007)

It is important to mention here that the Internet has played an important role in this socio-political mobilization as many of the activists of these movements were bloggers and active Internet users. Cyberactivism started to play a political role since the legislative elections in Egypt during the late 2005 and early 2006, covering with photos, videos and testimonies the election process and revealing many violations and abusive practices. Since then, bloggers and cyber activists have played significant roles showing their attitude of collective action and contributed to impact the public opinion about many critical issues that were later covered by the local and international media. Examples of such activism included detecting and exposing many torture cases by the police, sexual harassment incidents such as the ones that took place during the Fitr Feast in downtown Cairo in 2006. This was followed by many activists talking about their own experiences or sharing testimonies of others thus raising public debate about socio-political problems. Cyber activists played a central role during the 6th of April nationwide strike and in the aftermath of Mahalla incidences including the Mahalla siege and trials. Activists were actively reporting what was happening through blogs, campaigning for the strike through Facebook, which was newly introduced by then, and later on using Twitter to instantly report about the Mahalla siege and the trials. Cyber activists were not blogging, or tweeting only about political issues, they also opened the door to talk about many issues that were considered taboos in the Egyptian society such as religion, gender relations and spinsterhood, among others. The blogger Ghada Abdel Aal for instance, created a blog called "I want to get married" to criticize the contradictions of marriage

traditions in Egypt and the pressures exerted on unmarried girls by their communities and religious discourse, producing anguish about spinsterhood. Ghada's blogs were then transferred into a book published by a well-known publishing house in Egypt, Alshourouq, and then was made into a hit-TV series during Ramadan. This attracted attention to the new social media, especially blogging. In 2006, the blogger Kareem Amer was for the first time sentenced to prison for publishing critical opinions on his blog. His case represented the first incident, which was then followed by others, of detaining bloggers and cyberactivists without a court decision, and invoking the emergency law for publishing political messages online.

The rise of online activists and cyber activism in Egypt coincided with the rise of the various political protest movements from different backgrounds which I outlined earlier. The future of these movements is connected to "the development of political and professional movements in Egypt that would fuel political activism" (Zahran,2007) Simultaneously, political agitations gave birth to more mature, coherent and stronger social movements, as all these movements functioned as the backbone for the 2011 revolution. Cyber activism flourished as a new social movement in Egypt where most of the youth activists were more attracted to mobilize and network with each other through their online activism. Cyberspace became the virtual gathering place of these new movements and the Internet became the fertile soil where new social initiatives can be actualized. It allows new social movements to communicate, generate, and distribute information in cheap and effective ways, thus enabling participants through this interactive space to receive reactions, responses, and feedback in a less centralized, hierarchical structure of communication compared to other conventional means of communication.

Egypt...cyberactivism is here to stay

According to Radsch's study, there are two key objectives that characterized cyberactivism in the Arab region particularly during the revolutions namely "to build domestic support and influence the Western policy agenda, often via the mainstream media" (Radsch, 2012: 23) The focus of a significant proportion of cyberactivism revolved around influencing the mainstream media agenda, as an increasingly "symbiotic relationship between citizen and professional journalism has developed throughout the Arab Spring" (ibid: 23) Though through my interviews, the movements I focus on did not put affecting the western media as their goal as much as affecting the local public space, their activism reached the western media.

Salwa, an activist blogger and member of Mosireen collective, who was hit with birdshot that spread all over her body by the security forces while filming one attack on protesters in February 2012, explained to me how the group's activities started to expand to the streets after the revolution. She said that it all started when a group of activists gathered for the purpose to build an archive of clips that document street protests since their onset in 2011. However they were shocked by the lack of proper independent content reporting the unfolding of the revolution events. Therefore they started to make their own reports to counter the state's channels false reports incorporating videos and footage produced by ordinary people through their cameras and even their mobile phones. Since it was impossible to broadcast their material through the state owned channels and even the private ones which were still subjected to governmental regulations, they resorted to using their virtual spaces such as blogs, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and even some offline public places to screen their documentaries that

challenged the official claims, such as the assertion that the security forces only use force against “thugs” not the peaceful protesters. (Dec, 2012)

This being said, cyberactivism before and during the 18 days of protests in Tahrir, was evident in affecting the general behaviors of the people. It changed how people felt and reacted towards the protestors, which forced even the anti-revolutionary media to tackle the Tahrir protests the same method of the cyber activists. This in addition to recognizing the effect of the social media on moving the people and changing the public mood. Though the Internet was cut for two days, its reactivation witnessed a paramount impact. Talk-shows took from Facebook pages their news and movements of the people. Additionally, new social media created the general atmosphere of Tahrir Square, through showing footage of how the demonstrators spend their days displayed on YouTube and shared on Facebook and Twitter. Those footage were produced by individual protestors, who uploaded them on their accounts on Facebook or Twitter, as an attempt to produce alternative media, opposing the State’s media that is believed to show only the State’s side of the story. Members of the three examined groups participated actively during the 18 days and have shared news, pictures and footage. Thus the 18 days of Tahrir marked the momentum of cyber activism in Egypt, or the active, organized beginning. Through cyberactivists, the idea of the co-operative public and near to ideal relationship between the demonstrators was publicized and romanticized.

My field work in Egypt happened in three different phases. First, I conducted physical field visits and face to face meetings with members of these groups. I also, conducted virtual meetings through online correspondence, and following and observing different initiatives offline and online. Mosireen was the only group with premises that is located downtown so I managed to visit them in September 2011 and I took advantage of

joining one of their photography workshops in December 2012, where I got to know the group's members and work dynamics in addition to closely interviewing four of the group's members, Lamia, Kareem, Salwa, and Eman who joined the groups later in 2013. Second, I tried a different approach with No Military Trials as I choose to contact their members through twitter and Facebook and eventually was able to contact one of the main founders Manal and through our online correspondence we discussed issues related to the role of the social media, her motivation, and how she got involved and how she describes her activism. Regarding Kazeboon it was difficult for me to contact certain people who can be defined as members of Kazeboon because they intentionally spread the notion that everyone and anyone can be part of this initiative. Therefore, I choose not to contact one person rather to follow the decentralized spirit of the group and follow their overall events through their online website, Facebook page, and twitter account; reading people's testimonies and reactions about their activities, looking at the circulated materials, and watching TV interviews with some of their members. I also attended one of their screening events and observed the dynamics of their activism where I managed to talk with one of the groups' members Rania a journalist and prominent activist. My fieldwork observations are integrated in the following analysis of the three initiatives.

I started with "**Mosireen**" because it falls at the heart of cyberactivism; it is located in the center of many other groups and initiatives like operations against sexual harassment (Opantish), No Military Trials for Civilians, Kazeboon and many others. "Mosireen gathers us all" said Lamia a political activist and one of the founders of Mosireen and member on other groups such as Kazeboon and Opantish. Mosireen, basically started as a non-profit collective media center, it is located in downtown Cairo, which serves as an alternative media space. It puts a heavy weight on the contribution of

individual citizens' collaboration in documenting what came in their way from the unfolding events of the revolution. Mosireen's main target is the documentation and archiving all the events related to the ongoing revolution because they are afraid of "the erasure of the real history of the revolution" said Lamia In Arabic Mosireen means, "we are determined" as they say to achieve the revolution's demands. My first field visit to Mosireen was in September 2011, during SCAF rule. I had the address and appointment via an email correspondent. I took a Taxi to Adley street and found the building close to the Jewish synagogue, but was not sure of the building. I asked a police officer in a police pick-up guarding the synagogue, if that building was the right building. He asked me "where to?" I hesitated to give him the right answer, but thought why should I? So I told him, "Mosireen", his response showed the state's disapproval of the activity done by this movement. He asked me in disapproval, "I do not know what are they Mosireern about?"

I kept thinking about the officer's question on my way up to the apartment, 'what are they insisting on?' The obvious answer would be from their activity on the ground to uncover the brutality of the regime, to show people their inhumane deeds. "We are insisting on keeping the revolution alive" said Salwa when I asked her this question. "We didn't invent something new but we felt the responsibility to help in documenting the reality especially when the people and media started to retreat from the streets after the outset of Husny Mubarak" said Salwa. The mainstream media tried to romanticize the revolution as the beautiful eighteen days that ended with the ouster of the head of the regime and to spread the notion that mission is accomplished, the revolution is over and everyone should go home and the "production wheel" should move on.

It all started when four activists and filmmakers, who participated in the Egyptian

revolution in January 2011, noticed the official media blackout of what was actually going on in the streets since the 25th of January. This raised the need for an alternative way to show the other side of the story. Thousands of people started to document the events through their participation in the protests or even from their windows and balconies using their cellphones or cameras then uploading them in their social networks and writing their testimonies for the world away from the censorship and the centralization of the mainstream media channels. Mosireen became aware of the significance of the citizen media or what they like to call the “popular media” as an effective revolutionary weapon; Kareem described popular media during a photography workshop I attended as “the news generated by ordinary people who are not necessarily specialized in journalism or media production armed by the advancement of communication technologies that are becoming more accessible by the mass”. Therefore, Mosireen provide what they like to call a ‘collective workspace,’ which enables the networking and interaction between different activists from other groups such as “Kazeboon” and “No-Military Trails for Civilians” which I will talk about below. They support them with all necessary tools and videos for their cause. They also work to create public audio and visual archive for all events about the revolution. They hold free workshops and trainings in different media fields such as photography, video editing, and photojournalism open for everyone to spread the culture of popular media and social activism.

Tahrir Cinema was one of their initiatives during the sit-ins in Tahrir Square in which every night they used to screen open source movies and documentaries or even unedited videos from YouTube or mobile phones about the revolution. It has been two years since they started; they managed to gather more than 10 million megabits of

footage, and they trained hundreds of people. In only four months they uploaded 67 video with 284600 views. Their channel in YouTube was the most viewed nonprofit channel in the world in January 2011, many local and international news stations referred to their footage such as Aljazeera, ONTV, The Guardian, Financial Times and many others. They did not care in the beginning about copyright issues or getting paid for screening their documentation, but with the dire need of funding they started to ask for copyright and selling footage to media and news channels became one source of their funding.

When I joined one of their photography workshops in December 2012, it was an intensive workshop because it happened during the El Itihadia events where protesters defended their right for a balanced constitution. In response to President Morsy's Constitutional Declaration and his decision to hurry through the writing of the Draft Constitution, protesters called for a march on the Presidential Palace (Itahideyya) in Heliopolis, on Tuesday 4th December 2012. The march culminated in a sit-in in front of the Presidential Palace. At around 12 noon the following day, Wednesday 5th December, the protesters' sit-in in front of the palace was attacked by Morsy's supporters from Salafist groups and the Muslim Brotherhood, who destroyed the tents of the sit-in and violently attacked protesters. Something which went largely unreported by the media was the Interior Ministry's backing of Morsy's supporters in the clashes: State Security protected the ranks of the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafists by attacking protesters with tear gas. On the night of the Presidential Palace clashes, Muslim Brotherhood supporters also kidnapped and tortured several protesters. This has pushed many to escalate their protest, from initially asking Morsy to go back on his controversial decisions, to

demanding that he steps down from the presidency altogether. Mosireen members were at the place filming, editing, and uploading the events online to document and show the events for the mislead public by the mainstream media. The photography workshop had to be rescheduled a number of times because everyone was on the streets documenting the events and these were the golden times for Mosireen in which they managed to get both local and international attention and support.

“No military trials for civilians” was founded in the same period as Mosireen by a group of activists and lawyers who originally worked at the civil society organizations such as Hesham Mubarek NGO that is mainly concerned with offering legal aid for detainees. The NGO got involved after the ouster of Hosni Mubarak when thousands of civilians were arrested during the revolution and referred to military courts, under the reign of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. This initiative mainly advocates for the release of the detainees, the investigation of all forms of violations and torture done to those detainees by the military police, and to move their cases from the military courts to civilian ones. They work on three levels: providing emotional support for the martyrs' and detainees' families, media campaigns about the case, and legal support to follow up on the detainees' cases. They use all materials provided in social media to mobilize, organize, advocate for their cause, and form networks of supporters around the country and among international human right groups. Nadia Hassan, a member of the group, was proud to announce in a TV show that the movement managed to set free 11,000 detainees out of 12,000 since they started in 2011. However, she stressed that this number is based on the reported cases and she claims that many are still missing. Through online correspondences, Manal, a 25 years old biologist, active human rights defender and one

of the founders of No military trials for civilians explained to me, during an online interview via Skype in March 2012, how she, along with other activists, have managed to bring together lawyers, activists, victims' families and their neighborhoods, media professions, and political parties all rally in a nationwide movement against military trials since February 2011. Part of the group's activity is to follow up with the detainees who get released and ask them to record their stories. "They write it down. Some of them we managed to get their video testimonies right after they were released, so it actually shows bruises and burn marks" said Manal. The testimonies are now online, as a common blog, called the Tahrir Diaries. "Especially with the army violations and the army torture cases," she said, "the Internet is really our only means of fighting this" The group activities have managed to bring international attention from the Human Rights organizations and put pressure on the government during the SCAF period. The SCAF eventually has shifted their approach in an attempt to reduce the constant marches of the No military trails group and other civilians so the protesters were getting suspended sentences rather than the long sentences from 3 to 4 years they used to get. Nonetheless, the campaign against military trials will continue working to push against extra-judicial trials for all civilians, regardless of the charges they face. While the release of protesters is an encouraging development for the activists, the suspended sentences they have been handed is not the exoneration they were seeking. "The fact that they have suspended sentences does not give them the pride they deserve as revolutionaries who did nothing wrong," said Manal.

It is worth mentioning here that some members of this group were behind exposing the truth about the death of Omar, the 12 year-old sweet potato vendor who was

shot in the heart by a policeman in the military forces outside the front gates of Cairo's US Embassy close to Tahrir Square on February the 3rd 2013. Omar was already dead when the ambulance arrived to the Mounira Hospital and policemen who accompanied the ambulance made sure that Omar's case was not registered in the hospital's medical records then moved the body directly to Zeinhom morgue which filed him as "unknown corpse". Rania, a 30 years old journalist, a prominent activist and member of No Military Trails with other members of the group found Omar's body by chance when they were visiting the morgue to look for their friend's body Mohammed El Gindy, an activist who was tortured to death. They found his body with no medical record and wondered if this is the new strategy of the police to cover up any suspicious crime so they decided to investigate Omar's story. They managed to gather evidence and eyewitnesses about Omar's death and they spread the story along with a picture of his dead body in the social media. Within two days, Omar's story was the headline news of many TV shows and newspapers as it created public outrage and debate. In a television interview with Mahmoud Saad, Omar's father told the story of his son's death by an army policeman who carelessly shot the boy because he refused to give him sweet potato as he wanted to go to the bathroom first. This public pressure eventually made the Egyptian Armed Forces to admit their responsibility for the child's death claiming that it was by mistake and they suspended the offender for 15 days while they were investigating. The Army's apology and claim of responsibility for the boy's death is an unprecedented incidence from an institution that is prone to deny their responsibility of killing many protesters, such as the evident case of Maspero massacre in October 2011. This is a good example of the dynamics of cyberactivism that revolves around influencing the mainstream media

agenda, as an increasingly “symbiotic relationship between citizens and professional journalism” (Radsch, 2012) has developed throughout the Arab revolutions.

Rania also an active member of the third group “**Kazeboon**” which means “they are lairs.” It is another group which was founded after the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces took power. Its main aim is to uncover the lies that SCAF propagated in order to save its face. It is a decentralized group whose activities are based on screening documentaries filmed or edited by Mosireen, and calling for public mobilization by asking people everywhere to screen the documentaries that they uploaded on their Facebook page. The group activities have moved from online space to the offline space by involving people to screen the documentaries in their neighborhoods. “We have already held hundreds of showings,” says Rania. “We are a de-centralised movement, so we coordinate, helping provide projectors or filmed material to whoever needs it.”(2012) Kazeboon aims to reveal the truth about all kinds of the violations that happened since the Army took charge so they described themselves in their Facebook page as the “lie detector machine” online and one engine of the alternative popular media. Their strategy is to hold nationwide campaigns to reach out to as many people as they can to show them the truth that is hidden by the deceiving mainstream media about the crimes made by the army who claimed time and again that they protect the revolution. They have an official Facebook page, Twitter account and YouTube channel to publicize, mobilize and organize for their campaigns. They also have an online application for anyone who wants to be part of the campaigns with clear instruction on how to hold a campaign with a long list of videos to be used in different parts of Egypt. These campaigns were held in the streets or different locations and set ups using projectors to show the videos specially

edited to expose the contradictions of the army's official announcements through mainstream media in relationship to actual practices. This movement was one of the fundamental factors that mobilized people to revive the second revolution in 25th of January 2012. Right after Mohammed Morsy became the president and the dominance of the Islamic parties, the movement added new dimension to their activities, which is to show the violations done by the Muslim Brothers' government. It is beautifully demonstrated in their logo as they added the two crossed swords of the Muslim brothers' logo beside the Army hat and the logo says "Kazeboon besm eldeen" (lairs in the name of God). It is also worth mentioning that a new group has emerged recently during Morsy's period called "E5wan Kazeboon" following the same manner as "3askar Kazeboon" to detect the lies and contradictions between the government's statements and the real practices. These three post revolution initiatives were heavily occupied with new technologies and inspired by the new media. They were working both online and offline spheres and could not have succeeded in their mission without the use of both spheres. The thesis suggests that these groups were part of a whole new movement that resemble the logics of NSMs where Mosireen represented the core of the movement regarding the content and knowledge; No for Military Trails represented the professional part particularly the legal side, while kazeboon represented the decentralized spirit of the movement. Cyberactivism became a fundamental and integral part of these new social movements.

The rest of the chapter studies this new social movement represented by the three post revolution groups, which worked to expose the violations of the authorities and the misguidance of the mainstream media. This is done by analyzing five elements of the

founding paradigm that have been provided through the history of social movements theorization; “When the working-class movement was at its height in the 1960s, it provided sociology with the founding paradigm for social movements” (Wieviorka, 2010: 2) This paradigm was based on five main points, which are: the actors’ identity, their relationship to culture, their relationship to their adversary, their subjectivity, their framework of action, national or otherwise.

Framing their action

Although these initiatives were confined to certain geographical locations, which is Egypt, their framework of action moved beyond the conventional nation-state relationship. They emerged as a reaction to the failure of the state to protect their citizens questioning the mainstream media’s integrity. Mosireen for instance, has conducted many trainings and workshops for hundreds of activists to learn different aspects of citizen journalism such as filming, editing, and live streaming to emphasize the popular media as their main interactive tool that went beyond the state's media to build new realities. On the longer term, they worked towards promoting this culture of popular media, and advocating for cultural and social collective activism addressing different forms of inequalities or social injustice using online and offline means. “Even if we had a less biased media, we would still want to empower citizen journalists” said Salwa. “The era of state control over the message in Egypt is over. But we need to do a lot of work to compete with the fortress of lies state television. Its reach extends to far more people than the Internet” said Salwa in an interview by FT Magazine in Feb 2012.

For instance, these citizen generated documentaries that these initiatives broadcast and screened across the country which represented a great potential to escape

the monopoly and control over the current media and film making industry, which hindered access to a large footage archive of the past history. It severed as an open source of historical documentation and an archive of the events with relatively low budget, and which is rendered available to the coming generations of artists, researches, and film makers using open source applications and endorsing several types of public copyrights licenses such as the Creative Common License that gave the users the right to share, use and build upon these materials. They did not go through hectic bureaucracy clearance and licensing complications to use certain footage materials and prove Hooper's hypothesis that 'Copyright licensing in the audiovisual archive sector is not fit for purpose for the digital age' (Hooper 2012: 21).

Moreover, their framework of action represented the essence of the new social movements' association with symbolic believes and values that move beyond conflicts over material resources. This in turn, promoted a great sense of belonging and autonomous individuality of the actors who gather for common socially constructed grievances or struggle rather than being restricted to a certain group or location (Johnston, Larana, and Gusfield 1994; Klandermans 1992). Lamia told me that what stroke her the most during the beginning of the revolution in 2011 was hearing people chanting new chants that were not used before by activists. "bread, freedom, social justice" and sometimes people add "human dignity" Lamia said "these chants prove that revolution demands are beyond any reformist claims for more democratic political system; rather, they were more symbolic and radical in relation to the states power. "Until we reach these demands, the revolution will keep going" said Lamia (Dec, 2012) Therefore, for her and other members of Mosireen, No Military Trails, and Kazeboon

“The revolution as a principle is our core value and keeping it alive is our motive through everyday activism” said Lamia She claimed that these revolutionary groups have succeeded in what most of the civil society organizations have failed to achieve which is to “introduce people to be part of the power equation” Also, the virtual nature of the cyberspace, it is decentralized and non-hierarchical diffused social networks have translated in the way these social movements functioned online and offline which redefines their relationship with the state. Both Kazeboon and No Military Trails function in the same decentralized non-hierarchical manner as there were no certain criteria to join any group except your personal motivation, desire, and commitment to join in. Their cyberactivism allowed them to challenge and compete with the mainstream media as a new or alternative public source of information and awareness that comes from below. Although most of Kazeboon public screening went peacefully, in some places they got attacked. “They can’t shut us down by arresting us. There are now far too many people involved. If they arrest me, someone will come and stage a Kazeboon showing on the street in front of my house” said Rania in an interview by FT Magazine in Feb 2012.

These three initiatives functioned collectively in a decentralized, non-hierarchical manner with the absence of the conventional sole leader of each who is supposed to inspire, direct the whole group, and speak on their behalf. During my research, the process to select members of each initiative to speak as representative of the group was a bit challenging yet inspiring. For instance, the first thing I realized when I reached Mosireen’s premises in Cairo downtown is that there is no preset hierarchy on who got to talk to the press or who was the leader of the group or who got the priority to represent

the group. They all insist that everyone including the founders and the new members had equal chance to speak on behalf of the group. Also, going through Mosireens' official YouTube channel, I noticed that all their short documentaries, which are over 200, are published without credits to any of the film-makers who could make up to thirty people working at any one of these films. This emphasizes the collective spirit among the group members that went beyond any personal glory, rather they work for general causes collectively. In order to keep the spirit of the revolution alive Lamia stressed on three things that people in any revolutionary group should not do "do not have a sole leader, do not accept negotiation with the authorities because you will never be able to represent everyone's demands, and do not embrace or participate at any reforms such as elections that would replicate and sustain the status quo." (Dec. 2012)

However it was not an easy task to maintain this collective non-hierarchical leadership; on questioning D on the dynamics of decision making and choice of the topics they work on, her answer was that they "discuss, identify and then proceed with a project collectively" She said sometimes they have to go through very long meetings to reach conclusions specially when there is disagreement among the team. She gave me an example of one meeting that lasted for almost a day and she cynically called it the "18 hours battle" as an example of many battles they had to go through that demonstrate the collective dynamics of decision making. This "battle" for instance, occurred during the very beginnings of Mosireen when they used to have small place in downtown and their activities were restricted to filming and documenting the unfolding events of protests in Tahrir square. Some members of the team raised the concern that there was more focus and attention paid to cover the protests in Tahrir square by the online activists who lived

in Cairo and the national and international media, neglecting the events happening in other squares in other governorates; this resulted in lack of information and difficulty to reach out activists from outside Cairo. Therefore, they were discussing how Mosireen could contribute to cross this centralization of Cairo. Some suggested that they can expand their activities to include providing trainings to more people from different locations on filmmaking, live streaming and editing and make their place an open space for other groups and individuals to carry on their activities. Other members of the team were concerned about the consequences of this kind of commitment because it was a huge responsibility to run an open space and provide trainings that require financial and human resources that they were not sure they can handle. They eventually agreed to expand and they moved to a bigger place that was open to the public. They also decided that besides having an open space for people to come, they also have to reach out them by going to different governorates to conduct these trainings there.

Furthermore, except for Mosireen, these initiatives did not have an official location as they are generally seeking to claim their right to occupy any public actual or virtual space to disseminate and convey their messages to the whole world without being restricted to a certain location, which was seen in their pride to inspire “Occupy” movement around the world. “We always make sure that all of our media production is translated into English because we believe that we advocate for causes that are not restricted to local affairs in Egypt rather concern the whole humanity” said Eman. (Sept. 2013) She also gave me examples of Mosireen's insistence to show solidarity with other revolutionaries around the world such as the solidarity campaign with the uprisings in Greece in 2012 where they made film and used to disseminate the videos made by the

Greek activists. They also managed to travel and exchange experiences with activists in different countries like Syria and Turkey. This allowed them to push limits of their perception of the possibility to imagine new spaces for social and political contestation outside the conventional frameworks of sociopolitical actions. Therefore, these post-revolution movements have fundamental desire to seek internal and external recognition as they wish to reconstruct their realities and create new logics and possibilities of their existence that go beyond the classical meanings of the nation-state boundaries.

From direct to diffused adversary

It might seem that the movements described above have a clearly defined adversary, which is for instance to fight against the military's violations of the citizens' rights or against the state's fraudulent media. However, cyberactivism allowed them to add a global element to their local struggles as their actions and campaigns usually manage to bring domestic and international attention and debate "What distinguishes our activism from the past movements is the extensive use of new technologies and social media" said Eman. During protests, social media gave Eman the option to have another role besides joining the protests physically and getting beaten "I was able to instantly tweet what is going on in the streets in both Arabic and English which I believe had significant role to uncover the violations to the whole world" said Eman. They worked on many levels in which sometimes they work against their adversary in a direct way and in other cases their adversary became less defined and distant. When the activists and lawyers of No-military-Trails follow legally the cases of the detainees, the tortured and martyrs they rallied against the unjust practices of the state's agencies who were involved in these cases such as the national security or the military police. Likewise, when

Kazeboon or Mosireen created visual materials and screened them in their campaigns to show the contradiction of the reality and the official media statements they worked against the state's mainstream media.

The collaborative work of all three movements was evident in the events of Maspero on the 9th of October 2011 after the massacre of 27 peaceful protesters who rallied against sectarianism. While the state run channels were falsely broadcasting that the army was attacked by the protesters encouraging “honorable people” to go out to defend their army. “A protest against sectarianism had set off from the Cairo district of Shubra shortly after 4 PM on that day. Two hours later, at its final destination at the state television building known as Maspero, 27 of the protesters were killed, either by the army's bullets or under the wheels of their armed personnel carriers in a haze of furious and brutal violence” (Carr, 2013) The incident was witnessed, filmed and documented through Facebook and Twitter. Kazeboon, also collaborated in campaigning against SCAF taking the Maspero incident as their milestone, through screening videos shot by Mosireen in main squares in major cities and against the wall of the State TV building itself representing one of their adversaries which is the state run media. “When I saw the images on the TV building, I felt we were getting closer to our goal of ousting the military” said Rania. “Through persistence and determination we have been able to achieve something. It means that any dream starts out as a seemingly crazy notion and that sensible ideas lead nowhere.” said Rania. in an interview by FT Magazine in Feb 2012.

On the other hand, these groups functioned through diffused networks in non-hierarchical decentralized manner which makes them hard to be identified or tracked by the authorities; thus being less defined to the authorities. For instance, Kazeboon's

decentralization of their campaign has enabled people who are not necessarily engaged in political activism to lead part of the campaign. They kept announcing a reminder on their website, Facebook group, and kept tweeting again and again that the “the campaign has no coordinators, it is public property and anyone has the right to display a screening without having recourse to anyone from the campaign”.said Omar El Sabh (cited in Daily News, Jan. 2012) They made it easier for anyone who wants to independently participate by hosting a screening of the military violations in their homes, neighborhoods, schools, or even cafes. The campaign made available a collection of videos, graffiti stencil models, and photos that show Human Rights violations which are easily accessible by anyone through their online channels. The mission was simple and all what was needed was a screen and a projector to broadcast the materials and to publicize the event online through Facebook and Twitter asking people to join. Usually Kazeboon screening events were followed by marches that went through different streets and squares chanting “revolution in all Egyptian streets and squares until victory”. “Repression in this country will not have as easy a time in the future as it did in the past. They have used everything against the people – bullets, crushing them with armored vehicles. They have no more ways at their disposal, but we do” said Rania. in an interview by FT Magazine in Feb 2012. The campaign had stretched out almost through the whole country with remarkable speed and constancy and sometimes more than 4 events were conducted spontaneously at the same time in different locations. Kazboon’s campaign strategy ruptures the popular obsession on Tahrir as the sole symbol and venue of the revolution and demonstrations; it had made the revolution decentralized in all the streets and squares moving from online space to the offline publics of the country which made it harder for the counter-revolutionary forces to locate and attack such movements.

New relationship with conventional politics

Radsch, suggested that the emergence of “small media that rivals the scope and reach of mass media helped shift the balance of power between mainstream, authoritative state...and alternative, individual voices embedded in the small media of blogs and mobile telephony. The mobile phone continues to be one of the most important tools for cyberactivists, in particular, camera-equipped, Internet-enabled phones, while Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, and blogs are the most important Internet-based platforms” (Radsch 2012: 25). The emergence of these immaterial technologies had enabled these groups to seek recognition without using the conventional means such as being engaged in political parties or official media channels. They did so through their active engagement to create, document, and communicate a whole new body of knowledge including information, images, videos, that would manipulate the emotions, thoughts and influence the public opinion about certain causes. Kareem, an actor and one of Mosireen’s founders said that people especially older generation like his father were confused of what is the political point of these activities such as public film screenings. His father asked him of what was next “are you going to start a TV station or are you trying to initiate a political party?” Although some people like his Father might not consider such activities and initiatives as political since they do not adopt traditional means such as being part of a party or union and using conventional media channels to propagate particular causes such as newspapers and TV channels, their on/offline activism allow them to challenge and compete with the mainstream media as new or alternative public source of information and awareness that comes from below.

They were all un-institutionalized with no predetermined or fixed agendas, as their actions are evolving and are redefined in relation to the overall situation. For instance, Lamia explained to me that although the revolution is their sole motive of their activism, sometimes they chose to work on “smaller battles” such as supporting the right of the residents of small island called Qursaya on claiming their right to the land after the military attempted to evacuate them in November 2012 by visiting the place and filming with the residents and collecting their stories to be used against the Army’s claims. Thus, their actions might have political implications but they do not wish to have further political follow-ups in terms of engaging in the conventional political sphere.

This allows us as scholars and researchers to push limits of our perception of the possibility to imagine new spaces for social and political contestation outside the conventional means. Moreover, through their online activism, these new movements recognize the existence and the importance of temporary diffused networks as a significant element for resource mobilization and collective actions rather than just assuming centralized organizational forms of mobilization and social change. Therefore, in order to keep the ambitions to provide independent media collective, Mosireen has resorted to a crowd funding through online page for donations on a site called Indiegogo and they managed to raise over 40.000 LE to cover their running costs that would allow them to expand their activities to other parts of Egypt. They wanted to keep their independence by avoiding being restricted to address certain grant-giving institutions’ agendas or to satisfy sponsoring advertisers "The idea for us is to serve the community with information, coverage, training, and the equipment we are providing," Said Lamia. (Dec. 2012) She also told me an important story about how they keep receiving calls and

generous offers from many foreign institutions or embassies to financially support their activities since they started. She told me that they are strict about not accepting such offers in order to keep their integrity and assure that they are independent.

Culturally loaded movements

What special about these groups is that they seek to expand these movements to encompass actors from varied backgrounds instead of being restricted to certain socially defined category as in the old working class movements. For instance, when I participated in one of Mosireen workshop about the different kinds of professional photography including the photojournalism, I was impressed by the inclusive way in which Mosireen has chosen the workshop participants. I was surrounded by 20 people of totally different backgrounds in terms of their gender, age, occupation, education, and nationality who joined the workshop for different proposes. “We seek to promote a culture of popular activism and to support the emergence of the popular media all over the country to defy the centrality of the mainstream media” says Kareem during the photography workshop. In the same manner, Kazeboon has online application for anyone who wants to be part of the campaigns which is not restricted by any certain skills or any political or social background of the applicants providing them with clear instruction on how to hold a campaign with long list of videos to be used in different parts of Egypt. The No Military Trials for Civilians Group is also unique due to its grassroots structure, which encompasses participants from all social strata and gathers together activists, lawyers, media professionals, families, neighborhoods and political parties around a common goal. This is quite consistent with one of the essence of NSMs that it is comprised of a wide range of participants from different social categories and ideologies

without being restricted to certain age, gender, race, or social class. Unlike classic social movements whose members used to belong to specific category such as labour workers or belong to certain political group or social class. These new social initiatives or movements are not based on specific instrumental ideology. Rather they are associated with revolution as their central value that integrates different groups and attempts symbolic believes and values that move beyond conflicts over material resources which promote great sense of belonging and autonomous individuality of the actors who gather for common socially constructed grievances or struggle rather than being restricted to certain group or location (Johnston, Larana, and Gusfield 1994; Klandermans 1992). All three groups are gathered for a social cause that binds them together in an attempt to achieve higher values that they see in the revolution's demands.

The nature of their activism online was based on diffused social structure of wide range of different social categories. For instance, users of different blogs and social networks who gather for different causes came from different social, economic, and ideological background but they unite in common struggles. New social movement theorists refused the process of constructing common identity for the social movement actors or assuming unified group interest, rather they acknowledged the existence of conflict of interests among the same social movement groups (Hunt, Benford, and Snow 1994; Johnston, Larana, and Gusfield 1994; Klandermans 1994; Melucci 1989; Stoecker 1995). The diffused nature of the identities and the existence of different ideological backgrounds of the activists in the realm of cyberactivism could lead to organizational changes resulting from conflicts. This may result in goal transformation, new coalitions with other groups, strategic transformation, and adaptation of new tactics; which is clear in the cooperation and the formation of productive synergies between these post-

revolution groups. Eman explained to me how she was part of a close network of activists which Mosireen work with such as (Opantish) then when she noticed how her work greatly intersect with Mosireen activities she decided to become a member. Also, individual engagement of one member in certain case might inspire a collective involvement in the same cause by all the groups' members. For instance, Lamia was part of a coalition called "Egyptians against Coal" a group of environmental and human rights activists, government officials and voluntary organizations who campaign against the government's decision to import coal to supply Egypt's cement factories. This had inspired Mosireen as a group to produce video to supports the anti- coal campaign and became part of this coalition since 2012. "This is not just about coal. It is about ensuring that this country has sovereignty over its own energy sources and guaranteeing that instead of moving in the opposite direction of the world, that we are working for renewable alternatives," said activist Ahmed El Droubi, coordinator of the Egyptians Against Coal campaign. (cited in Allafrika.com, march, 2014)

Their subjectivity/ies:

As mentioned above members of these movements are not strictly affiliated to a certain social class or category. Their activism through the virtual cyber sphere allows the construction of individual activists who share common struggles but not necessarily the same cultural, political, social background. The distinction between what is political, what is cultural, and what is social has become blurred so that "Social relations stretched out" (Massey, 1999.) These activists make and remake the space that they construct through their cyberactivism. "So their subjectivity is neither cultural, nor political, nor

social” They have created a cyberspace for their activity and have created with it their subjectivity that escapes the hegemony of the state and struggles to achieve innovative relationships in the social space. They do this through being occupied with the everydayness of their activity. That is they occupy themselves with the current events of the everyday, without determining or dictating the consequences or outcome of their activism. “This subjectivity is personal, specific to the individual and cannot be reduced to any form of cultural rooting. It operates upstream, it is what leads a person to become involved and, moreover, what leads them to leave. Each individual wishes to be able to choose his or her struggle, involvement and collective identity; but people also wish to manage their participation in action in their own way, at their own rhythm and be able to stop if they so desire” (Wieviorka, 2010) Cyberactivism has provided people or the subjects with this virtuality in which they interact, share experience, define their own choices, create their own motives and at the same time participate in forms of collective actions for change.

Although she is a graduate student in cancer biology, Manal, of No military trails for civilians describes herself as a full-time cancer researcher and also full-time Human Rights activist. "I've always known I will be politically active. It is sort of, I do not know, part of my heritage I guess," said Manal as she was raised in a family of activists and Human Rights defenders. "But I needed to find my own space, a way to make my own mark. Using Twitter, using social networks, and with my phone, working on cases of military detentions, tribunals and torture... this has become my own space. I've found my own way of being part of all of this now” said Manal. She wrote on her blog “Ma3t” about the human rights violations and the brutality of the military police during

crackdowns on Tahrir protesters, encouraging people to come out and tell their stories. Since Feb. the 25th, 2011, Manal and other activists have managed to bring together lawyers, activists, victims' families and their neighborhoods, media professions, and political parties all rally in a nationwide movement against military trails. Part of the group's activity is to follow up with the detainees who get released and ask them to record their stories.

Their activism has inspired and encouraged many Egyptian bloggers and online activists to organize anti- SCAF blogging day on the 23rd of May 2012 and initiated anti- SCAF hashtag #NOSCAF where they channel all their energies to criticize and highlight the violations of the military rule since the ouster of Mubarak. Although writing about the Egyptian military is considered a red line and blogger such as Maikel Nabil got arrested and had 3 years sentence for writing about the military, activists have decided to flood the Internet with their testimonies, opinions, and objections simultaneously in large numbers hoping that this would minimize the risk of being targeted by the authorities. By the end of that blogging day, the activists have created a Facebook page to compile all the posts of that day and there were around 375 blog entries; they were written in both Arabic and English most of which were criticizing the military rule and calling for a second revolution this time against the Army initiated with the "Second Day of Rage". "Can a country become a democracy when the path leading to it is paved with actions that are fundamentally opposed to democracy?" asked Amira Mikhail in her blog post. Mikhail, among other bloggers, wrote that she is going to Tahrir Square to show her objection to the SCAF's interim government.

In 2012, Manal was nominated for the Front Line Award for Human Rights

Defenders at Risk, which eventually went to a Syrian blogger Razan Ghazzawi. She is one among many bloggers and activists who are increasingly being recognized locally and internationally for their activism rather than their profession. They feel more sense of belonging through their subjective political, social, and cultural activism that has eventually substituted their professions as bloggers, online activist, photographers and citizen journalists. Thus, it is sensitive process in which our identities and subjectivities are being constructed through our interaction in these channels. The over estimation of the activists individuality over the collective identity might lead them to lay back with false sense of achievement specially when they become well known activists with thousands of followers in the cyber space. Therefore, what really matters and can be counted as form of resistance is the consciousness of the online users that distinguishes them from being either passive or active agents for change and resistance. It is the individual and collective consciousness that enables them to be and act as political subjects. It is their awareness of common struggles that leads them to mobilize through these virtual channels, thus, creating space for resistance and social change despite all counter efforts to absorb and subsume all kind of potentialities of these cyber movements as new sites of resistance. It is new site of political, social, cultural, and even ideological contestation in which the possibilities to reinforce the current power relation or draw new ones is applicable.

Chapter 3: Cyberactivism in Yemen...new hopes for social change

Unlike Egypt, in which the state is monopolizing the powers with total support of the army and the existence of fragile opposition parties, the Yemeni state's institutions are weak and its authority is balanced by the existence of other power structures. The tribes have important social-economic and political importance. In addition, Islamists in Yemen have always been active key players in the political scene. However, the dynamics of these powers in relation to the state is very complicated and mediated through intersected networks of patronage. Therefore, Yemeni people affiliation to these powers is very complicated and it could be sometimes contradictory; we can see the fragmentation of the army between mix of tribal, religious and national identity. In addition, the tribal hegemony hinders the development of modern civil society. However, Yemen has special kind of traditional civil society mediated by unconventional means of deliberation outside the electoral system. Qat chewing for instance, is one of these unconventional spaces of political and citizenship deliberation (Wedeen, 2008) which is considered nation-wide medium that is heavily haunted by all these affiliations for all Yemenis from different categories including youth. Therefore, Youth in Yemen, the thesis suggests, are heavily engaged and absorbed in traditional politics in forms of political parties as well as religious and tribal complicated affiliations. Unlike Egypt, cyberactivism in Yemen has been recently introduced as a site of political contestation by Yemeni youth during 2011 revolution. Therefore, the chapter explores how cyberspace is used by individual activists in and outside the country during revolution events, which does not necessarily lead to a formation of post revolution groups such as the case in Egypt, to unfold the interrelation between both the online and

offline publics. In addition, this chapter analyzes an anti-Qat campaign that started virtually and translated in physical publics in Yemen by a group of online activists who live in and outside the country. Although it is hard to claim that cyberactivism has emerged in Yemen as new social movement in itself, the Anti-Qat campaign has the potentials to be analyzed using the same social movement indicators used to analyze the post revolution groups in Egypt.

During my fieldwork I experienced many mixed emotions passing through strong enthusiasm and determination into deep stress and frustration. My original plan was to visit my country, not to visit my family and friends, but to eagerly observe, participate, and meet the activists who were engaged in the 2011 Yemeni revolution. However, I was not able to visit my own country at that time. My father is a well-known politician and diplomat, who served the country all of his life in many important positions. With the unfolding of the revolutionary events and the increase of the state's violence against the protesters, my father could not help but to publicly announce at the general meeting in the League of the Arab States his position condemning the death of more than 14 university students at the hand of the state's security forces who were part of the sit-ins. Since then, we were receiving threats and our house in Egypt was attacked and all family members were put in danger if we try to visit our own country. Although I was stressed and frustrated that I cannot visit my own country and witness this historical moment, this did not stop me to continue my research about Yemeni cyber activism. Therefore, the cyber space was my only tool to challenge this situation and all my interactions with the Yemeni activists whether those who live in Yemen or abroad. I was also able to follow the situation closely and observe the dynamics of their activism

through different Facebook groups, blogs, twitter, and online news outlets. However, before I start the analysis of these observations it is important to introduce a general overview about the social-political situation in the country in order to figure out dynamics of the power structures throughout the modern history of Yemen.

Tribalism, Islamism and State Politics

The name of Yemen was derived from an Arabic word which means prosperity and blessings due to its strategic position on the ancient trade and spice routes located at the crossroads of the Middle East, Asia and Africa for thousands of years. The place known as the Arabia Felix or “Happy Arabia”, was a name used by geographers to describe Yemen (Springfield, Mass., 1972). Until the early 1960s, Yemen was divided into the north, which was ruled by imams and the south, which was a British colony. In September 1962 a republican revolution took place in the north against the Imamate “which had ruled all or parts of the country for over a thousand years and legitimized its rule on Zaydi religious identity and on a specific social hierarchy topped by Hashemites or Sada, i.e.: individuals claiming descent from Prophet Muhammad. The fall of the Zaydi imam’s monarchy gave way to a more direct separation between politics and religion in the country. This occurred through the establishment of the republican regime, once inspired by Gamal ‘Abdul Nassir’s model in Egypt” (Philip, 2008) A year later, the south revolted against the British colony in October 1963 and became independent in 1967 establishing the only Marxist state in the region. The Republic of Yemen was established on the 22nd of May 1990 unifying the new emerging Yemen Arab Republic of the north and the People’s Democratic Republic of the south. This unification was the beginning of a new era in the modern history of the country with a

new governing system that adopted democratic and political pluralism and a liberal economic system. With this unification of the north and the south, Yemen “embarked itself in an outstanding democratization process that no country in the region had yet experienced. The constitution, approved by referendum, appeared as particularly liberal, granting civil society and opposition parties a wide range of rights and a share of the exercise of power”(Bonney, L & Poirier, M, 2010: 3) In that year alone, around 150 political parties emerged and fourteen of them have actively participated in the parliamentary elections in 1993. In addition, a multi-party coalition had ruled the country between 1990 and 1997. Since then, three main parties have dominated the political scene beside seven or eight small parties the ruling party “General People's Congress”, which consists of different categories in the society including tribal, religious, and academic public figures; Al Islah or the Yemeni Congregation for reform which is a mix of tribal, Salafist, and Muslim brotherhood factions, and the “Yemeni Socialist Party”, which represents the remaining elements of the communist movement that emerged and governed the south of the country before the unification. Expectations were high specially that the country entertained a wide range of political and civil rights and freedom of expression more than any other country in the region. However, the tensions between the ruling party and the opposition parties have grown as a result of Ali Abdulla Saleh's attempts to keep all important powers in his hands along with his clan and the ruling GPC party. (Mansour, 2000)

Similar to Egypt, during the 2000s there were several constitutional amendments to extend the presidential period and arrangements were made to allow the son of the president to run for presidency after his father. But unlike Egypt, the opposition parties in

Yemen were more mature and succeeded to form a coalition, The Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) Ahzab al-liqa al-mushtarak that was founded by five opposition parties with totally different ideologies to counter the ruling party's attempts to dominate the country. It included AL Islah, Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP), Hizb Al-Haq, the Unionist party, and the Popular Forces Union party. This along with other tribal and religious coalitions in the country worked effectively to make power balance among all decision makers.(ibid)

Beside the political pluralism, the majority of the Yemeni society is tribal with almost 75% of the population living in rural areas. Tribes have great control over the political and socioeconomic scene in Yemen as most of the politicians and military leaders, and the business elites have tribal affiliations. It is important to state that tribes in Yemen are not a homogenous social category and it is difficult to define a tribe due to the great geographical variations of the tribes and the rapid change in the tribal system. However, "Tribes in Yemen are distinct from those in other Middle Eastern countries in that they are sedentary and territorial, and consanguinity is not necessarily a defining factor of membership. The tribal system is based on collective liability and defense of honor. Tribal leadership in theory rests on consensus and the ability to mediate, although the sheikhly office has become a hereditary position in some regions and among some tribes"(McCune, 2012: 3) This hegemony of the tribal society is one reason of the country's tensions between the traditional and modern forms of governance. For instance, tribes usually resort to customary law in conflict resolutions which in turn reinforces "Tribal identity" in which tribal members share common obligations and values related to tribe more than national identity. Furthermore, the customary law is

recognized by the state and even widely used as a legitimate and effective way of conflict resolution. There has been a dispute among scholars on whether the tribal system is weakening the state or is one great factor of its stability. On one hand, it has been argued that "Tribal society has been an effective and enduring source of government for the populations of northern Yemen for millennia. Providing security, stability and predictability, tribal authorities know their people as well as their territory and are intimately familiar with local perceptions of justice. The rich and enduring tribal social structures provide a strong and resilient social fabric that promotes solidarity and collective action."(Naylor, 2012: 3) On the other hand, the tribes members' sense of belonging is "grounded in loyalty to family, lineage or village rather than to an abstract idea like the Yemeni state" which signifies the weakness of the "national identity"(Manea, 1996: 3) In addition, the north of Yemen is dominated by several tribal confederations each of which includes tribes, clans and extended families from which comes the members of the three most influential groups in Yemen, the politicians, the military, and the business men. This strong independent tribal system in the North has hindered the emergence of civil society, unlike the south in which the role of the tribes is limited particularly before the unification in 1990 because the south was controlled by one socialist party that reduced the role of the tribes. That might explain why most of the very first civil institutions such as radio media stations and labor unions were established in the south.

Throughout its modern history Yemen "has never enjoyed full control over the tribes but has established a delicate balance of power vis-a-vis the major tribes based on the sharing of economic and political benefits of power."(Manea, 1996: 6) The

politicization of tribes dates back to the ancient Yemeni kingdoms where tribes played a crucial role in enhancing the kingdoms ability to control their territories. At the same time kings used different methods to control the tribes. For instance, Imam Yahia managed to establish the Mutawakliat kingdom in 1918 with the help of different tribes in the northern Yemen who fought with him against Ottoman rule. At the same time Imam Yahia and his son and successor Ahmed used controlling methods such as bribes and the hostage system. "The bribes were mainly given to Sheiks of the Hashid and Bakil tribes, which were the predominant tribal confederations of the region. To coerce tribal support, meanwhile, the Imamate held family members of tribal Sheiks hostage. If any tribe threatened the Imam's authority, these family members were killed"(Manea, 1996: 6)

As a son of Sheikh of important tribal confederation, my father was a hostage during his early adulthood. Immam used to keep the hostages in Sana'a in a place called Dar-alsalam and they used to get proper treatment and access to education as long as they were on good terms with the Imam. Despite all the efforts of the central government to control the tribes by using them as political allies, the tribes remained as independent entities led by their Sheikhs; Tribes acknowledge the national identity as belonging to Yemen, but refuse to accept the state sovereignty and control over their territories. In her analysis about the role of the tribes in modern Yemen, Elham Manea says "although the central government tried to penetrate society and to break the resistance of the tribes, it was the tribes and their leaders who effectively penetrated the state and were overwhelmingly represented in the bureaucracy, its army, legislative and executive bodies, and the political system as a whole. For example, Ibrahim Al Hamdi, president of the former Yemen Arab Republic between 1974-1977, was the first political leader who attempted to create a modern state in Yemen. To do so, he tried to break tribal power and

instill state's sovereignty. Al Hamdi paid his efforts with his life and his successors never tried to follow his lead. Thus, as Abu Ghanim contends, "the attempt to control the tribal society through modern bureaucracy... led to the consolidation of tribal influence though in modern forms." This situation had repercussions to the detriment of the country's political system" (1996)

One of the main factors that allowed Ali Abdullah Saleh to maintain his rule for over 30 years is that fact that he adopted a vast network of patronage with the tribes as a strategic method of governance. In fact Saleh's tribe, Sanhan is part of Hashid which is one of the most powerful tribal confederations in the country. His brothers control the army and the security apparatus, while the head of Hashid Sheik Abdullah Al Ahmer was the speaker of the Yemeni Parliament and political leader in Islah Party. As an example of these formal and informal patronage networks, Philips (2008) explains how the tribes have been "co-opted into the modern Yemeni state by a patronage network with two key components. The first component of that network is formal, though secretive, with the Ministry of Tribal Affairs paying salaries, both in cash and in kind, to nearly 6,000 tribal sheikhs throughout the country. The second component functions through the schools and health facilities and provides both "ghost" employee contracts, in which a salary is paid to a non-working employee, as well as direct cash transfers Patronage in the education sector alone accounts for over 6% of the entire Yemeni government budget" (qouated in Egle, 2011: 1)

Political tribalization is not the only power structure that balance the state mono power over the country. Islamism or Islam politics is a central force that affects the whole sociopolitical scene in the country. In fact, Islamist politics in Yemen have always been blended with tribal influence. The most powerful representation of Islamic politics is in Islah,

or the Yemeni Congregation for reform. For more than two decades it remained the largest Islamist party. It is a mix of tribal, Salafist, and Muslim Brotherhood factions. Muslim Brotherhood first emerged in Yemen in 1960s while Yemen was still divided and had a crucial role to fight what they considered as anti Islamic movement of the Marxist state in the south. Salafists flourished in the 1970s with the establishment of the “Scientific Institutes” by Abdulmajeed Alzindani a religious Sheikh who used to be an Islamic scholar in Saudi Arabia and brought the Salafist network into Islah. These institutes are Islamic schools similar to Madrassas that teach young people religion in Pakistan and Afghanistan and a replacement of the former institutionalized Quraan schools. These institutes adopted Salafism inspired by Wahabism which is strict ideology imported from Saudi Arabia. These institutes were independent from the state Educational system that were established at the same time and “many of the students educated in Zindani’s institutes eventually went to Afghanistan in the 1980s to fight the Soviet occupation” These institutes were eventually integrated with the public official education system of the whole country in 2001 after long battles about this negative extremist religious impact. The tribal part of Islah is represented by Sheikh Abdullah al Ahmar, chief of the northern Hashid Tribal Confederation who brought along other tribal and business associates to widen the party base. “The Islah Party was founded after the May 1990 merger of North Yemen and South Yemen. It was an amalgam that merged three strands of society: tribal forces, which were powerful in rural areas; the Muslim Brotherhood, which was strong in urban areas; and Salafi sheikhs, who ran a network of religious schools. Its political spectrum included traditionalists, pragmatic conservatives, and rigid ultraconservatives. Unlike Islamist parties elsewhere, however, Islah was effectively sponsored by the ruling General People’s Congress.”(Campbell, 2009: 3) Islah has always been a pragmatic party that has served as both the official opposition and an ally of the government.

Another manifestation of the tribal-islamic politics in Yemen is the Houthi movement in the north. The movement named after its founder Husain Alhouthi who is part of a big clan that occupies part of the northern province Sadaa. He was a member of Al-haqq party, a small Zaydi political party which was under attack by the government after they showed support to the separatist movement in the south in 1992. Al Houthi fled to Syria and Iran for a while then he formed his own party "Al Shabab Almoamen" (the Believing Youth) when he returned; his main purpose was to revive Zaydism by teaching youth about its history throughout the whole Sadaa province. Ali Abdullah Saleh's government and the military forces went through more than six wars against Alhouthi and his followers accusing him of trying to set up himself as Imam, establishing unlicensed religious centers, and organizing an armed militia, as well as staging violent anti American anti Israel protests. The movement was named Huthies officially after Alhouthi's assassination in 2004 during one of the conflicts and their militia that is known as Ansarullah, (the Partisans of God) as formed. Saleh even used the help of the tribes in his war against Houthies. For instance, "In 2009 the Government encouraged the formation of a "popular army" of tribesmen to supplement the regular army's fight against the Houthis in northern Yemen. The Government used the "popular army" to harness tribal support for the war, increase its numbers and firepower in the region, and engage in illegitimate tactics."(Mcuune, 2012:5) The government rewarded the tribesmen who fought against Houthies for their loyalty. "Yemen Times Online reported in late August 2009 that more than 3,000 Hashid tribesmen were being mobilized to fight the Houthis there. While some tribes contributed fighters to the Government's side, others supported the Houthis, out of shared anti-government sentiments, appreciation for the Houthis' help in resolving tribal disputes, or outrage at the collateral damage caused by the Government's bombing of population centers"(ibid: 7)

Since their emergence, Houthies political and religious practices are still vague and their actions are contradictory. Although Ansarullah identify themselves politically with Hezbollah in Lebanon with their anti American and anti-Isreali sentiments, their religious believes as Zaydies are different than the Twelvers Shiism found in Lebanon. Also, they supported and joined the 2011 revolution and participated in the National Dialogue in 2013 and 2014, but their militia moved to Sanaa and seized the capital in Jan 2015 forcing President Hadi and his government to resign with the help of the former president Saleh and his loyalists. Since 2014, Houthies managed to gain new supporters beyond their original followers as a reaction of Hadi's government constant failures to address peoples aspirations. Certainly, Houthies actions that are supported internally and internationally by Iran have challenged the progress of NDC and the whole reform process.

The fact that the country has witnessed many internal conflicts beside other sociopolitical factors make Yemen a good fertile environment for extremists such as Al Qaeda which is considered a major Islamic force that has a huge impact in the politics of the country. Al Qaeda of the Arabian Peninsula AQAP was behind many terrorist attacks such as the bombing of USS Cole in 2000. The aftermath of the 2011 revolution has left a power vacuum in the areas occupied by Al Qaeda particularly in the south and central Yemen such as Abyan, Marib, and Shabwa and Hadramout where they still have total control despite the government efforts and a US drones attacks to eliminate its members. "Most Yemenis viewed Al Qaeda as an unwanted and outside force. But in 2013 and 2014, local sympathies were stoked again when the Sunnis of Al Qaeda appeared to at least partially counterbalance the aggression of Shiite Houthis in the Ansarullah movement, which was backed by Iran. The two militias engaged in an escalating series of tit-for-tat attacks and

assassinations in 2014. Conflict between the rival extremist groups continued apace.”(Campbell, 2015: 4) In fact, there is a simplification in analyzing the religious identities of the Yemenis. Some assume that Yemeni people are divided between two sects Sunni and Shi'i and that this division is a root cause to many of the conflicts in the Yemen. However, it is more complicated if we look closely we will find that the Zaydis which represent Shi'i in some northern part of the country and the Shafiis which are Sunni in the rest of the country. They are moderate sects and their philosophies are close to each other. Zaydis are different than the Twelvers Shi'i found in Lebanon, Iraq and Iran and have many common aspects with Sunnism. That is why Yemenis refused to be recognized according to a sectarian division. However the conflicts over power are structural conflicts over sovereignty and between the existing traditional and nontraditional powers mentioned above.

In conclusion, the Yemeni political formula has always been characterized by its “capacity to integrate and accommodate a wide variety of actors and identities. The relationship between the state and various political, especially Islamist, or social, particularly tribal, groups and their integration into public institutions (army, police, the education sector, parliament, etc.) have accounted greatly for regime stability” (Bonnefoy, L & Poirier, M, 2010: 3) Though, the state has never been granted full monopoly or sovereignty over the whole country and its power has been balanced by the existing tribal and religious institutions. This formula has guaranteed a kind of stability to the state and at the same time was a reason weakening its authority. This kind of environment has provided a space to political pluralism and a great margin of freedom of expression compared to the neighboring countries. Lisa Wedeen argues that “the very fragility of some authoritarian

states may enhance opportunities for widespread activism and critical, deliberative discussion” (2008: 104) and she mentioned Qat chew gatherings as an example of unconventional medium of deliberations in which people “entertain lively disagreements about issues of mutual public concern, and to make worlds in common” which represents as she claims “an important aspect of democratic practice and personhood” (Wedeen, 2008: 104)

In fact Qat chew gatherings are considered as national sites of social and political deliberation which heavily are embedded by all mentioned above political, religious, and tribal affiliations. In one Qat session we can have a glimpse about how complicated and interrelated these power relations and affiliations are. In their quest to study the political styles in Yemen beyond the stereotypes Dresch, P& Haykel, B (1995) have noticed the subtle dynamics of these power relations in Qat chew gatherings;

“In a single Qat chew during 1992-indeed sitting together at the head of the Diwan were the head of Islah in Ma'rib governorate at the time, Ali Al-Qibli Nimran, the secretary of the YSP there, Abdullah Ahmad Mujaydic, and the local leader of the Ba'th Party (Iraqi wing). All three men are from the tribe of Murad. (Murad forms part of Madhhij which together with Bakil are the two large groupings distinct from Shaykh Abdullah's group of Hashid.) The YSP man's sister is married to the brother of Islah's then delegate, and the Ba'thist is son of the linking brother, of a younger generation than the other two-appropriately for a region where the Ba'th was less important. Close links of kinship by themselves explain little. Their existence, however, provides one of many means to negotiate differences that, were party programs taken literally, would be intractable. On a grander scale than in Murad, Shaykh Abdullah of Al-'Usaymat (Hashid) is related by marriage to Mujahid Abu Shawarib of Kharif (also Hashid), who until 1994 was a leading figure in the Yemeni branch of the Ba'th Party. They have been close colleagues since the civil war of the 1960s. An electoral agreement between the two parties drew predictable claims of "mere tribalism," and one can agree that party programs were not the whole reality. Those outside tribal relations find such connections dubious. Those within them may find them natural and fear that party allegiance disrupts a system with a unity of its own.” (414)

Cyber activism and Yemeni revolution

What I am trying to show here is that the political trajectory of the country is heavily controlled by the conventional powers of the political parties affected by religious and tribal affiliations as well as both regional and international strong interventions. Youth, as I stated at the beginning, are more organized around these components. Even the revolution in February 2011 which was led by young Yemeni women and men demanding change, was initiated after a call from political youth activists who are affiliated to political parties such as Tawakol Karman and Khaled Al Anesy from Islah party and Hashed Al Azazy from socialist party to protest in front of the Tunisian embassy in Yemen in solidarity with the Jasmine revolution. These calls were then followed by many protests mobilized by different political parties but eventually supported by large crowds seeking change and social justice. This revolution, which has lasted for more than 10 months, is considered the largest civil protest movement in the Yemeni history. The determination of the Yemeni youth was eventually absorbed by the interventions of the political and tribal powers who joined the revolution with the so called "Gulf Initiative" devised by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) rendering the youth revolution into mere political crises and battles between the super powers in the country. The initiative guarantee the safe exit of Ali Abdulla Saleh and his relatives and transferred the power to then-vice president Abd Rabu Mansour Hadi who was sworn in as Yemeni's new president in a one-man election in February 2012 excluding the youth from the entire process. However, many of the revolutionaries did not object when the revolution was settled politically because their political parties

were part of the deal and they actively participated to promote its implementation. Most of the activists who were against this settlement were independent but unfortunately, they were the minority.

Although the cyberspace was used to mobilize or announce certain events or protests by young activists, it was not the main mobilization realm as the case in Egypt. In fact, electricity was constantly off in most of the country during the revolution hindering the use of any kind of communication tool. Therefore, political engagement through the net was mainly done by Yemeni people who were previously active online and engaged in civil society efforts or who were living abroad to get updated on what is going on in the country and to show the rest of the world in seeking regional and international recognition. The following is an example of how youth activists used online activism during the revolution.

Citizen journalism in the absence of independent media

Amal, is a blogger and researcher based in San'a. She used to communicate through different social media channels writing about many different personal and public issues until the onset of the Yemeni revolution when she dedicated her blog "Woman from Yemen" to document the revolution and educate the world about the Yemeni affairs. She said that these online platforms allowed her to emerge as what she prefers to call herself as citizen journalist. About the role of social media, she wrote in her blog "it may seem hard to imagine that social media could play important role in the Yemeni social and political reconfiguration; giving the fact that the country is living under high rates of illiteracy with approximately 45% according to the UNDP and where Internet penetration is less than 2% but it is important to note that youth comprise the majority

of the Yemeni population with almost 60% which in turn constitute the majority of the Internet users who were active agents in the revolution and still involved in the ongoing struggles” (womanfromyemen.blogspot.com, Dec. 2011)

She told me how she was amazed by the creativity of the Yemeni activists and how they managed to establish wireless spots in some tents in the Change Square using very simple yet creative solutions in order to be able to communicate, organize and mobilize. “A group at Change Square called the media committee assigned themselves as one of the media voices covering the revolution. Information, photographs and videos are updated regularly on their blog, YouTube channel, and Facebook group. Some of their information was used by local, regional and international media. Twitter has also become a very important source for spreading information to the world minute by minute especially given the low number of foreign journalists in Yemen due to the strict laws regulating entry visas to the country” (Dec. 2011)

She claims that one of the most important roles of cyberactivism during the revolution was as sources of information in the absence of independent media. She said that independent media does not exist giving the fact that printing presses, television channels and radio stations are controlled by the Ministry of Information and subjected to its censorship as newspapers and magazines are either owned by the government or affiliated to political parties. Thus social media has come to fulfill this role. “Some bloggers and citizen journalists have become sources of information, forcing their writing style to shift from personal diaries to more objective “news” in order to fill the information void” said Amal (Dec. 2011)

She gave me the example of how social media played an important role as

independent media to truly cover “The Life March” where thousands of Yemenis joined the “Life March” began its 250 kilometer journey from Taiz to Sana’a which took place from December 20 to December 24, 2011. The “Life March” could be one of the longest marches recorded in history, but this remarkable unprecedented march was faced with complete silence by both national and international media, including TV networks and newspapers in the Middle East, all of which have simply called it a “peaceful rally.” A Facebook group about the march was created for people to join the march, be updated or at least join the discussions about the march. The group later evolved to include updates about the march time and location including photos and videos and messages from supporters inside and outside the country have filled the page. Activists have set up a live stream for others to watch the event unfold and activists abroad created websites as part of the media campaign to publicize the event such as (lifemarch.net) with an interactive Google Map of the march, phone messages from activists, and reports on the march. Given the fact that the Life March was organized by independent protesters, it not only went against the stance of the ruling party but also against the desires of the formal opposition political parties. This meant that none of the formal media outlets covered the event on television, radio, or printed press. Social media became the sole outlet for people to get an update on the Life March.

Though she refuses to exaggerate the role of these small groups of online activists, at the same time she argues its importance in relation to the whole context of the revolution. She said: “Some dubbed these revolutions as the Facebook or Twitter revolutions and attributed the revolutions to these social networking sites. Others have completely dismissed its role, especially in societies with low literacy and Internet

penetration rates. Another group, myself included, believe that social media is not a silent witness, nor is the cause of the mass people's movement. Twitter and Facebook do not cause revolutions, people do. These people, fueled by years of injustice and wide grievances, are the true agents of change." However, after this political absorption of the revolution by the "Gulf Initiative" and the implementation of its terms, many activists lost hope of their attempts to directly challenge the political infrastructure.

All these initiatives and cyber activities happened during the beginning of the revolution and did not lead to the formation of post revolution groups or initiatives that I can study separately. That is why I want to bring here the cyber anti-Qat campaign as my case study. First, this recent campaign has started as individual efforts by online activists that in turn developed into collective action done through different online and offline publics. Also, Qat chewing is massively used by almost all social categories; hence, it became an inevitable means of communication and socialization in the Yemeni modern society. Therefore, this cyber anti-Qat campaign could tell us more of how online activism could filter in the offline spaces in an attempt to redefine or reshape social power structures. Before exploring the actual Anti-Qat movement, we need to have an idea about how this habit – Qat chewing – is heavily haunting all the publics of the Yemeni society with serious implications.

Qat...the opium of Yemeni nation...chewing itself to death

"Qat is the Arabic term for *Catha edulis*, a species of the Celastraceae cultivated in the highlands of southwestern Arabia for at least the last six centuries. The exact origins of Qat is not certain but many stories state that it originated in the Horn of Africa before

it spread to the Arabian Peninsula and other parts of Africa. It was introduced to Yemen via Ethiopia in the 15th century. The leaves of this tree are chewed as a stimulant, producing a feeling of euphoria followed by depression." (Varisco, 1986) Qat has been used over centuries as a medium of socialization for its desired stimulating effect. Usually people gather to chew Qat for four to five hours in special spaces at the household set aside for this purpose called "Diwan" or "Mafrag". In the past, Qat was consumed by urban elites usually old people during weekends; but now almost 90 percent of Yemeni population are chewing Qat on a daily basis. (Varisco, 1986: 8)

These daily Qat gatherings serve as "an important forum for socializing with one's friends and neighbors, informal conduct of business, discussion of current events, dispute mediation and religious instruction. Students use the occasion to study together; poets actively seek inspiration while chewing. When women meet for an afternoon party (tafrita), they may dance and show off their clothing and jewelry. Even someone who does not chew Qat may attend a chew simply for the sake of socialization."(ibid: 5) Qat chewing became part of many important social occasions such as weddings, celebration of birth, funerals and many religious ceremonies like Almaouled alnabawi, even in Ramadan people chew Qat after Eftar.

Many argue about the negative impact of Qat consumption. For instance, Qat could lead to health hazards as its leaves contain chemical substance called cathinone, which is listed in the same category as heroin and cocaine. In 1980, the World Health Organization classified Qat as a drug of abuse that can generate light to moderate psychological dependence. It can also cause very serious health problems such as cancers, liver and kidney diseases due to the pesticide residues in its leaves. "Most

Western travelers and development planners echo the sentiments of Ingrams and condemn the chewing of Qat as a health hazard, waste of time, drain on the household budget, disincentive to local production of food crops and obstacle to development of a slowly emerging third-world economy.”(ibid: 1) However, Qat chewing is increasing every year and it became the most profitable cash crop taking over the traditional food crops and the government collects substantial revenues from taxing Qat production and marketing.

Thus, looking at the overall socio-economic and cultural development of the country might give us a better idea about the reasons behind the increase in this habit. With the Oil booming in the Gulf countries in the early 1970s and 1980s, “over one-third of the potential male labor force in the Yemen has migrated for temporary work abroad, mostly to the oil-producing states” by then remittances constituted a substantial part of Yemeni economy. This increase of the average household income had increased Qat demand and consumption by new consumers who could not afford it before thus increasing its production. “Many farmers, who in the past could barely provide subsistence needs, now can afford through remittance earnings to chew Qat daily if they wish. As rural and urban wages have inflated, members of the poor service groups can also afford to spend on Qat.” (Varisco, 1986: 2) In addition, Qat production was limited to few areas near major towns but roads development made it possible to transport fresh crops every day from remote rural areas encouraging small farmers to consider Qat cultivation instead of traditional food crop. This occurred in parallel with the decrease of people dependence on subsistence grains with the increase of imported foodstuff and consumer goods. Yemeni farmers no longer need to cultivate food for their own

household.

Qat cultivation consumes huge amounts of water eating up almost 40 percent of the country's water resources and much of the agrarian land of the country as farmers are increasingly growing Qat instead of other crops because it is more profitable with production increasing by about 10% - 15% every year while importing wheat and corn and other food supplies, according to a study paper quoted in the Yemen Observer in January 2012 by Dr Nasser Abdullah al-Aulaqi, former Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries. It is also estimated that one "daily bag" of Qat requires about 500 liters of water to produce. "Qat is estimated to account for up to one-third of Yemen's total water consumption, and because of its high profitability, it contributes much of the capital required for large-scale expansion of groundwater-fed irrigation. Though no surveys of the *Qat* industry in Yemen have been undertaken, it appears that much of the trade is controlled by cartel-like organizations. A World Bank report concluded that "it is clear that *Qat* creates fortunes, and with it vested interests." These interests, while nebulous, were implicated in the report in blocking several crop-substitution and *Qat* regulation efforts, while maintaining a "laissez-faire" policy toward *Qat* use (Ward 2000: 13). As with other uses of Yemen's groundwater reserves, *Qat* cultivation appears ultimately to strengthen elites to the detriment of the national economy and environment" (Moore, 2011: 45) Although Yemen is currently suffering from acute economic crisis that lead to the increase of the prices of all goods and the lack of the most basic needs such as electricity, gas, fuel, and of course water, Yemenis continue to consume Qat in large quantities spending almost 40 percent of their weak salaries. Most experts predict Sana'a, the fastest-growing capital in the world at 7 percent a year, will run out of water supplies

by 2017. That is the same year the World Bank says Yemen will cease earning income from its oil, which currently accounts for three-quarters of the state's revenues.

Even with the mentioned above explanation of the increased Qat consumption. It does not clearly explain why people continue to spend a great portion of their salaries and time in Qat. Varisco argues that “The modern Yemeni has a need to identify himself in a positive way. Chewing Qat is an act that is distinctively Yemeni and shared with no other Arab culture. The use of Qat is embedded in the traditional society and has been infused with new meanings to face a rapidly changing context. Chewing is an act with symbolic references that a Yemeni of any social category can follow to reinforce, and in some cases to create, a cultural identity. The meaning of chewing is that it gives the chewer a meaning, a sense of his or her own identity in a rapidly changing world over which he or she has little or no control.” Chewing Qat is seen as an activity distinctively Yemeni and an activity with positive associations. It is not simply that more people are chewing Qat; the act of chewing as a social phenomenon has new, widely shared symbolism. Qat chewing is a cultural identity marker that any Yemeni can define for himself/herself. (Varisco, 1986)

Besides being major socializing venue, Qat chews is regarded as unconventional medium of political participation. As stated above, Qat gatherings serve as a medium in which people freely discuss different public concerns. Wedeen (2008) suggests that “qāt chews are democratic in substantive representational terms—less because they actually enable citizen control than because they facilitate a kind of political participation. They promote citizen awareness and produce subjects who critically debate political issues, allowing participants to build an agonistically inclined political world in

which disagreements are entertained in common. They are the site for the performance of citizenship, for the critical self-assertion of citizens the existence of whom is made possible through these exercises of deliberation.”(2008, 119) I agree with her that people practice a great sense of their opinions; in fact, the social life in Yemen revolves around Qat chewing; all family and friends gatherings including weddings and even business and political meetings are conducted during Qat chewing sessions to induce decision making. However, Qat gatherings are heavily politicized and haunted by mix of political religious conversations that reinforce the status quo. They are an extension of the political and social realities and by no means these deliberations within Qat gathering sitings would produce something different or lead to social change. On the contrary, Qat is one great factor to reinforce many social problems and stereotypes especially that Qat sessions are conducted in gender segregated manners and also the whole Qat cultivation process is male dominant excluding women from her usual part in the agrarian society (Miles, 1997) Qat is neither condemned by religious leaders nor banned or regulated by the law and is socially accepted, consumed, and infiltrated on all social categories; elders and young, men and women and even children, politicians, religious people, educated and uneducated, workers and unemployed, and even during the revolution many protestors were having Qat during their sit-ins in their tents claiming that it is the only way that could make people to continue the sit in. Thus, Qat chewing is a great source of pressure on people who do not want to chew Qat as they feel socially excluded especially with the lack of other social alternatives and even the few social clubs, cafes, gyms, cultural centers are male dominated or associated with bad perceptions. The Anti-Qat initiative is an attempt by a new generation of youth to imagine new spaces of socializing outside these highly politicized publics.

Yemen without Qat...dreaming grow into reality

The efforts to reduce or eradicate Qat consumption are not new, they were mostly done by individual NGOs such as AlAfif Institution with their known campaign called “Yemen without Qat”. There were also governmental attempts to regulate Qat consumption and ban it in the government institutions. However, these efforts were not successful because as stated before Qat cultivation and trade is monopolized by people who are very well connected with the government officials especially with the high corruption in the country. However, the revolution in 2011 gave youth activists some hope that they can change anything in their realities even such deep rooted social phenomenon as they managed to change the political interface, new initiatives working against Qat have emerged inspired by the revolutionary spirit holding the hope to change this habit. It all started in 2012 a year after the revolution as an anti-Qat campaign via the social media when a young Yemeni blogger and activist who used to live in Lebanon Hind initiated a twitter hashtag #onedaywithoutQat calling to stop chewing Qat for only one day which was the 12th of Jan 2012. This hashtag attracted many supporters and developed into a whole online and offline campaign. It is important to note here how cyber space allowed this young woman, along with other Yemenis especially who live abroad, to emerge as well-known online activists followed by thousands of people in their social media accounts even prior to the anti-Qat campaign through their activism online against other issue which I will explain below.

During the first days of the Yemeni revolution in 2011, while Hind was following the Yemeni news closely, she noticed that Reuters was reporting deceiving news about

what is actually going on especially what was happening in Tai'z when the government was shelling Freedom Square. Reuters presented it as a fight between tribes. Then when she was discussing this with Twitter friends she discovered that Reuters reporter in Yemen is Ali Abdullah Saleh's personal interpreter so she started to question the integrity of such a well-established news institution that has been known as reliable source of information for over 160 years. According to Hind, they hired a correspondent who has clear affiliations with the president of the country under question. She told me that what frustrated her most is the hopeless reaction of many Yemeni tweeps when she shared this information with them via her Twitter account. She said "many Yemenis who live inside the country knew about this but they seem indifferent because they lost hope in changing a lot of things in the country. Therefore, she decided to take the initiative and expose this news to everyone to bring public attention to what is going on in Yemen. She decided to do so through social media because she believes that conventional media have failed to show the reality of what is going on in Yemen; blaming the international media of visualizing the Yemeni revolution as mere battle between Ali Saleh and his supporters and a bunch of armed tribes and terrorists neglecting the revolutionaries persistence to go on peaceful revolution in a country where 90 percent of its population are armed and have all the capacity to instantly initiate civil war. She wrote in her blog wondering why the media is ignoring the Yemeni revolution while praising it in other countries.

"Is it because we are poorer than others? Is it because we do not have enough Oil to persuade them to interfere in Yemen? Is it because we have AL-Qaeda? Even so...Why not allow Yemenis the opportunity to change their country to the better...Didn't they prove all these months that they are people who deserve respect

and trust?.. We are not barbaric people as media visualize us... If we were barbarians we would go out to kill each other in the streets and nothing prevents us from this.. We have weapons and we have all the sectarian conflicts that allow for this.. but with Yemenis insistence not to drive the country to war...you see them going out hundreds of thousands from all the provinces chanting 'peaceful peaceful' .. Where is the world of them and why they don't see them? The answer is «the international media and their correspondents” (doryaleryani.blogspot.com, Nov. 2011)

To bring more public attention to this scandal she intended to send this information to the well-known activist and journalist Dima AlKhateeb who became more engaged online in 2011 during the Arab revolutions and is followed by thousands of people online. Tweets were accumulated by individual Yemeni and non-Yemeni online activists as they initiated a hashtag titled Shame on Reuters #ShameOnReuters to tweet about this issue. Then the issue was escalated and this hashtag was trending which means that thousands of people talked about it in their twitter accounts many of them wrote about it in their blogs and other social media tools. Until eventually this trend grabs the attention of the conventional media's channels and newspapers such as France24, New York Times, Washington Post and others which affected the reputation of Reuters as reliable source of information. That is why Reuters eventually announced that this reporter is no longer working for them.

This story exemplifies the power of social media's communicative capabilities with its networking features to build up social and political support and pressure that leads to constructing public opinion which in turn challenges existing authorities. Also,

this example shows how the social media as an alternative source of knowledge and information is appropriating new relationship with the conventional media and challenging its authority. The Internet is made up of “many publics because it carries “a constellation of communicative spaces in society that permit the circulation of information, ideas, debates— ideally in an unfettered manner—and also the formation of political will (i.e., public opinion)” (Dalhgreen 2005:148). Thus, the Internet as a network of networks fosters multiple publics in which political actors negotiate identity, politics, authority, and social and cultural practices” (Barnes, 2012: 70) With small efforts this woman and her supporters from the online alternative media spaces managed to form public pressure on one of the mainstream media outlets- Reuters- which led them to change the reporter. After this event, Hind became well known and followed by thousands of followers online. Therefore, when she initiated the anti-Qat campaign it was much easier for her to reach so many people quickly and gather information and support almost instantly.

The beginning was a small campaign to abstain from chewing Qat for one day: the 12th of January 2012. Hind initiated the campaign with a twitter hashtag #noQat12jan which attracted the support from other Yemeni activist who joined the anti-Qat campaign and they created a page on Facebook to reach out to people in Yemen because the majority of people who use social media in the country use Facebook more than twitter. These young activists from in and outside the country started to share different ideas for the logo and slogans for the campaign on the Facebook page one of which is “I am a Yemeni who wants change and will not chew Qat on the 12th of January.” Although the campaign did not succeed to reduce the number of Qat chewers that specific day, it

managed to generate debate and support. They managed to create a public debate where everyone both with and against Qat were part of and many local and international media talked about the campaign. They managed to form local networks and communicate and win the support of many key figures such as Tawakol Karman who won Nobel Peace Prize in 2011, the Arab intellectual Azmi Bshara, many institutions and NGOs who were or were not working against Qat before, and many local and regional news talked about this campaign which led people to ask for more than this campaign.

Therefore, the second phase of the campaign on the 12th of April 2012 was more mature, working at many levels calling for no Qat in governmental facilities. Its impact on the ground was stronger resulting in the creation of five different groups from five different governorates (Sana'a, Aden, Taiz, Hudaida and Dhamar) where they visited governmental offices and schools distributing flyers spreading the awareness of the negative impacts of Qat consumption. As the numbers of volunteers and activists increased, this led to the formation of (*Eradah* Foundation for Qat-free nation) gathering all campaign participants in one group. They worked at many levels; legally they worked to draft a law against Qat which was written by attorney Omar Al Himiari, one of the campaign supporters in Taiz. Hind with other members of *Eradah* took stand at the parliament building in November 2012 demanding to discuss this law to ban Qat in the governmental facilities. After one month the parliament discussed it and it was rejected by some of the members and was supposed to be discussed again in few months. At another level this campaign caught the attention of the Minister of Education back then and they negotiated the possibility to integrate lessons about the negative impacts of the Qat in school's curriculum. In 2013, the group organized another sit in in front of the parliament calling for passing a strategy to gradually eliminate Qat consumption by

2033. Hind managed to meet with many official representatives in the National Dialogue Conference NDC who eventually discussed the strategy and the proposed law which was in the NDC final output.

In a third phase of the campaign the new foundation launched a new campaign #Yemeni Weddings without Qat fighting Qat in one of the most important social events where Qat is an essential component where hundreds of people gather to celebrate while chewing Qat. Weddings generally are heavily loaded with most of the society's traditions and customs in which people pay deep respect to obey these norms. Weddings are held in gender segregated arrangements at which women gather in one place to celebrate the bride and men gather in another place to celebrate the groom. Usually Yemeni weddings gather huge numbers of guests that could reach thousands in one single wedding. They all gather and chew Qat except for single girls who are not encouraged to do so until they get married. Thus, the attempt to break such a deep social chain to have Qat free wedding environment is very crucial as it might lead to challenging many other social norms and restrictions later on. Fortunately, the first wedding without a Qat was held promoted by the anti-Qat campaign in all social media channels followed by seven successful weddings without Qat in one year. "I went to Yemen and attended the first wedding without Qat and even though the wedding was segregated and was "men only," I couldn't resist the idea of seeing this day with my own eyes: a wedding with 800 attendees with happy, cheerful faces with no bump on their cheeks. That was, by far, the happiest day of my life." said Hind. (April, 2013) Since then, anti-Qat activists created small book clubs in different areas where they meet every week to discuss a book they read. Others continue the awareness campaign in elementary schools where they teach the kids about the Qat hazards. Furthermore, Eradah celebrate the 12th of January of every year as the

anniversary of the anti-Qat campaign in all governorates. Looking at the anti-Qat initiative as well as the use of the cyberspace during the Yemeni revolution from NSM perspective will give us better insight of the activist's identity, their relationship to culture, their relationship to their adversary, their subjectivity, their framework of action.

Their framework of action

As stated before, the Anti-Qat initiative emerged as a result of the activists aspiration to escape the highly politicized publics in this case the Qat chew gatherings that are hijacked by a mix of the religious-tribal power conversations. It is an attempt to move beyond the publics that are heavily engaged with the logics of the state; they want to escape the logics of identity defined by being obligated to participate in Qat gatherings in order to be socially accepted as a good citizen or good Yemeni. They want to imagine new spaces of socializing outside these spaces. Although they seek recognition and support from the state officials to endorse an anti-Qat strategy, they are not a political party and do not want to get engaged in the traditional political parties, rather creating pressure in existing power structures. Furthermore, The use of social media allow the Yemeni activist to transcend the geographical location as activists from outside the country being active part in local matters and to bring regional and global recognition from public figures. The revolution has raised the hopes among Yemeni activists to be proactive after they lost hope in changing their realities. This campaign was very crucial as it created an opportunity for anti Qat movement in Yemen to seize this atmosphere of enthusiasm. Thus, I believe that it is relevant to look at cyberactivism as an emerging social movement from a political opportunity perspective; this will allow us to consider

online activism as a site to enable the creation of potential political opportunity that could be seized by activists at the right time “If the existing political system is vulnerable to a challenge, it creates an opportunity for others- like the movement members- to issue such a challenge and try to use this opportune time to push through a social change” (Meyer, 2004: 62). This perspective could enrich our understanding of the interaction of both internal and external structures that would lead to the mobilization of any movement depending on the context within which it interacts. These online activists who were inspired by the political transitional atmosphere have started campaigning online against one of the deep rooted social problems, the Qat, creating an atmosphere of hope, enthusiasm, support, and cooperation which enable the opportunity to fight this social habit from different dimensions whenever it is possible.

An emergence of new political subjects

The activists interaction in both online/offline publics enable them to reconfigure themselves as political subjects in the context of the Yemeni revolution and its aftermath. The fact that, social media communicative process which happens in the absence of the identity markers or the social markers of identity such as sex, race, age, class, and religion gives the online subject the option to endorse them partially or totally or even deconstruct this notion of identity and construct new potentials of an identity representation desired by the political actor. Their activism through the virtual cyber sphere allows the construction of individual activists who share common struggles but not necessarily the same cultural, political, social background. The anti-Qat group came from different backgrounds' activists who live in Yemen and who live abroad, old and young, women and men, politically engaged or independent. Although they might belong

to different political parties or religious and social backgrounds, they share the same anti-Qat sentiment and the desire to create social change. Cyberactivism has provided people or the subjects with this virtuality in which they interact, share experience, define their own choices, create their own motives and at the same time participate in forms of collective actions for change.

Before her total engagement with the Yemen revolution and the anti-Qat campaign, Hind was a 28 young blogger studying abroad. Inspired and motivated by the tide of revolutionary movements in the Arab region and specifically Yemen, she started to follow seriously the Yemeni social and political matters and constantly blogging and tweeting about them. She specifically became well known after the #shameonReuters online campaign and her heavy participation in the anti-Qat campaign. In a short time she became a well known political activist and many people started to perceive her as such. She considers herself as a political activist and she believes so much in the power of cyberactivism and its ability to create larger public resonance and affect wider population than conventional activism do. Her cyberactivism allowed her to transcend the space and time boundaries and play a leading role in this anti-Qat initiative in Yemen although she lives abroad. In her Facebook and twitter accounts, she is followed by almost 30,000 people from Yemen and all around the world. She writes now more about different social and political problems related to Yemeni society, such as highlighting gender issues such as the early marriage of young girls, social constraints on women's mobility and Hijab. She makes sure to translate them into different languages and post it in different online journals. Although her unsophisticated writing style does not qualify her to write in academic journals, social media gave her the chance to participate the way she desires to

represent herself and express her thoughts without having to fulfill certain professional criteria and she has been interviewed and recognized by many professional media channels and newspapers in matters related to Yemen revolution and the Anti-Qat initiative.

The same way social media gives Ala'a an alternative or new public space to bravely expose his sexual identity as "Queer" as he preferred to describe himself; social media gave him the option to expose his identity in an attempt to make a shocking and aggressive political stand to fight for the right of people who does not fit the hegemonic strict heterosexuality of the Yemeni society. It is shocking because Alaa is one of the well-known activists who has participated actively during the revolution, joined many events in the change squares, and conducted many interviews and he strongly believes in the power of the social media to make change in the society. He intended to come out un-anonymously exposing his real name posting this in his well-known blog. He even opened up his blog for other LGBT hidden community in Yemen to write in his blog their experiences so they did as a start step towards seeking social recognition and acceptance. This story is quite consistent with the nature NSMs which are concerned more about the intimate and personal aspects of peoples' lives instead of only revolving around public traditional political interests; feminist movements and LGBT groups are great example (Laraña, 1994) Cyberactivists start individually writing in their blogs, Twitter accounts, or Facebook walls about different personal as well as public issues then this stimulates individual and collective awareness and actions. This online initiative by Ala'a and people's reaction could be the seed to a new social movement that usually starts with individuals and then translates into collective actions. On the other

hand, these same publics give the option for “Noor”, one of the dominant Yemeni online activists who works intensively to spread the awareness about Yemen social and political affairs. Through the different online forums, she keeps her identity and even her face unrevealed in another political stance to say that her personal life is not what matters here, rather the news she keeps analyzing, reporting and posting. Social media give her the option to emerge as online activist sitting her personal life comfortably in the shadows while being in the same time in the forefront of the political battle for her causes.

Their adversary

Although this anti-Qat campaign might seem as a mere social initiative that works to limit or eradicate Qat chewing, it has deeper economic and political implications. Working against the consumption and the production of Qat is a big deal and these efforts would be confronted by their beneficiaries be it the state that benefits from Qat production, the tribal businessmen elites who monopolize its trade, or the norms and traditions that the activists seek to change through their online and offline actions. As I stated earlier, the Arab revolutions have dialectical relationship with cyberactivism since Internet have been used extensively by activists during and after the Arab revolutions. These revolutions provide fluid atmosphere that allowed people to dare to dream to change things that they thought as unmovable component of their life like Qat; using cyberactivism as their main tool. The activists are trying to redefine the dynamics of offline publics through interactive features of online publics. Thus, it is better to look at online/offline or virtual/actual binary as part of a dialectical relationship rather than separate spaces or publics with definite boundaries; “a dialectical relationship that

continuously shifts, defines, and continues the conversation about the boundaries of citizen and state authority, gender constructions, and various other social conventions” (Barnes, 2012: 32) For instance, since the start of the anti-Qat campaign in 2012, many anti-Qat activist organized cultural events such as book clubs, music concerts, and art exhibitions and announced it through the campaign's different online accounts as an alternative means of socializing outside the domination of Qat gatherings. These various publics found within the cyberspace such as the personal blogs, forums, Facebook groups, Twitter accounts which gave the activists the chance to explore another layers of their identities and experience another aspect of their existence that otherwise would be concealed due to many external and internal factors. Within these publics young activists were able to challenge further social norms and constrains such as the possibility for boys and girls to interact and socialize outside the acceptable formal institutions or spaces since it is not favorable and sometimes prohibited by the society. Hind explained to me how she was surprised and amazed by the change she noticed among the young generation of activists during her visits to the country to participate in the anti-Qat campaign events. She said “when I was student at Sana'a University before I left the country, it wasn’t acceptable for the boys and girls to intermingle except in very narrow limits, but since the revolution these activists became more encouraged to break these barriers” Its culturally loaded movement with the diversity of its participants, the individual initiatives that inspires collective actions, working together to create a culture of Qat free generations, and alternative socializing online and offline hypes.

Chapter 4: The cyber-space...a global site for liberation and subjugation

While the previous chapters focus on how cyber space allowed the emergence of new political subject and how cyber activism emerged as a new social movement featuring the recent revolutions in the Arab region. This chapter focuses on the limitations of the online activism as site of resistance. On one hand, by revisiting the global aspect of the cyberactivism through linking it with the global communicative capitalism which is associated with advanced information and communication technologies, enabled such activism as form of Hardt and Nigre's immaterial labour power exerted by political subjects "multitudes" outside the working logics and boundaries to work against the global capital "Empire". By doing so my intention is to reveal how this capital empire is continuously trying to subsume and absorb every potential aspect of these virtual spaces for its profitable interests. On other hand, this chapter explores how this site of political contestation is not exempted from the securitization and policing by the authorities particularly in the context of the Arab revolutions in Egypt and Yemen beside another organizational and structural challenges these groups are facing in relation to the over all political situation.

There is no doubt that the Internet constitutes a fundamental moment of the contemporary globalization which depends on advancement of information, communication, and production technologies associated with massive flow of digital information, financial capital, and even the movement of human populations along with cultural global flows. Castells (2001) notes that the Internet fits well the structural aspects of the network society emergent in late 20th century. As the Internet is adopted in

various social spheres, such is dialectically reconstructed according to network logics combined with historically formed and emergent values and ends. As I suggested in previous chapters both online and offline publics are interrelating in a dialectical relationship in which these various publics exist as part of the structural power relations of our daily life. That is why activism online has become dominant as a site of resistance in the contemporary. As Hardt and Negri (2000) note the varied multitudes who are organized in a great variety of social movements being organized increasingly globally and increasingly as networks of networks integrating local, regional, and global issues through the Internet. However, the same Internet that is being used in resistance to the oppressive aspects of contemporary society is facilitating the spread of hegemonic ideologies of neoliberalism, instrumental individualism, and consumer culture. It enables means, through which capitalism sustains its profits, globally coordinates its activities, and maintains its hegemony (Langman et al 2002)

The intense and advance use of Internet activism in the context of Arab revolutions may constitute a triumph moment of resistance through different networks of immaterial labour that create a seemingly common struggle of what could constitute a potential multitude that work against the capitalist Empire. For instance, a “synchronization” between social media and the traditional media was achieved during the first days of the revolution in which the revolutionary movement overpower the counterrevolutionary actions online and offline (Alexander & Aouragh, 2014) Although Internet or cyberactivism through cyber publics or virtual publics can not make change or revolution alone, it definitely penetrates, redefine, reshape and mold with the physical publics. Internet becomes integral logic of our daily life with no clear distinction between the on/offline publics. This cyber activism is the kind of immaterial labour of the social

worker which Negri suggests as a generalized form of labour power in which the new communicative and technological competencies while most explicit among “qualified” workers, existed in “virtual” form even within contingent and unemployed labor as the prerequisites of everyday life in high-tech capitalism (Lazzarato and Negri 1994, 87). As it becomes more blurred, it infiltrates social structures and power relations in both macro and micro level of our human history.

Cyberactivism within and beyond the Arab revolutions

There is no question about the crucial role that cyberactivism has played in the Arab revolutions; it is important to pay attention to this massively continuously growing phenomenon of cyberactivism associated with and fueled by the Arab revolutions as the number of social media users has dramatically increased. Social media has flourished and reached a momentum during and after revolutions in the region as people became more aware of the significance of these tools. Miryam Aouragh and Anne Alexander in their paper “The Egyptian Experience: Sense and Nonsense of the Internet Revolution” (2011) argued that the use of “these social media channels has shifted from being site of social networking and entertainment into a site for social and political contestation, civic engagement, and even entrepreneur activities. By repeatedly putting the Internet corporations—Facebook, Twitter, and the like—at the center, it seemed as if particular Western characteristics were artificially being inserted into a genuine popular Arab revolution” (3). Such an approach ignores the long history of social and political protest in Egypt. The years 2004–2005 saw an explosion of demonstrations calling for constitutional reform, a call taken up by judges who marched in 2006 demanding an end to state interference in their role as election monitors. Later that same year, large strikes

in the textile sector opened the door to a rising curve of workers' protests, which continued during and after the uprising against Mubarak (Alexander, 2010; Marfleet & El Mahdi, 2009).

Hosni Mubarak, Anwar Sadat, and Gamal Abdel Nasser are having tea in the afterlife. Mubarak asks Nasser, "How did you end up here?" "Poison," Nasser answers. Mubarak then turns to Sadat. "What about you?" he asks. "An assassin's bullet," Sadat says. Sadat and Nasser then turn to Mubarak, "And you?" To which Mubarak replies: "Facebook." (Lim, 2011)

Merlyna Lim mentions this joke as a manifestation of the effect of cyberactivism and its role in the stepping down of President Mubarak on 11 February 2011. The joke epitomizes perceptions about the role of social media, particularly Facebook, in the Arab uprisings. Some observers support the idea that social media was the main force behind the popular movement against authoritarian regimes in the Middle East and North African region (Cohen, 2011; Webster, 2011). It is an oversimplification to frame the Egyptian revolt exclusively as either a "Facebook revolution" or a "people's revolution." People and social media are not detached from each other (Zhuo, Wellman, & Yu, 2011; Lim 2011).

This leads me to wonder whether the social media has done more to the Arab revolutions or it's the other way around. In fact, Arab revolutions related movements and cyberactivism have dialectical relationship in which the former have provided a fluid atmosphere enabled by the latter; this motivated all social groups in the region with different interests to wake up and find their location in this transitional era. I propose also that we can look at Internet activism from a political opportunity structure perspective, if we consider online activism as a site enabling the creation of potential political

opportunity that could be seized by activists at the right time. This perspective enriches our understanding of the interaction of both internal and external structures that may enable the mobilization of any movement depending on the context it interacts within. Revolutionary movements emerge to overthrow previous regimes and build new ones, while cyberactivism helped in the rupture of these revolutions and now is helping to reconstruct the new realities for different groups. However it is important not to fall in the trap of overestimating the power of cyberactivism as a site of resistance. Although cyberactivism was and still is a significant factor behind the rupture and the continuity of the revolutions in the Arab region, its dominance as a revolutionary tool during these contemporary dissent movements is not enough to name these revolutions as “the Facebook revolution”. In Egypt for instance, the mainstream media tried to romanticize the revolution as the beautiful eighteen days that was sparked from the Internet by the youth and resulted with the ousting of the head of the regime and to spread the notion that the revolution is over and everyone should go home. Even the western opinion is favoring this story that is why Husam Elhamalawy, one of the most active bloggers and activists in Egypt, said on his Twitter account “Nominating Arab bloggers to the Nobel Peace Prize helps only to enforce the fabricated narrative this was an Internet revolution” (@3arabawy Oct. 2011) in response to nominating three Egyptian bloggers for 2011 Noble Peace Prize for their role in the revolution. In fact, many deep rooted social, political and economic reasons were also there. Social injustice, oppression and lack of freedom, poverty and the failure of the authoritative regimes to address people's needs depriving them from their basic rights; these beside many internal and external factors certainly lead people from different age groups not only youth to go to the streets to protests for their rights chanting for bread, dignity, and social justice. That explains why

some countries have witnessed uprisings that resulted in dramatic sociopolitical transformations and some have not despite the ratios of Internet users in different countries of the region. For instance, according to the latest report by the Arabic Information Network of Human Rights in 2012, countries like UAE represent the highest number of Internet users compared to its total population though the country hasn't witnessed the same revolutionary movements as other countries in the region. In addition, although Egypt and Saudi Arabia rest in the top ranking of the use of social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter, Egypt inspired the world with the revolution of January the 25th and now witnessing critical transitional period, while Saudi Arabia is still trapped in very rigid restrictions and censorship over the use of Internet. While Yemen which rests in the lower ranking of the number of Internet users in the region, it has witnessed a great revolution in February 2011 following Tunisia and Egypt. I brought these examples to highlight the importance of observing the sociopolitical and economic context in which cyber activism is taking place as youth use these cyberspaces differently.

Everyone wants to be there: Cyper publics are the extension of our realities

Whether for making more profit, monitoring, studying and analyzing this communicative social phenomenon or even observing the users attitudes, everyone wants to establish their place online as part of their complete existence. Companies want to observe youth category who dominate the social media to see what they are talking about what they like what they dislike and what they say about their products, so do the artists and the actors. Social scientists don't want to miss the chance to witness and study and be part of one of the largest virtual social experiment in the human history. Psychologists

want to know the psychological impact of Internet among its users. Police is looking there for criminals and harassers and electronic imprints for fugitive prisoners. Lawyers are digging for evidences that might help their cases. Husbands and wives and lovers are looking for traces that their partners are cheating on. Media experts are amazed by this living paradigm of popular alternative media.

The mainstream media are afraid that this new media would take the rug from underneath its feet so they created hyperlinks at their websites to facilitate for the readers to put these links in their social media channels to expand their existence there. National security is monitoring the activist's accounts to be updated on the coming events, protests, dates and locations. Corporations are looking through their potential employees' online profiles to fill more information about them in their files or to discover more things that they might hide. The governments and political parties have implanted their electronic committees online to enhance their image and ruin their counterparts' reputations and to affect the public opinion. Simply, everyone wants to be there. It became the new site of political and social contestations even by the people who have all the powers and the mainstream media are in their hands. But they try to subsume these virtual channels for their own interests. Neoliberal capitalist powers try to subsume these publics to reduce its potentials as sites of resistance even in broader level as battle between leading superpower nations.

We are voluntarily building up online profiles in different social media networks which is a perfect example of the modern construction of "productive" subjectivities through immaterial labour in terms of social communication and networking which Mark Coté and Jennifer Pybus (2007) referred to as the construction of "online subjectivities in an open-ended process of becoming" through Internet social networks such as My Space,

Facebook and many other virtual networks. This cybernetic or digital construction of our subjectivity within such virtual social networks is a constitutive practice of immaterial labour which constitutes a “new realm for the expansion of capital and thus surplus value” (ibid) In which we are the active immaterial workers who are subjected to perpetual voluntarily collective learning and training process of becoming the desirable productive communicator/ consumer of capital. That is why it is important not to forget that these social media channels are owned by these big corporations who are able to control the use of all the information uploaded at these spaces and that we are easily to be tracked and monitored.

At this point in the digital age there's probably enough indication to make people think twice about what they say or do online and how the capital are seizing this extending virtual power to put more control over the labourer. For instance ten people got fired from their jobs by their employers because of what they post on their social media accounts expressing some of their beliefs or their opinion about different life events according to CNN international article, 2013. Like this school bus driver Johnny Cook who wrote in his Facebook expressing that he was upset after one student in his bus told him how he was denied lunch because he owed the school 40 cents. The school administration found out and asked him to remove the post and apologize but he didn't and got fired instead. Another incident of a secondary school math teacher in Denver who got fired because of what she is posting on her Twitter like how she likes to smoke weed. When the school administration found out about her Twitter account they put her in an administration leave while her students find her posts as cool and they protested online to bring her back to work but she eventually got fired. Another incident of a pizza kitchen server in California who got fired because he expressed how he is not happy

about the new company uniform that he have to wear in his Twitter account. These examples of how our interaction through social media accounts are perceived as online extension to our social existence which the capital corporations take seriously and extend their power over their employees by abusing their freedom of expression through their own channels that are supposedly outside the working walls and how these communicative channels managed to make the distinction between working and non-working space private and public more blurred.

Policing and securitization of the cyber space

In the context of Egypt, the telecommunication and Internet companies are controlled and monitored by the government although they are privately owned because they have to go through strict governmental rules and regulations. Thus, it was easy for the government to block both telecome and Internet communication during the onset of the revolution of the 25th of Jan, 2011, particularly on the 27th of Jan. in an attempt to control the information flow to the public and to hinder activists' organization and mobilization through different social media channels whether through their computers or mobile phones. According to Freedom House latest report (2012), the government shut down almost all of its Border Gateway Protocol routes, which disconnected the country from the global network. Similarly, mobile operators were ordered to cut all mobile phone service, including mobile Internet and SM text-messaging, under the excuse that “foreign intelligence was using communication technologies to plan terrorist actions,” according to State Intelligence. The authorities have eventually restored the mobile and Internet operations on the 2nd of Feb. on one hand after widespread condemnation of such unprecedented restriction measures and on the other hand to make it easier to track and

monitor activists online movements and plans as it was more difficult to control and predict their activities offline.

However, once Internet and mobile services were restored, the government forced mobile operators to send out messages encouraging the customers to be part of the pro-government rallies. The government also used the same tactic with the Internet in which they made public figures to post pro-government messages on their websites and social media accounts. The SCAF also have followed the same strategy in 2011 as they created their own group on Facebook to communicate with protestors in their favorite online venues. General Abdel Moneim Qato stated in a TV interview that “One of our key weapons was spreading rumors to manipulate the street” so the SCAF has created their own army of online paid users whom their job is to join and participate in all the online discussions about the revolution favoring and supporting the regime’s position. Not only the government and the SCAF who tried establish online armies working for their interests, the political parties such as the Freedom and Justice and Al Nour parties have all established an army of micro-bloggers in their struggle to spread information and set the pace and tone of discussion. Given the fact that after the revolution social networking became the new political playground as the number of Facebook users reached over 10.6 million by the end of 2011, placing Egypt in the top 20 countries using Facebook. Similarly, the number of YouTube users increased to over eight million, the most in the Arab world. Therefore, all emerging political parties, the Egyptian government, and the military body started actively participating in online forums, engaging with the public in discussions about the current state of the country. Social media is haunted by all anti-revolutionary agents in an attempt to absorb the potentiality of this new site for resistant to work instead for their interest.

Legally, the Egyptian constitution and penal code state that the media is free within the limits of society which is a very vague statement that enable the government to limit freedom of expression under the principle of “keeping public order.” Although there are no explicit rules that allow the government to censor or monitor citizens’ behavior, according to local advocates, the constitutional rights for protecting freedom have lost their protective power because of an array of restrictive laws, specifically the 1996 Press Law, the 1971 Law on the Protection of the Nation and Citizens, the 1977 Law on Security of National Unity, the Publications Laws and the Parties Laws, and the Emergency Law according to the Media Sustainability Index (2006) This Emergency Law which has been in place since 1981, was renewed by the government in May 2010 until the end of May 2012 claiming that its use is going to be limited to compact terrorism and drug trafficking and did not grant any powers to impose censorship or shut down media outlets. However, both the Mubarak regime and SCAF military administration used the Emergency Law to suppress freedom of expression, restrict citizens’ rights to access and publish information, and detain thousands of civilians between 2010 and early 2012, including several online activists according to Freedom House report (2012) would this section be better placed earlier, before you discuss the three groups you are examining in Egypt as it seems to frame the context these groups are working through in terms of navigating the Internet as a tool vs. a public space.

The violations against activists and bloggers continued to get worse during the last couple of years since 2010 with many bloggers and activists threatened, beaten, or harassed. For instance, even before the revolution in 2011 bloggers such as Wael Abbas, Asmaa Mahfouz, and Israa Abdel Fattah were detained and kept away from communicating online under claims that their posts pose great danger on the Egyptian

national security. Thereafter, with the unfolding of the first days of the 2011 revolution, many bloggers, activists, and Facebook groups' admins were detained by the Egyptian security forces including Wael Ghoneim who is the founder of "We are All Khaled Said" page in Facebook which was created to protest against the brutal death of Khaled Said by the hands of the police in July 2010.

After the revolution, the SCAF continued the same policies against bloggers and online activists and one of the famous cases was the arbitrary detention Maikel Sanad in Feb. 2011 who is a political activist and blogger always criticizing the Egyptian military rule for 60 years advocating canceling the mandatory military service for all male Egyptians. He was released 27 hours later after being tortured by military police then he got arrested again in March 2011 and sentenced to three years in prison on charges of "insulting the military" in his blog post titled "The Army and the People Were Never One Hand" criticizing the SCAF administration and their human rights violations during that period. After escalating local and global pressure, Sanad was released by on Jan. 2012 after spending 10 months in prison.

In another instance, Alaa Abdul Fattah who is one of the premier bloggers and human right advocates in Egypt was detained by the SCAF security forces because he refused to be interrogated by military prosecutor instead of civilian one over allegations of "inciting violence and sabotage" during deadly clashes between the army and protesters in October 2011. Abd al-Fattah said the army had no grounds for interrogating him and demanded to speak to a civilian official that prompted his detention then he was released after spending few months in prison. In August 2011, the activists Asma'a Mahfouz faced newly invented charge of writing agitation tweets against the SCAF and she was transferred to the military prosecutor and was fined with 20.000 LE but was

eventually released in response to activists and civil society condemnation and pressure.

Furthermore, the intimidation against activists and bloggers has increased since 2011 and in one case the blogger Malek Mostafa lost his right eye to a police rubber bullet during a peaceful protest in Nov. 2011 calling on the SCAF to transfer power to a civilian government. Another incidence was of the columnist Mona Eltahawy who was brutally beaten and sexually assaulted by the military while covering the same protests. Salwa a co- founder of Mosireen was left with at least 117 birdshot wounds while filming an armored personnel carrier (APC) after the police responded violently to a peaceful protest in Cairo in Feb. 2012. Although these high profile activists have managed to get eventually released and recovered and getting public support and pressure, there are still so many of activists in prison lacking the logistics and support that would help them to take their freedom.

The situation in Yemen is not different than any authoritative country in the region in terms of controlling the media and freedom of expression and oppressing opposition movements. The Yemeni government is controlling the information flow online as the Internet service is monopolized by a state owned company called Yemen Net. The company is responsible for blocking incredible number of news websites who are opposing the government and forums that are talking about critical Yemeni political issues particularly the southern movement. This blocking policy is not a new phenomenon the authorities have applied this strategy since the introduction of the Internet in the country; in response some activists have established new sites to publish the blocked websites and forums called YemenPortal.net which became popular internationally among people who are following the Yemeni affairs which got eventually blocked by the authorities. One of the founders of this portal Walid Al-Saqaf a journalist

who turned cyber activist started anti-censorship campaign through blocked.arabiaportal.net that resonated internationally in response to banning the portal in Yemen.

Another challenge that hinders the Internet access is the weak telecommunication infrastructure in the country and the high cost of installing the service that can't be afford by everyone. That is why although the number of Internet and social media users has noticeably increased after the revolution to reach 4.3 million users in 2012 which is almost the double of users in 2010, it still low compared to other countries in the region. Both Ahmed and Amal explained to me how the revolutionary events in Yemen lies in the people's strength to collaborate together. While the bulk of mobilization efforts in Yemen happen through word of mouth, radio, brochures and SMS services; sites such as Facebook helped people meet each other with one click, without having to travel great distances between cities. They told me how online for and Facebook groups helped people meet each other from different parts of the country. These online social media groups enabled the instant communication between people with similar interests that otherwise wouldn't be met. These groups also according to them helped great time in organizing for the revolution related events and marches. They told me that they are currently part of many independent groups who have members from various parts of the country. They hold online meetings in closed Facebook groups, where they vote on important matters, and share documents. After the revolution, hundreds of revolutionary Facebook groups and pages and websites were created talking about wide range of social and political matters and news including women's role in the revolution and other media campaigns such as Support Yemen to spread the awareness and raise the voice of Yemeni revolutionaries. However, they all draw my attention not to forget the fact that

the ratio of online users and activists in particular are still a minority in the Yemeni context and in the developing countries in general although they admit that social media have played significant role in mobilizing the mass movement. They told me that online activists are not the only revolutionaries especially that western media tends to describe these online activists as the leaders and the heroes of the revolution ignoring the unknown people in the ground simply because they do not speak their language or use these sophisticated communication tools. Just because they do not speak other languages or use Twitter and Facebook or write their thoughts in blogs does not mean that they do not exist.

That is why the use of social media as a site for political contestation is still not dominant as the case in Egypt, so the ratio of online activists and bloggers who got arrested or threatened is far less than journalists or political detainees who participated in the revolution or part of the southern or other opposition movements who are in constant subjugation to threats and detention. However there are some famous cases which activists were threatened and put at risk due to their online activism and what they post in their social media accounts. Afrah Nasser is a journalist and blogger who had to seek asylum in Sweden where she lives now after receiving death threats due to her online activism. She explained that she was writing about “Soft topics” then with the unfolding of the Yemeni revolution in 2011 she started to blog actively about the anti-government protests and different violations by the authorities she focused mainly on writing about how hazardous to be a journalist in Yemen investigating about the journalists who got killed while covering the protests and what she called a stream of attacks against journalists including physical assaults, detentions, harassment, and attacks on news outlets. Consequently, her blog was featured in CNN.com list for the 10 must read

bloggers from the Middle East on March 2011.

Another activist and a writer Bushra Al-Maqtari is facing death threats and is accused of apostasy in response to one of her articles that went viral on Facebook and other Yemeni forums and sites; the article words said that God seemed to be absent in Khidar, a village where her fellow Taizis were badly treated during a 260-kilometre-long march from their city to the capital, Sana'a, in December 2011 which is known by the "Life March". A group of religious scholars who are affiliated to the previous regime issued a Fatwa against her entitled 'The fatwa of the scholars of Yemen regarding the cursing of the divine' accusing her of apostasy demanding that the state should bring al-Maqtari before a court of law, saying that they would not remain silent at what she had written and also demanding the state to close the news websites that published her article and they should express their regret and sorry for doing so. "They just picked a few words and sentences from an article I wrote," she said and argued for her defense that she never meant to say that God did not exist but was only expressing her anger toward the deaths of her fellow countrymen. Another case of the journalist Majed Karout who was put in jail and was found by Al Baydha court after posting in his Facebook account documents revealing involvement of some of the government officials in one big corruption case in the telecommunication institution in Al Baydha governorate.

These are just examples that show how the development of social media mirrors the "antinomies" of late capitalism. Social media networks are global platforms "par excellence", yet their global reach is embedded in diverse localized contexts. Social media form and extend the social space we communicate and interact in and, at the same time, give users unprecedented power to perform these communications in seemingly more open and autonomous ways. On the one hand, social media are forming and

extending “an explosion of virtuality”; on the other, social media corporations have phenomenal power to shape the modes of this virtuality. The often celebrated ‘user’s revolts’ against industry’s handling of social media platforms seem as a mere aberrations to the overall, overarching prerogative of owner companies to, for instance, rewrite the terms of service for using these platforms or revamping the social software that runs them.(Patelis and Hatzopoulos, 2013)

Political transformations and Cyberactivism

Another challenge facing any cyber movement is its ability to cross the class and geographic boundaries. After all, activism through social media still limited to people who have the privilege to have access to these technologies. Despite these post revolutionary groups attempts to bridge the gap between the online and offline political actions, such as Mosireen filmmaking trainings, and Kazeboon public screenings, Salwa expressed her frustration and how they sometimes feel alienated even in their own neighborhood in which people feel intimidated to knock their door and join them. Lamia agrees with her and wonders if they were not fortunate to have a proper access to education and the privilege to afford to have a premises and expensive equipments she can not imagine how they would survive. Kazeboon has succeeded at some point during the revolution to bridge this gap between the political actions online and offline and to challenge the authorities. However, this relies greatly in the overall political situation.

Which leads to another important challenge that is facing most of these groups and collectives who emerged during the revolution and are working on the propagation and agitation for certain events is its dependency on the overall political atmosphere of the country. For instance, Mosireen activities reached its peak in 2011 during the first

year after the revolution in which there were a lot of demonstrations and revolution related events that are happening all over the country so they had rich material to circulate in the social media to compete the official media stories. They were the most viewed channel and were more acceptable from the public and in the streets they had supporters; also during Etehadia events, in 2012 they had the same appeal in the streets. However, after June 30th power balance between the revolutionaries and counterrevolutionaries has changed after Military took the state powers again from Muslim Brothers who are portrayed as the terrorists and the Military again controlled the political scene but this time they used the power of social media logics to win the heart of people by supporting “Tamarrod” petition to overthrow Morsy Since then, a polarization sentiment took over the whole state and private media in which you are either with the revolution, referring to June 30th or a terrorist encouraging the state to take ruthless actions against any rebellious actions endorsing for instance anti-demonstration law. For that “Kareem said “the revolution doesn’t move in straight line rather it moves in waves...reach peak and sometimes reach bottom depends on many factors such as the political situation” therefore, the mainstream media once was using these groups materials as the source of their news; now it is the opposite because the main stream media have win the street again and the activists are now just circulating and criticizing what are being broadcast and said in different TV shows.

The new media functions “as a megaphone, generating external attention from citizens, news media, and governments outside of the country. The mechanism by which it achieves this function might be called bridging”. Bridging becomes important “when traditional news sources are unavailable or regulated by the government, or when violence or repression makes it difficult for mainstream media to directly cover an

unfolding story” (New Media and conflict after the Arab Spring, 2012, p. 12). While cyberactivism gear audience to activism, yet the audience “has a short attention span”(13) which makes cyberactivism a movement that moves with the flow and has its ebbs and falls.

Activism and Personal commitment

As stated in previous chapters, one feature of the new social movements is the variety of participants' identities and ideologies which could have positive and negative impacts. One of which, is the possible conflicts that could happen between the groups' members and the variety of their personal commitment to the cause (Laraña, 1994) Because such activities put them in danger and at risk people commitments are shaken specially when they do not get that same attention and support from the public specially that most of them are not working for monetary reward. Also, some members leave the group due to conflicts in their vision of what should be done next and due to differences in their political opinions about critical issues which lead to organizational changes within the groups. Salwa from Mosireen explained to me how the group used to hire full time staff, herself included, when they had extensive work in the streets then at other times when their activism is not acceptable or supported by the public they have to look for a real job. She said “people chose to make their own sacrifices. I lost my marriage life due to my choice to be activist...But choosing revolution as your motive for activism is life long battle and sometimes I need to retreat and take care of myself and look for real paid job.” (March, 2013)

What to do next

These dramatic and perpetual changes in the political and social situation leads to another challenge or question these revolutionary groups face “What to do next?” When I visited Mosireen premises in November 2014, it was totally different. The busy rooms filled with activists and volunteers were empty and when I asked the guy who opened the door of the current events he told me Mosireen now is not holding any events. S told me that their channel now is at its least viewership since they started, and they are spending their time doing nothing new. She is frustrated and the group is trying to figure out how to reevaluate their activities and think how to overcome this challenge since the old way is not working. Mosireen members met to prioritize current issues and what moves should they take, this happened to comply with the changing moment of the public’s dissatisfaction of their actions after June 30th. Their choice, then came to continue in their activity of highlighting issues that need to be in the spot light, that include the people, which call for change, but is not in direct relation with the revolution. Their activities in the post June 30th, though limited and cast away from the public, are tirelessly going on like the archiving project. Since then, Kazeboon have preferred to retreat, yet No for Military Trial have worked actively on the ground, giving legal support to detainees, regardless of their political background. This put the group in controversy with the public and made them a target for public attack. They were severely attacked by the police when standing in front of a court calling for the freedom of the detainees. Although the attack on No for Military Trials was filmed by Mosireen and other activists and shared on social media, the public reaction was not that supportive as it used to be before June 30th and police violence and brutality against protesters and the arrest of high profile activists

such as Alaa Abdul Fattah and his sister Mona did not trigger that same public support and rage as such incidences used to do before. Both Salwa and Lamia from Mosireen shared with me the same concern about how their success to get people's support is greatly tied to the current political situation and their activism alone does not always guarantee achieving their goals without the existence of other political and social opportunities which they can capitalized on. Therefore, when the political situation does not favor or require their presence on the streets, they tend to reflect on what they have done so far and how they can make sense of their activism in broader level. Thus, they chose to work on long-term projects such as providing an open source archive of all the footage they managed to collect during the revolution to be accessible to the public.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Throughout the thesis' chapters cyberactivism was explored from different perspectives; as an integral part of new social movements, as alternative media, and as site of constructing the potential political subject. We saw how Internet activism as kind of immaterial labour allows transcending different publics' boundaries at many levels and how it became an inevitable tool and site for political contestation at present. As Dyer-Witheford notes "immaterial labor is a crucial component of revolt against global capital, perhaps its main contribution is that of weaving networks of communications between insurgencies, not just by cyberactivism but in a wide range of autonomous and alternative media (video, film, guerrilla radio, print) that in turn are elements in hybrid networks of pre- and postindustrial communication forms, complex relays that transfer news and information from email exchanges to in-person meetings and back again." (Dyer-Witheford 2001: 77)

Cyberactivism in Arab revolution.. An emerging New Social Movement

Although all these post revolution groups, Mosireem, No Military Tails for Civilians, and Kazeboon, were heavily occupied with immaterial new technologies and inspired by the new media, they were working both online and offline spheres and could not have succeeded in their mission without the use of both spheres. The thesis suggests that these groups were part of a whole new movement that resemble the logics of NSMs. Their framework of action represented the essence of the new social movements' association with symbolic believes and values that move beyond conflicts over material resources. These new social movements are not based on specific instrumental ideology. Rather

they are associated with revolution as their central value that integrates different groups and attempts symbolic believes and values that move beyond conflicts over material resources which promote great sense of belonging and autonomous individuality of the actors who gather for common socially constructed grievances or struggle rather than being restricted to certain group or location (Johnston, Larana, and Gusfield 1994; Klandermans 1992). All three groups are gathered for a social cause that binds them together in an attempt to achieve higher values that they see in the revolution's demands. The emergence of these immaterial technologies had enabled these groups to seek recognition without using the conventional means such as being engaged in political parties or official media channels. They did so through their active engagement to create, document, and communicate a whole new body of knowledge including information, images, videos, that would manipulate the emotions, thoughts and influence the public opinion about certain causes. Furthermore, except for Mosireen, these initiatives did not have an official location as they are generally seeking to claim their right to occupy any public actual or virtual space to disseminate and convey their messages to the whole world without being restricted to a certain location, which was seen in their pride to inspire "Occupy" movement around the world. This allowed them to push limits of their perception of the possibility to imagine new spaces for social and political contestation outside the conventional frameworks of sociopolitical actions. Therefore, these post-revolution movements have fundamental desire to seek internal and external recognition as they wish to reconstruct their realities and create new logics and possibilities of their existence that go beyond the classical meanings of the nation-state boundaries. Also, the virtual nature of the cyberspace, its decentralized and non-hierarchical diffused social networks have translated in the way these social movements functioned online and

offline which redefines their relationship with the state. These three groups functioned collectively in a decentralized, non-hierarchical manner with the absence of the conventional sole leader of each who is supposed to inspire, direct the whole group, and speak on their behalf. They were all un-institutionalized with no predetermined or fixed agendas, as their actions are evolving and are redefined in relation to the overall situation. This allows us as scholars and researchers to push limits of our perception of the possibility to imagine new spaces for social and political contestation outside the conventional means. What special about these groups is that they seek to expand these movements to encompass actors from varied backgrounds instead of being restricted to certain socially defined category as in the old working class movements. Moreover, through their online activism, these new movements recognize the existence and the importance of temporary diffused networks as a significant element for resource mobilization and collective actions rather than just assuming centralized organizational forms of mobilization and social change. The nature of their activism online was based on diffused social structure of wide range of different social categories. For instance, users of different blogs and social networks who gather for different causes came from different social, economic, and ideological background but they unite in common struggles. This is quite consistent with the New social movement theorists refusal of the process of constructing common identity for the social movement actors or assuming unified group interest, rather they acknowledged the existence of conflict of interests among the same social movement groups (Hunt, Benford, and Snow 1994; Johnston, Larana, and Gusfield 1994; Klandermans 1994; Melucci 1989; Stoecker 1995). The diffused nature of the identities and the existence of different ideological backgrounds of the activists in the realm of cyberactivism could lead to organizational changes resulting

from conflicts. This may result in goal transformation, new coalitions with other groups, strategic transformation, and adaptation of new tactics; which is clear in the cooperation and the formation of productive synergies between these post-revolution groups.

The case of cyberactivism in the context of Yemeni revolution was different as it does not necessarily lead to a formation of post revolution groups such as the case in Egypt. However, it gave us crucial insight of how cyberspace was used by individual activists in and outside the country during revolution events and the interrelation between both the online and offline publics. Although it is hard to claim that cyberactivism by Yemeni activists has emerged as new social movement in itself, their activism through the virtual cyber sphere allows the construction of individual activists who share common struggles but not necessarily the same cultural, political, social background. Furthermore, The use of social media allow the Yemeni activists to transcend the geographical location as activists from outside the country being active part in local matters and to bring regional and global recognition from public figures. The revolution has raised the hopes among Yemeni activists to be proactive after they lost hope in changing their realities. As I stated earlier, the Arab revolutions have dialectical relationship with cyberactivism since Internet have been used extensively by activists during and after the Arab revolutions. These revolutions provide fluid atmosphere that allowed people to dare to dream to change things that they thought as unmovable component of their life like Qat; using cyberactivism as their main tool. Although activism through cyber publics or virtual publics can not make change or revolution alone, it definitely penetrates, redefine, reshape and mold with the physical publics. Internet becomes integral logic of our daily life with no clear distinction between the on/offline publics. The activists are trying to redefine the dynamics of offline publics

through interactive features of online publics. Thus, it is better to look at online/offline or virtual/actual binary as part of a dialectical relationship rather than separate spaces or publics with definite boundaries; “a dialectical relationship that continuously shifts, defines, and continues the conversation about the boundaries of citizen and state authority, gender constructions, and various other social conventions” (Barnes, 2012: 32)

These various publics found within the cyberspace such as the personal blogs, forums, Facebook groups, Twitter accounts which gave the activists the chance to explore another layers of their identities and experience another aspect of their existence that otherwise would be concealed due to many external and internal factors. The activists interaction in both online/offline publics enable them to reconfigure themselves as political subjects in the context of the Yemeni revolution and its aftermath. The fact that, social media communicative process which happens in the absence of the identity markers or the social markers of identity such as sex, race, age, class, and religion gives the online subject the option to endorse them partially or totally or even deconstruct this notion of identity and construct new potentials of an identity representation desired by the political actor. Their activism through the virtual cyber sphere allows the construction of individual activists who share common struggles but not necessarily the same cultural, political, social background. The anti-Qat group came from different backgrounds' activists who live in Yemen and who live abroad, old and young, women and men, politically engaged or independent. Although they might belong to different political parties or religious and social backgrounds, they share the same anti-Qat sentiment and the desire to create social change. Cyberactivism has provided people or the subjects with this virtuality in which they interact, share experience, define their own choices, create their own motives and at the same time participate in forms of collective actions for

change.

At the same time, the thesis explored some aspects of how this site is always haunted and absorbed by capital hegemony. Thus, we might need to consider looking at how the Internet and its social networks are being constructed so we can overcome and reverse the limitations of its current architecture. We need to explore alternative ways to liberate cyberspace from capital hegemony. “Partly separate from the creation of this “electronic fabric of struggle” are struggles about the creation of the electronic fabric, contesting the capitalist architecture of the networks, and its classificatory stratifications of access. Together, these do indeed constitute a formidable accumulation of “immaterial” struggles over what communication flows within the new information spaces, what the boundaries of those spaces will be, who will be included, and who excluded. (Dyer-Witheford 2001:77)

Liberation of the cyber-space

One approach to do this is through what Morris and Langman (2010) call “contesting and constructing the Internet” (3); this includes contesting the current structures of the Internet while working on developing new structures. “To understand the social fabric underlying the potential of cyberactivism, it is important to explore how Internet technology itself may be designed to facilitate or inhibit democratic interaction.”(ibid: 17) The current nature of the Internet is functioning through networks governed and organized by government agencies and legislation, communication capitalists industry, net administrators and programmers. One way to go toward liberating the Internet is the use of free software that is known as open source software

code. Lawrence Lessig (1999) argues that “the ability of government to control the structure of the Internet is related to the nature of the code architecture of the net and open code is less easy to regulate.”(760) The culture of this open source software code sharing has been part of continually evolving free software movement that is using “social practices of sharing code and seeks to formalize the hacker ethic with a copyleft or General Public License legal strategy to make software a common resource, programming publicly available for modification”. (761) There are many types of free software applications which their makers are seeking to replace “capitalist information economy with an electronic commons” (Morris & Langman, 2010: 18) For instance, the open source code in the Linux operating system now has significant share of various operating system markets, decentralizes control of computer systems architecture, and is a major competitor of Microsoft Windows.

Although this technical approach of cyberactivism may seem a bit distant from the social aspect of the movement activism, this free software movement is one venue that allows activists to be proactive in seizing some measures of public control over the development of the net. This would enable social actors to address crucial topics of Internet development in legal debates such as surveillance, taxation of Internet commerce, and copyright protection for media distribution. “Institutionalizing a democratic architecture of the net is a base from which to empower other types of democratic planning necessary for any sustainable type of democratic society and openness on other levels of net services such as in alternative and local community based media and the ability to monitor governments and corporations.”(Morris & Langman, 2010: 18)

The Free software movements are actively working to combat governments’ and

corporations' measures to control the mass through surveillance, censorship, and monitoring programs. For instance, with the increase of the governments' and corporates' communication surveillance measures among their citizens a widespread use of private encryptions through virtual networks has emerged to resist and escape the surveillance filters of these controlling measures. Advocacy efforts by various national entities such as the Center for Democracy and Technology and the Electronic Frontier Foundation aim to contest limits on openness on the Internet and advance democratic practices and constitutional liberties in the digital age.

Efforts are exerted from different Arabic institutes to create a respected data base that encompasses Arabic digital content in all different kinds of sciences and arts. This in addition to spreading the use of open source programs and applications. Mosireen among other groups are working closely with foundations such as Arabic Digital Expression Foundation ADEF to achieve this. Mosireen are working towards creating an interactive audio-visual archiving that works as more sustainable project on archive the oral history of the revolution since the first 18 days. This initiative is their future project in an attempt to sustain the history of the revolution after noticing that after three years of the revolution the history is being manipulated and distorted so people are now confused of what exactly happened. They think by collecting audio visual materials it will be more reliable document of what happened. Alexander and Aouragh argue that "the key dynamics of media production and consumption by revolutionary activists are not located in the affordances of the Internet but in the shifting balance of forces between revolution and counterrevolution on the wider political stage" therefore, this digital archiving initiative could be part of the "popular movement in Egypt that have moved away from reliance on old and new capitalist media as simply carriers of their voices and hopes

toward media practices seeking to develop media voices and infrastructures of their own.” (2014: 891)

However, even if the architecture of the Internet is decentralized, there remain political economy problems of access. This can be overcome by working on crossing the digital divide. In this information and networking society that is dominated by neoliberal global hegemonic system in which capitalist economy relies more on the use of robotics in the production process, class struggles and working class movements have dramatically shifted as new forms of social movements with global features started to emerge in response to the globalization historical moment that we still live in, which consists of massive flows of information, capital, and human populations across boundaries of the states (Castells, 1996) These new global social movements are adopting global aspects of dissent using the Internet as one significant tool; cyberactivism. This leads to leaving behind a growing number of unskilled labour in terms of the dominant information technology era. Efforts and attention must be paid to create new training venues to include Internet illiterate populations in this information age. “Closing the digital divide is a necessary part of empowering the main victims of the information revolution and increasing their ability to form productive alliances with other sectors in contesting for broader political power” (Morris & Langman, 2010: 18)

Needless to mention that many deep rooted social injustice disparities such as poverty and illiteracy need to be addressed as a prerequisite to reach Internet and information access equality otherwise this cybernetic venue will remain an elitist apparatus. Knowledge about how to use the Internet is differentially available by class exacerbating various forms of inequality (Castells, 2001) It should be noted that many organizations working on Third World Development and eradication of poverty use

various Internet media to network and promote their causes. Counter to efforts to expand access to the Internet are legislative efforts at increased taxes on net access and activity and hidden taxes in the form of high costs for access to broadband.

Immaterial, Material, and Immiserated laboring powers in global struggles

At the same time although it is true that cyber actions have come to the forefront of the social and political contestation as it is part of the immaterial labour dominating the social structures in the capital neoliberal era, we need not neglect the other kinds of laboring in the society that complements this kind of labour power; immaterial labour does not make revolution and social change alone. “Recognizing the real importance of immaterial labor in today’s global struggles requires decentering it from the privileged spot to which Hardt and Negri assign it. The attention paid to “immaterial” laborers should be balanced by equal attention to at least two other groups: “material” and “immiserated” workers. (Dyer-Witheford, 2001: 76) If immaterial labor is characterized according to its “communicational and affective activity”, then material labor is that type of work still primarily focused on shaping the physicality of products (from sport utility vehicles to running shoes to semiconductor chips) which obstinately refuse to dematerialize themselves, and “immiserated” labor is that part of the labor force which, through various “gradations of precarious and contingent employment up to the short- and long-term reserve army of the unemployed, is treated by capital as simply surplus to requirements” (ibid: 76)

As we are witnessing tendencies toward immateriality in the labour logics in the information society, this should not conceal the yet unrecognized tendencies toward more “materiality” and “immiseration” in other venues of the post-industrial work force. Dyer-

Witheyford argues that all concrete work is constituted at an intersection of these three vectors, which are not mutually exclusive but are “actualized to differing degrees along a continuum.” (2001: 77) However, an extreme spatial concentration of one form of these labour powers in one region and other forms in another region is what constitutes the global geographical structure of the world as the “North” and “South” of the global order. “If the paradigmatic figures of today’s immaterial labor are among the networkers of the World Wide Web, then those of material labor are surely in the manufacturing plants of the maquiladoras, export-processing zones, and new industrial areas, and those of immiserated labor are in the vast tides of the homeless and itinerant who settle in the doorways and alleys of every rural slum and world city.” (ibid) Thus, while immaterial labor is privileged in terms of the high-technology capitalist hierarchy of work, the dynamics of struggle against that hierarchy often flow in the reverse direction, from the bottom up. In the circuit of struggles, “it is immiserated labor that generates spontaneous insurgencies (riots, insurrections, land wars), material labor that gives these struggles organizational form (strikes, unions), and immaterial labor that circulates these struggles (media, netwars, etc.).” (ibid) The intermingling of these three components was exemplified in the 25th of Jan. revolution; immaterial labour that creates intellectual common struggle through cyberactivism has helped the spark of the revolution and later on in the organization, planning and also as alternative media; strikes of the material labour workers of factories and unions have helped to deepen the pressure on the authorities; the movement of “immiserated” mass who poured into the streets seeking bread and social justice has created the momentum and legitimized this movement as revolution. All these components together made the revolution not solely by one of them.

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