2-1-2013

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MLA Citation
Galal, Ola. *El Thawra and El Balad: narratives of youth about protest participation and political subjectivity in the January 25 Revolution*. 2013. American University in Cairo, Master's Thesis. *AUC Knowledge Fountain*.
https://fount.aucegypt.edu/etds/1135

The American University in Cairo

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

El Thawra and *El Balad*

Narratives of Youth about Protest Participation and Political Subjectivity in the January 25

Revolution

A Thesis Submitted to

The Department of Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology, and Egyptology

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts

In Sociology - Anthropology

By **Ola Galal**

Under the supervision of **Dr. Hanan Sabea**

January 2013

The American University in Cairo

El Thawra and *El Balad*

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Has been approved by

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mother Nelly Shafik

Acknowledgements

Academic research is never solely the product of the individual effort of the researcher but is always the outcome of continuous discussion and dialogue with others, and this thesis is no exception. Therefore, I wish to acknowledge all those who contributed directly and indirectly to this thesis. First of all, I want to express the deepest appreciation to the members of my supervisory committee, Dr. Hanan Sabea, Dr. Agnes Czajka, and Dr. Reem Saad, for their unwavering dedication, passion, and patience throughout the duration of the project. I am deeply grateful to Dr. Hanan Sabea, who is not only my academic advisor but also my mentor, for helping me give a more meaningful and refined form to what have been at the very start of this project raw and formless ideas, and for continuously inspiring me whenever we would meet. I want to greatly thank Dr. Agnes Czajka for her commitment to remaining on the committee even though she had moved out of Egypt before the completion of the project, and Dr. Reem Saad for helping me clarify confusions related to the use of theories and better articulate my ideas. I want to thank them all for helping me with editing the content of the thesis, suggesting better sentence formulations and words here or there; and for communicating very clearly with me. I want to thank all the research participants in this research who have been very generous with their time and effort and without whom this project would have not materialized.

Secondly, I want to express my profound gratitude to members of my family, particularly my mother, Nelly Shafik, without whose moral support and logistical assistance this project would not have been possible, and my father, Dr. Ahmed Osman, who has always given the highest priority to granting me and my brother Kareem a good education. I want to also extend my thanks to Aunt Eman, Uncle Mohamed, and Aunt Fifi for always inquiring about the progress of my thesis and lovingly prodding me to complete it.

Last but not least, I want to thank Dr. Kevin Dwyer and Dr. Nadine Naber, who first introduced me to the fascinating world of Anthropology and Sociology and whose lectures enthused me to pursue a graduate degree in the field

ABSTRACT

This thesis documents the narratives of a group of Egyptian youth about their participation in the 18 days of protest and analyzes their narratives in terms of reasons and meanings of taking part in such events. First, I analyze how these youth constructed their memory of the 18 days and produced a certain version of history. Second, I look at the meanings they ascribed to the Revolution through examining their narratives about why and how they participated in the 18 days and how such an experience changed their perception about and their desire for participating in collective action and politics in general. Analytically, I examine the making of political subjects through the unfolding of an event, i.e. the Revolution. I argue that the making of political subjectivity through participation in the events identified as the Revolution is equally shaped by sensibilities of belonging to a collective articulated in patriotic terms. In sum, I aim to contribute to the production of histories about the Revolution from the perspective of its participants, as well as to analyze the meanings of belonging, the nation, citizenship, and subjectivity that emerge from experiences of protest and the constitution of narratives thereof. I contend that it is not only the events themselves and the experiences thereof that shape political subjectivity, but equally important is the production of historical narratives thereof.

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Chapter One

I-Introduction

As the protests unfolded in Tahrir Square last year, Egyptians seemingly suddenly, or perhaps gradually, abandoned their disinterest in collective action and let go of their fear by joining mass protests that were--in their scale and timing--unthinkable, both to the regime and the participants themselves. For the first time, at least since the 1952 Revolution, thousands of hundreds and even at times, millions of people were on the streets marching or camping out to demand the removal of the ruling regime at the helm of which was then President Hosni Mubarak. For many if not most of them, this was the first time that they have ever ventured into the public space to call for any of their civil, political or social rights alongside their fellow citizens from different religious affiliations, economic classes, regional backgrounds, and political ideologies. These series of protests and the sit-in, now commonly referred to as the Revolution, succeeded at least in the dismantling of the regime's facade, including the president, after which power was passed on to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) until the presidential elections in May and June, 2012 that brought the Muslim Brotherhood's candidate, Mohamed Morsi, into power. The debate about what these changes in the political and historical structure mean is still ongoing as is a core movement that is still seeking to overhaul the system from its roots in line with the revolutionary rather than the reformist model of change. According to this group of activists and protest organizers, the Revolution[1] is still continuing until its goals, which in themselves still fail to win consensus, are achieved.

However, amongst the mess and uncertainty about the meaning and the outcome of the Revolution, a clear-cut transformation has taken place: many more Egyptians now--after the ouster of Mubarak on February 11, 2011--have become much more willing to take part in social and political collective action and are more interested in the affairs of their country. They gained a new

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[1] The mass protests that broke out on January 25 and led to the ouster of Mubarak have been called by the media, government officials, and political commentators "uprising," "revolution," and "revolt" among other terms. I will use the term "Revolution" to refer to these events as I discuss in the section on terminology at the end of this chapter.

sense of ownership of their territory and their destiny by virtue of their actual or even symbolic participation in overthrowing a ruler who was in power for 30 years. Even though, this unthinkable event happened thanks to a myriad of factors--including but not limited to the regime's delayed reactions and stubbornness and international pressure--it nevertheless helped boost Egyptians' self-confidence, at least for a while after Mubarak left. The Revolution, as an extraordinary historical moment, also triggered heightened patriotic sentiments, or simply "the love of the country," a sensibility that reversed for the majority of Egyptians a feeling of frustration with their country. This research is an attempt to make sense of that change as a rupture and as a process that is still evolving and the meanings emerging therefrom. This research looks at a group of middle-class youth, who for the first time in their lives took part in mass protests, and how they narrate their experiences.

II- Goals

The aim of this thesis is two-fold: to document the narratives of a group of Egyptian youth about their participation in the 18 days of protest and to analyze the narratives in terms of the reasons for and the meanings attributed to taking part in such events. First, I analyze how these youth construct their memory of the 18 days and produce a certain version of history. Second, I look at the meanings they ascribe to the Revolution by examining their narratives about why and how they participated in the 18 days and how such an experience changed their perception about and their desire for taking part in collective action and politics in general. Analytically, my aim is to examine the making of political subjects through the unfolding of an event, i.e. the Revolution. I further argue that the making of political subjectivity through participation in the events identified as the Revolution is equally shaped by sensibilities of belonging to a collective articulated in patriotic terms. In sum, this thesis aims to contribute to the production of histories about the Revolution from the perspective of its participants, as well as to analyze the meanings of belonging, the nation, citizenship, and subjectivity that emerge from experiences of protest and the constitution of narratives thereof. I contend that it is not only the events themselves and the experiences thereof

that shape political subjectivity, but equally important is the production of historical narratives thereof.

III- Questions

My research addresses two overlapping sets of questions pertaining to the histories of the 18 days of protest and meanings of belonging, citizenship, nation, and subjectivity:

A. Histories of the 18 days of Protest:

1-What is the chronology of events that marks participants' narration of the 18 days of protest and how do they differ among participants?

2-What are the reasons cited by the participants for taking part in the protests and what did participation in the protests mean for them?

3- What are the modes of engagement in the protests and what factors determined the activities the participants carried out during the protests (e.g. the role of a physician would be different from the role of an activist or that of a journalist, or someone supplying medicine and   food, sleeping in the square, etc.)?

4- Do participants acknowledge increased involvement in collective social and political action because of and/or after participating in the 18 days? If so, what does that increased involvement entail?

5- How does the narration of the events identified as the Revolution shape participants' political subjectivity?

B. Belonging to the Collective:

1- What are the terms of belonging participants used to narrate the 18 days of protest? What kinds of collectives and communities did they imagine belonging to, how, and why?

2- What role do the participant's subject position play in defining their experiences of

protest and their imagining of collective belonging in the context of protest; and how do

these experiences compare with other experiences before and after the 18 days?

3- How can the display of flags and the chanting of patriotic slogans and songs that

permeated the protests be explained? Did nationalism or patriotism--or more precisely the

claim of "love for one's country"--and the desire to acquire citizenship rights play a role in

mobilizing participants and in shaping their experience of protest? How were these ideas

manifested during and/or transformed by such an experience? For participants who

highlighted the importance of "love for the country" or citizenship rights in shaping their

experience, in what ways did they perform these and how were these similar to or different

from the period preceding their participation in the protest?

4- How did the participants' increased involvement in collective political and social action

and their ideas about citizenship rights and about patriotism shape their subjectivity?

IV-Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

Most academic studies (Korany and El-Mahdi 2012, Bayat 2011, Bamyeh 2011, Amar

2011, Amin 2011) on the January 25 Revolution had two characteristics in common: First, they

analyzed events from the etic view that gives primacy to the perspective of the observers rather than

the view of the participants; and second, they were more concerned with questions related to how

and why the protests took place than with questions about meanings of such events to participants.

There is not sufficient in-depth academic material given that less than two years have elapsed since

the outbreak of the Revolution and the time of writing. However, there many articles that were

written as the protests were ongoing, and they do provide the building blocks for further analysis

that I hope this thesis will contribute to (Bayat 2011, Amar 2011).

In articles written shortly after the eruption of the protests, Paul Amar and Assef Bayat

highlighted the civil character of the protests. "It is neither nationalist, anti-imperialist, nor third-

worldist", argued Bayat (Bayat, Feb. 10, 2011). Paul Amar referred to the emergence of a "new

political society" in Egypt uniting new or relatively new groups of youth, workers, women and religious groups (Amar, Feb. 1, 2011). He argued that the uprising's successful take-off was due to the coming together of two forces: the movement of workers' rights, especially in the two years preceding the Revolution, and the movement against torture and police brutality that mobilized people across the country in the three years preceding it (Amar, Feb. 8, 2011). Omnia El Shakry offered a historical structural view of the January 25 Revolution by comparing it to the revolutions of 1919 and 1952, and concluding that it is the "product of unprecedented historical assemblage of complex forces" (El Shakry 2011). Samir Amin examined the link between the Egyptian Revolution and the global financial crisis of 2008. He posed the question whether the recent of wave of protests, which he saw as mainly directed against the imperialist character of the regimes, would be able to lead to the transition to a "loftier pattern of civilization, that of Socialism" (Amin, 2011, 7-8). Taking a wider pan-regional historical-structural perspective, Bahgat Korany and Rabab El-Mahdi argued that the roots of Egypt's Revolution was in domestic and regional political activism that date back to the Palestinian *Intifada*. They argued that the actors involved in the Revolution and the mobilization tools that they used were much more diverse than current accounts made them to be. Worker and peasant protests, pro-democracy movements and sit-ins as well as the "erosion of the corporatist social pact that sustained authoritarianism" all contributed to triggering the Egyptian Revolution. As such, the authors sought to dispel what they called the main "myths" about the Egyptian Revolution: that it was sudden and unexpected, that social media was the main mobilizing tool behind it, and that it was a revolution driven by middle-class youth (Korany and El-Mahdi, 2012, 14).

The previous sources have in common two things: the type of data they relied on for analysis and the perspective they took to analyze them. Their data was collected through observation, media articles (as in Jeffrey C. Alexander's "Performative Revolution in Egypt"), and historical archives rather than through interviewing or direct interaction with the participants of the Revolution, and most of them take an etic perspective that was mostly concerned with structural

issues. So these kind of sources are suitable for the kind of questions they pose. However, to answer a different set of questions--those about meanings and processes related to the Revolution--, one has to deal with a smaller scope and take a different unit of analysis: that of the subject (Ghannam 2012, Abu-Lughod 2012, Winegar 2012).

Ghannam examined the impact of the events in Tahrir Square on the thoughts and feelings of Egyptians in a low-income Cairo neighborhood and attempted to explore some of the cultural meanings, such as the use of violence, that shaped her close interlocutors' attempts to make sense of the shifting situation during the early days of the Egyptian Revolution (Ghannam, 2012, 32). Lila Abu-Lughod offered insight into how the Revolution was experienced in an Egyptian village in Upper Egypt, where youth mobilized to find solutions to their community's problems (Abu-Lughod, 2012, 21). Jessica Winegar challenged the assumption that political transformation during Egypt's Revolution was solely shaped by the iconic male revolutionaries in Tahrir Square. Although these men by virtue of being on the square did have a privilege, the women she interviewed at their homes also experienced Revolution through various forms of affect that were influenced by their gender and class (Winegar, 2012, 67). Thus, all of these articles take the subject as the locus of their studies, trying to go beyond answering questions about why and how the Egyptian Revolution happened, to more of a focus on the meanings of the events from the viewpoint of their participants. My study aims to add to that literature. My concern is with questions that are smaller in scope, rather than trying to look at the protests in aggregate. I will do this by taking the individual subject as the focus of the thesis.

A- "Politics from Below"

Korany and El-Mahdi proposed two approaches that are relevant to the understanding of the January 25 protests: Social movement theory and the theory of everyday resistance (Korany and El-Mahdi, 2012, 10). Hank Johnston defined social movements as being made up of several organizations and less formal groups and circles in addition to individuals with no affiliations who are gathered around an issue or a certain grievance, which they publicize and illustrate their force to

state representatives with the aim of bringing about change (Johnston, 2011, 14). Mario Diani argued that the diverse groups taking part in the movement should put their differences aside so that they could form a united front against their opponents and that the social movement's duration "extends beyond an isolated action or the lifespan of a specific group" (Johnston, 2011, 14). However, three concepts from social movements theory are most useful in understanding the Egyptian and Arab Spring context, argued Korany and El-Mahdi. First, resource mobilization explains how political, financial and cultural resources are mobilized for the purpose of dissent. Second, political opportunity structure as a paradigm seeks to explain why people take part in contention and why their numbers multiply at certain points in time. Finally, framing explains how individual subjectivity evolves into a "shared inter-subjectivity, and thereby to transform dispersed, disgruntled individuals into an organized protest movement, with shared objectives and even a shared identity" (Korany and El-Mahdi, 2012, 10-12).

Korany and El-Mahdi also proposed the theory of everyday resistance that was presented by James Scott and afterwards developed into what Assef Bayat called "the quiet encroachment" (Korany and El-Mahdi, 2012, 10). Central to this approach is the idea of "politics from below." They argued that misconceptions by many political scientists studying the region are attributed to an overemphasis on 'politics of the elite'[2] (Korany and El-Mahdi, 2012, 14). They argued that the way knowledge about the region is produced by area specialists is deficient in that it gives ultimate importance to 'politics from above'[3], 'formal politics' and "institutional politics" to the detriment of 'politics from below', 'informal politics' and "extra-institutional dynamics". This study of "politics from above" is justified by the fact this region's political rulers are "over-present" and "domineering", however, it does not provide the full picture as it is "incomplete and biased". This bias is even more apparent when one embarks on the study of change that is spearheaded by "excluded and marginalized sectors, as is the case in the Arab Spring" (Korany and El-Mahdi, 2012, 8). I will follow Korany, El-Mahdi and Bayat in emphasizing "politics from below" rather

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[2] The parenthesis is the authors'.
[3] The parenthesis is the authors'.

than "elite politics" that take rulers as their unit of analysis. I will focus on the subjects of the January 25 Revolution, the protesters.

Asef Bayat's theoretical lens of "street politics" and "the quiet encroachment of the ordinary" (Bayat, 1997& 2009), is relevant to this thesis in that it goes beyond the "public dimension of elite politics" and focuses instead on the "politics of the informals" (Bayat, xii-xv, 1997). Bayat argued that "ordinary people" gradually reclaim their rights from the state by encroaching on the very space from which it seeks to exclude them, becoming politicized into action that involves joining larger networks of activism when their gains are threatened (Bayat 2009). He speaks of "atomized individuals" who engage in collective action and "operate outside formal institutions of factories, schools and associations" (Bayat, 2009, 9). "[S]ocial agents without institutions, coherent ideology, or evident leadership" are at the heart of this kind of politics (Bayat, 2009, 15). For urban subjects, who are the locus of my study and "who structurally lack institutional power of disruption (such as going on strike), 'the street' becomes the ultimate arena to communicate discontent" whereby conflict between these individuals and the authorities erupt as a result of the "active use" of public space" (Bayat, 2009, 11). Street politics "assumes more relevance, particularly in the neoliberal city, those shaped by the logic of the market", including Cairo (Bayat, 12, 2009), which is the site of my study. This offers a framework to understand how "atomized" Egyptian youth were mobilized to join the mass protests (mainly because of the lack of opportunities to practice politics or collective action within the framework of formal institutions, which were autocratic, exclusive, and dominated by elites).

Bayat also proposed the term "social nonmovements" to refer to "collective actions of noncollective actors; they embody shared practices of large numbers of ordinary people whose fragmented but similar activities trigger much social change, even though these practices are rarely guided by an ideology or recognizable leadership and organizations" (Bayat, 2009, 14). Bayat's unit of analysis is the "poor and disenfranchised" (Bayat, 1997, xvi), although he does expand this in his later work to include women and youth (Bayat 2009). This fits my thesis because I will focus on

Egyptian youth who were not "activists[4]" or "active" before the outbreak of the Revolution and who have become mobilized into collective action and later joined political parties and other social and political change groups or organizations after taking part in the January 25 protests and sit-ins. This thesis is about how the action of "ordinary" people for whom protest and collective action was not part of their lives until the onset of the Revolution brought about change. Also a reference to Thomas Hardt and Antonio Negri's idea of "multitude" as presented by Bayat is important. Multitude is defined as "singularities of social subjects that act in common" (Bayat, 2009, 21). Bayat drew the distinction between both concepts: while the concept of non-movements refers to people from the same group, such as Muslim women, globalized youth, urban poor or illegal migrants, multitude brings together social subjects belonging to different groups, such as men, women, black, white, etc. (Bayat, 2009, 21). What is relevant from these two concepts of non-movements and multitude is this: the idea of the "ordinary" unaffiliated people effecting change and that these people do not necessarily belong to one class or one group. And this is exactly the case at hand here: unaffiliated youth joining forces with different groups in Egyptian society to effect change. And these ordinary actors, the youth, had their subjectivities shaped by the historical event of the Revolution and by their participation in it.

B- Theorizing the Subject of Revolution

The perspective I take in this research is that of the acting subject, i.e. the protester, whose subjectivity is shaped by his or her narration of the Revolution and his or her involvement in effecting political and social change during and after the 18 days through participation in the protests, joining political parties, voting, and so on. In order to understand the formation and transformation of the subject during and after the Revolution, I will rely on three theorists: Michel Foucault, Sherry Ortner, and Ranabir Samaddar.

Foucault's objective was to create a history of the different modes by which human beings are constructed as subjects by bringing in the question of power. One of the ways he suggested

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[4] *Nashet* is a word used in the Egyptian context to refer to individuals who are part of loosely organized groups.

power should be studied is through the examination of forms of resistance against various forms of power in a way that brings to light the power relations that permeate society. Foucault conceived of power not as an institution or a dominant group but as forms or techniques exerted through practices of everyday life that turn individuals into subjects. This technique of power acts upon the individual in that it "categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him that he must recognize and others have to recognize in him" (Foucault, 2000, 331). Foucault means subject in the dual sense of the word: "subject to someone else by control and dependence", and as "tied to his own identity by a conscience of self-knowledge" (Foucault, 2000, 326-331). Therefore, power only exists in so far as it is exercised by one party, whether individual or collective, over another, although it also exists as a set of available possibilities that are supported by permanent structures. "What defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action that does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead, it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on a possible or actual future or present actions" (Foucault, 2000, 340).

Foucault's theory is useful in explaining youth subjectivities that were formed under Mubarak especially with regards to the everyday practices of state agents vis-a-vis its citizens. These subjectivities were reformulated and reshaped as a result of participating in the Revolution. Salwa Ismail showed in her study of popular quarters how Egyptian youth evolve as subjects of humiliation. She explains that the everyday encounters of Egyptians, in particular youth, with government agents and agencies give rise to understandings and feelings that result in their formation and development as subjects of *ihana* and *mahana*, which means a sense of humiliation or a feeling of being humiliated. These youth see this humiliation as undermining their self-identification as *awlad el balad* (sons of the country), a subjectivity resulting from their being able to act freely. Against this backdrop, emerges a subject that is opposed to the government, and it is this subject that was the agent of the January 25 Revolution (Ismail, 2011, 990-992). Ismail, here, tied the psychological formation of the subject, i.e. through humiliation, to the larger structure

within which the subject exists, i.e. the state. Ortner further developed this tie between the psychological and structural levels by expounding on the concept of subjectivity.

Ortner dissected the concept of subjectivity into two levels between which she keeps moving back and forth: the psychological aspect that deals with the inner feelings, desires, anxieties and intentions of the person, and the wider social and cultural formations that shape and stimulate subjectivities. In this sense, subjectivities are reflections of the inner state of the acting subjects that are shaped within specific cultural and historical structures. In her exact words, it is "the ensemble of modes of perception, affect, thought, desire, and fear that animate acting subjects" as well as the "cultural and social formations that shape, organize, and provoke those modes of affect, thought, and so on" (Ortner, 2006, 107). This subjectivity is the basis of "agency", which is indispensable in understanding how people attempt to "act upon the world even as they are acted upon... it takes shape as specific desires and intentions within a matrix of subjectivity--of (culturally constituted) feelings, thoughts, and meanings" (Ortner, 2006, 107-111). "[T]he idea of agency itself presupposes a complex subjectivity behind it, in which a subject partially internalizes and partially reflects upon... a set of circumstances" in which he or she finds himself or herself (Ortner, 2006, 126-127).

Ortner built her view on the basic assumption of practice theory that postulates "that culture (in a very broad sense) constructs people as particular kinds of social actors, but social actors, through their living, on-the-ground, variable practices, reproduce or transform--and usually some of each--the culture that made them" (Ortner, 2006, 129). Ortner highlighted the importance of what she calls "social practices" of actors and its dialectical relationship, rather an oppositional relationship, with the structural constraints on human beings (Ortner, 2006, 4). Practice theory provides an understanding of "the production of social subjects through practice in the world, and of the production of the world itself through practice" (Ortner, 2006, 16). Foucault and Ortner, thus, both stressed the importance of "practice" in shaping subjectivities, with the former focusing more on on the power exerted through certain form of practices itself or what he calls "techniques" and the latter emphasizing the social actors themselves. But the main point here is that subjectivities

are shaped by real practices grounded in the social world through a process that involves self awareness and reflexivity, and that very same process in itself is capable of reshaping the larger structures. Practice, process and reflexivity are thus central to subject formation.

In an attempt to understand subjectivities that emerge under conditions of the practice of "politics" and/or being engaged in a "political" process, I find Ranabir Samaddar's concept of the "political subject" useful. It is useful in this thesis because it takes its unit of analysis to be the actor who becomes engaged in politics out of necessity without being part of formal or institutional politics yet operates within its framework (Samaddar 2009). This, I contend, is the case of youth who took part in the January 25 Revolution and who continued to remain engaged in social and political action, also out of necessity and not as a luxury. Samaddar examined the conditions under which such figure emerges, arguing that it is contentious everyday events that do not necessarily fall within the realm of "formal politics" that result in the emergence of the subject as political (Samaddar 2009), somehow echoing Bayat's theory of the "quiet encroachment" (Bayat 2009). Samaddar contended that terms such as "citizen" and "political society" fail to capture what the "political subject" stands for because it is the "political subject" himself or herself who challenges the formal political establishment of modern democratic politics, "upsetting at times the fine calculations of democratic politics (Samaddar, 2009, xvii-xx). Like Ortner and Foucault, Samaddar also emphasized the role of practices in shaping political subjectivity. The production of the political subject, he argued, is associated with "a conjunction of circumstances associated with contentions, events, political practices, and new desires" (Samaddar, 2009, xxv). The political practices he refers to here include: organizing, voting, negotiating, appealing to law, claiming rights and identity, mobilizing, associating, demonstrating, dialoguing, refusing to pay taxes, and writing petitions (Samaddar, 2009, xxiii-xxiv). I will therefore use Samaddar to bring in "politics" to the discussion of the making of the subjects of the Revolution. In a way, the Revolution as an historical and a political event has helped transform the realm of the possible and of the "political" by creating and bringing in new actors, who have henceforth been excluded from "politics" not

necessarily because they did not want to but because they were marginalized and excluded from institutional politics. The subject of the Revolution is, therefore, a new actor on the political scene, who forced his or her agenda into the limelight. The subject of the Revolution is born out of and is shaped by the process of change that he or she is also actively engaged in shaping.

C-Egyptians, the State and Patriotism

As part of this research, I am seeking to understand the relationship between the individual and the larger collective to which he or she belongs or the larger structure within which he or she operates, i.e. that which belongs to the realm of what Ortner called "cultural and social formations" (Ortner, 2006, 107) that exert power on the subjects. The state and its agents are involved, as I have mentioned above following Ismail, in the formation of Egyptian youth as subjects of humiliation. Much of the anger displayed by the protesters during the Revolution was directed against the state and its representatives, in particular the police. Similarly, a lot of the demands were framed as citizenship rights, including the very right to protest--even though the protesters may have not framed them as "citizenship rights" as I will later show in the thesis. Therefore, I find it important to discuss the Egyptian state and the framework of citizenship. I will also engage in a discussion of the display of "love for the country" by protesters that I and other social scientists (including Bamyeh 2011) noticed during and after the Revolution. In his preliminary observations of Tahrir Square, Bamyeh argued that such expressions amount to "patriotism" (Bamyeh, Feb. 11, 2011). He explained: "I saw patriotism expressed everywhere as collective pride in the realization that people who did not know each other could act together, intentionally and with a purpose." (Bamyeh, Feb. 11, 2011).

The Egyptian state is almost non-existent as a service provider and a guarantor of rights, but it is present in the lives of its citizens through practices of coercion and corruption. I again refer to Salwa Ismail's study of Cairo's new popular quarters. Ismail explained that the state makes up for its inability to govern these popular areas at a distance by infiltrating them through its police apparatus whose job is to monitor and patrol these streets. Under this "police project", state agents

inspect markets and food supplies, implement health regulations and carry out practices whose objective is to discipline the defiant subject (Ismail, 2006, xxx). Ismail referred to the "fuzziness of the construct of the state and its elusive and slippery character" (Ismail, 2006, xxxii). In a similar vein, Veena Das described the state in India as "neither a purely rational-bureaucratic organization nor simply a fetish, but as a form of regulation that oscillates between a rational mode and a magical mode of being" (Das, 2007, 162). What is relevant to my discussion here is Das's statement: "[T]he state can penetrate the life of the community and yet remain distant and elusive" (Das, 2007, 178). Galal Amin described the Egyptian state as a "soft state", drawing on the idea presented by Swedish economist and sociologist Karl Gunnar Myrdal. Corruption is the hallmark of the soft state, through which it spreads from the executive power to the legislative and from the legislative to the judiciary. The weakness of the state fosters corruption, the spread of which further weakens the state (Amin, 2011, 7-8). If not completely totalitarian, the Egyptian state has since the 1980s remained a soft state and maintained many of the restrictions on individual freedoms imposed under Gamal Abdel Nasser's totalitarian regime (Amin, 2011, 38).

The soft yet coercive state was alienating its citizens, a lot of whom--including the participants in this research--did not even think of themselves as "citizens" despite the state's propagandist effort at giving them the illusion that they were. Mubarak's now defunct party, The National Democratic Party, had campaigned a lot to spread what it called "New Thinking" that promoted neoliberalism and citizenship, but it failed to find a following among most Egyptians. The legal status of Egyptian as citizens has over the past 30 years been rendered obsolete, and the rhetoric of rights and duties was hollow. In theory, "citizenship" is defined as a "certificate regulating the relationship between the individual and the state" the right to which people win from the state through struggle and sometimes revolution, oftentimes at a heavy sacrifice with the persistent resistance of the state (Davis, 2000, 50). T. H. Marshall divided citizenship rights into three components: civil, political, and social. Civil rights guarantee the person's freedom, including freedom of speech, thought, and faith, and the right to own property and access the justice system,

with the courts representing the relevant institution for such an endeavor. Political rights guarantee the political participation of individuals, whether by becoming members of elected bodies or by electing such members, with such rights represented by parliament and local authorities. Social rights entail an entitlement to a modicum of economic welfare and security, a share in the social heritage, and the opportunity to live as a "civilized being" in line with standards prevalent in the society in question, with the education system and social services being the relevant institutions for the guarantee of such rights (Marshall, 1964, 71-2).

Marshall's framework will be useful in that it presents an ideal model against which one can assess discourses, debates and negotiations about citizenship rights in Egypt. Participants in this research alluded to these three categories of citizenship throughout the interviews. As such, they lacked what Brubaker titled "substantive citizenship", even though the government argues that they have "formal citizenship", or status of being a member in the nation-state. "[O]ne can possess formal state membership yet be excluded (in law or fact) from certain political, civil, or social rights or from effective participation in the business of rule in a variety of settings" (Bottomore, 1992, 66). Egyptian state institutions, especially the police, acted through power relations to produce Egyptians as subjects of humiliation and oppression through various practices, such as random identity police checks. The state, for Egyptians, was an ambiguous entity, appearing and disappearing in their lives abruptly. And the citizen-subject only concerned the state in so far as he or she was intransigent and had to be brought under control. In a sense, the state was the face or the physical incarnation of that Egyptian collective to which they legally, but not necessarily emotionally, belonged. They held anger and frustration towards that entity, and scoffed at the term "citizen", which was void of substantial content. During the January 25 Revolution, a large portion of their anger was against that very state.

However, one phenomenon that I, and many others including Mohammed Bamyeh (Bamyeh 2011), observed was that a repertoire associated with the Egyptian nation, the most ostensible symbol being Egypt's flag, was extensively used by protesters during the 18 days. The Egyptian

flag was omnipresent from the very first day of demonstrations as it was carried by protesters in the marches, with some wrapping it around their heads or shoulders and others painting it on their faces and hands. People in Tahrir Square often chanted the national anthem and sang along to patriotic songs that blared out of loudspeakers. "Egypt, mother! Here are your children! They tolerated bitterness for your sake!" (*Masr ya omm! Weladek ahom! Dol 'alashanek shalo el hamm!*") was a slogan oftentimes repeated by the protesters. Some protesters described their participation in the demonstrations against Mubarak as "an act for the sake of this country" (*'ashan el balad dih*) and spoke of their "love for the country" (*hob el balad*). This display of "love for the country" during the 18 days was no doubt shaped by the historical and political context in which it emerged, distinguishing it from similar expressions in other contexts, such as when the Egyptian national football team played against another team. So although there was hatred towards the Egyptian state, there was "love" for Egypt.

The theoretical concepts of nationalism and patriotism have been used to explain public displays of "love for the country"--among other phenomena--such as in the case of the American nationalism after September 11 (Puri 2004, Gellner 1983). The scholarly literature on nations and nationalism is very wide and has been developed in various contexts, ranging from European, colonial to postcolonial and Third Worldist (Gellner 1983, Smith 1989). I will, however, only select ideas that are relevant to the Egyptian protests. A general definition of nationalism is that it is a set of beliefs and practices that aim at creating a unified community with delineated boundaries in which all members are similar and equal and share a sense of belonging. Belonging to a nation is presented as more important than other forms of belonging, such as that to a family or an ethnic group, and is central in differentiating members of one nation from those of another (Puri, 2004, 2-3).

Nationalism has been used as a political ideology by post-colonial regimes to reassert state legitimacy or advance their social agenda, especially during periods of destabilization. Through employing "banal nationalism", i.e. the "flagging" of the nation (and its symbols) in the everyday

life of citizens", the regime is concerned with grabbing and maintaining power (Abdel Rahman, 2007, 285-286). The Egyptian state has been known to use this nationalistic discourse, as in the case of its stifling of Non-Governmental Organizations as was shown by Maha Abdel Rahman (Abdel Rahman 2007). So in a way, the Egyptian state employed nationalistic rhetoric to hush opposition that threatened its legitimacy, which is what it attempted to do with the January 25 protests by claiming that the demonstrators were representing foreign interests and were bound on destroying the Egyptian nation. In return, Egyptian protesters challenged this discourse in various ways as if saying: "we are Egyptian too and we love Egypt and that is why we are protesting".

This display of "love for the country" shared some characteristics with the kind of nationalism theorized by Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner. By aggregating in the physical space of Tahrir Square, Egyptians of all walks of life came face to face with each other, thus claiming a certain sameness based on a sensibility of all belonging to the Egyptian nation that superseded any other belonging, whether religious or class-based. However, the absence of a state as a promoter of official nationalism distinguishes this phenomenon from other forms of nationalism. As I mentioned above, the Egyptians gathered in Tahrir were *against* the Egyptian state, but that did not prevent them from displaying love for their country Egypt. This research attempts to explain this phenomenon of "love for the country", which is not associated with the state, and how patriotism partly shaped the experience of protest and the subjectivities of the participants. Based on my observations and following Bamyeh (2011), I argue that some protest participants' words and actions were colored by "patriotism," or to be more precise, a particular form of "patriotism" tied to the historical moment of the Revolution. This patriotism is different from the form described by Puri, i.e. the "expression of loyalty to the state" (Puri, 2004, 87). It is similar neither to the form of nationalism as an ideology employed by the state (Abdel Rahman 2007) nor to the chauvinistic sentiments expressed by members of the nation-state at times of wars or football matches. Such chauvinistic nationalist sentiments were expressed in the Egyptian media

and were echoed on the streets by ordinary people before and after Egypt's national football team played against the Algerian national team in the qualifications for the World Cup in 2009.

D- Narration and Production of History

In the pages to follow I present the perspective of the subjects through the medium of narration. That is why it is important to present a review of such theories and studies that deal with production of history and narration. This thesis takes as it starting point David William Cohen's definition of production of history as:

> "The processing of the past in societies and historical settings all over the world, and the struggles for control of voices and texts in innumerable settings which often animate the processing of the past... conventions and paradigms in the formation of historical knowledge and historical texts, the patterns and forces underlying interpretation, the contentions and struggles which evoke and produce texts, or particular glosses of tests along with sometimes powerfully nuanced vocabularies, as well as the structuring frames of record-keeping" (Cohen, 1994, 4-5).

Michel-Rolf Trouillot argued that history is not only produced by academics at universities but is also constructed by people outside of the guild of historians whether through the media, memorial celebrations, museums, movies (Trouillot, 1995, 19-20), and the making of history takes place in several locations that are all linked together (Cohen, 1994, 21). In that sense, this study follows Trouillot's advice by seeking to study the production of history outside of the guild of historians, focusing instead on the narratives of the protesters.

This study is also situated within the literature about protesting, narratives, youth , and social movements (Polletta 1998a&1998b, Auyero 2002, Kennelly 2009, Getrich 2008). Jacqueline Kennelly examined how a group of Canadian urban youth were "creatively responding to the vast array of political, social, and economic changes that make up their world" (Kennelly 2009, 293). Christina M. Getrich followed a group of second-generation Mexican youth in San Diego as they engaged with the immigrant rights movement during Spring 2006 (Getrich, 2008), and Francesca Polletta explored the archives about a movement of Black students in the 1960s (Polletta, 1998a). Moving beyond protests orchestrated by youth, Auyero presented multiple narratives of people

involved in the Santiago Del Estero riots in Argentina on December 16. 1993. He presented the different versions of the story as told by a judge, a cop and a dancer in attempt to explore "contentious conversations"--a term proposed by Charles Tilly--among those in power, the media, and the protesters (Auyero, 2002, 154). My study attempts to gain insights into youth protest, while at the same time contributing to the debate about how narratives and history are constructed in the context of protest and revolution.

V- Methodology

The primary focus of this study are the narratives of Egyptian youth about their participation in the protests in relationship to the reasons and the forms of participation, what this participation meant for them, and the participants' ideas about national belonging, nationalism and citizenship. The core sample of this research comprised ten middle-class Egyptians aged between 20 and 35 who, for the first time, took part in mass protests during the 18 days, and who afterwards started to become engaged in collective social and political action. The sample includes male and female as well as Muslim and Christian participants who subscribe to different political orientations and two of whom hail from provinces other than Cairo. I also intentionally selected participants who joined the 18 days at different points. This research is not concerned with "activists" who have regularly participated in and organized protests over the years preceding the January 25 Revolution. They have been the topic of previous research (such as Maha Abdelrahman's "The Transnational and the Local: Egyptian Activists and Transnational Protest Networks"). However, what stands out in the case of the January 25 Revolution is that it was able to draw in individuals with no protest or activist experience. Participants engaged as individuals and not as part of formal organized groups or political parties, and they might have participated as part of a group of friends.

I have selected these participants from among the people I have been meeting while taking part in the 18 days primarily as a journalist, but also as an Egyptian citizen and a part-time protester. I used my personal connections followed by the snowball method to select the participants according to the aforementioned categories and set of variables. I first started off

interviewing a larger sample of people, including older people, and then later decided to focus my research on youth and particularly those who were not involved in protests or any other form of collective action before the Revolution. I started my encounter with potential participants in a very casual manner, asking general questions about their participation in the protests, and then the subsequent meetings involved in-depth interviews using several sets of open-ended unstructured questions that depended on the setting of the interview. The sequence of the questions and the extent to which we delved into one aspect or another differed from one participant to another depending on several factors, including when he or she joined the protests and what his or her role has been. It also depended on the dynamics of interaction between the participants and me. For example, for someone like Mo[5], who joined the protests on the last day right before Mubarak stepped down, the discussion focused more on what social and political change groups he engaged with after the ouster of Mubarak rather than on why he participated in the Revolution.

This research was also based on participant observation of the 18 days and the regular protests that took place in the following year and a half. I conducted the interviews for this research between July 2011 and May 2012. The temporal unit of analysis in this research is the 18 days of protest. However, any attempt at understanding the participants' narratives of that period could only be accomplished by putting it in an historical context. Therefore, I asked the participants to talk and narrate anecdotes about their life trajectories, activities, social networks, ideas and affects before joining and during the protests, and how they carried on their lives after the fall of Mubarak, including whether they were involved in further protests and social or public work.

This research is qualitative, and more specifically an analysis of narratives and historical accounts of participants on the 18 days of protests that started on January 25. In contrast to media accounts in which protesters' quotes are published after being jotted down by journalists in a hurry against the clamor of slogans chanted loudly or while interlocutors are trying to dodge rubber bullets, accounts in this research have been collected over a longer period of time and--with a few

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[5] All names used in this research are pseudonyms as I will explain in the next section.

exceptions--in a more relaxed setting. Therefore, it has the advantage of allowing participants more time to recall, make sense of and narrate, forget and eliminate memories of the events.

VI- Ethical Considerations, Challenges and Limitations

This research is a qualitative one that brought me in direct contact with the participants for an extended period of time. The main two issues of concern were breaching the privacy of the participants and keeping their identity and information confidential. I tried to overcome the first problem is to take time to establish rapport with the participants and give them the chance to get to know me well enough so they would not feel that their privacy was being breached. At the same time, participants had the right to discontinue engaging in this research should they feel uncomfortable at any time. I reiterated to them that they hold the right to withdraw from the research anytime they wish when and/or if they think participation is causing them any kind of distress or harm without giving any reasons for such a withdrawal. I also made sure to let the participants know where the information will be published and gave them the right to have them identified or unidentified in the research depending on their preference. At the end, I decided to keep all their identities anonymous just in case identifying them might cause them trouble in the future, so all the names that appear in this research except one--Ahmed, which is a common name-- have been changed. I took down notes and recorded the participants' testimonies using a digital voice recorder during the interviews and downloaded the voice files on my personal computer, which is accessed only by myself. I assured them they also have the right to identify certain topics as public and other topics as confidential, which helped them feel more comfortable when talking to me knowing that only the topics they have identified as public will be published.

My subject position as an Egyptian woman who has taken part in the protests both as a journalist and a participant contributed somehow to the facilitation of communication between the participants and myself since we both have a shared experience of the same event. On the other hand, it may have also posed a challenge. During the course of the interviews, I was also challenged by some participants' misinterpretation or misunderstanding of questions and their "scripted

responses", those that the participants give out as an initial statement. These weakness were mitigated by spending more time in the introductory phase until I got a general understanding of each participant's conversation style and background and by making sure during subsequent dialogues to clarify my questions and check with participants regarding what they mean when they talk about certain terms that may appear ambiguous. I used the follow-up interviews to go over the points that I thought might have been based on assumptions. For example, in one interview, a participant told me he joined the protests because he wanted the country to improve (*'ayez el balad teb'a ahsan*). We both understood what *el balad,* the country, means, but it may mean different things for each one of us. These sorts of ambiguous terms that I spent a lot of time discussing with the participants, and this was at the heart of this research.

Since protests were still ongoing while I was conducting interviews, and the general situation in the country was still precarious during the transitional period following Mubarak's ouster, I bore in mind the sensitivities and the risks the participants may be exposed to, especially given that the authorities still sporadically rounded up people involved in protests, some of whom were accused of being "thugs" and ended up facing military tribunals. I do not know that any of the participants in this research were arrested. Also, I faced the risk of being regarded with suspicion by the potential participants of the research due to my position as a student at an institution whose name is affiliated with America, i.e. the American University in Cairo. State-owned television and newspapers and other media that were deemed biased towards the former regime -- and even under the transitional government -- have claimed at various occasions that there were spies and agents working for the interest of foreign governments, with the U.S. being identified as one of them, among the protesters. Therefore, I faced at least one situation where a potential participant asked me if my research is conducted on behalf of the U.S. Pentagon. I explained to him that although the institution I am affiliated with is American, it is a private university that is not linked to the government of the U.S. and that the manuscript of the research I am conducting will be available to the public on the library shelves at the university's campus in New Cairo.

VII-Terminology

I do not believe that the January 25 protests and sit-in and the changes in political power that resulted from it amount to a fully-fledged revolution -- at least of yet -- as the political, economic, and social system has not been totally replaced with a new one. Asef Bayat likened the Egyptian and Tunisian trajectories of change to Georgia's Rose Revolution of 2003 and Ukraine's Orange Revolution of November 2004-January 2005, calling them "refo-lutions", mixing "reform" measures with "revolutions". Such models of revolution bring about reforms in the institutions of the existing states (Bayat, March 3, 2011), falling short of a total system overhaul seen in earlier revolutions, such as the Iranian revolution of 1979. Nevertheless, I will in this research use the word Revolution in two senses-- as the research participants themselves do. In the first sense, for example when participants say "after the Revolution", i.e. after Mubarak stepped down on February 11, "revolution" here means the 18 days. In the second sense, i.e. when they say the "Revolution continues", they are referring to the ongoing and unfolding process of transition following the ouster of Mubarak as all the participants in this research -- and I agree with them -- believe the process of revolutionary change is still continuing, and contrary to the official narrative, the Revolution has not yet concluded.

In this research, I will refer to participants in this research as subjects. According to Michel-Rolph Trouillot, history as a social process, deals with people in three different capacities: as agents, or "occupants of structural positions"; as actors, "in constant interface with a context"; and as subjects; "as voices aware of their vocality" (Trouillot, 1995, 23). I prefer to use the third term because the terms by which people define their historical experience, which is at the heart of this enquiry through narrative form, designates them as subjects. People are "subjects of history" in as much as they "define the very terms under which some situations can be described. A historical event, such as a strike cannot be described as such, unless those involved in the strike describe it as such or to use Trouillot's words "making the subjective capacities of the workers a central part of the description" (Trouillot, 1995, 23). This is the approach I take in this research.

<h1 style="text-align:center">VIII- Biographies of Participants</h1>

In this section, I present a short biography of the ten main participants of the research. All the names have been changed and are presented in an alphabetical order.

Ahmed is a physicist in his thirties. He is originally from Aswan but lives in Cairo, where he works at a government agency.

Albert is an engineer in his thirties. He works for a private company in Cairo and lives in Zamalek.

Donia is an owner of a private business in her thirties. She is originally from Alexandria but has been living in Cairo for the past decade. She works and lives in downtown.

Essam is a student of art in his mid twenties. He was raised in a southern Egyptian province and moved to Cairo to attend a private foreign university a few years ago. He resides in New Cairo.

Jailan is an architect in her thirties. She lives with her family in Heliopolis.

John is a student of business in his early twenties. He was born and raised in Egypt but lived for a few years in the United States. He lives in the neighborhood of Faisal on the outskirts of greater Cairo. Beside studying, he works as a free-lance interpreter.

Mo is a government employee in his early twenties. He lives in Dar El Salam, a district of Old Cairo.

Mona is in her early thirties. She works for an international non-governmental organization in Cairo.

Mohamed works in information technology at a private company in Cairo. He was born and raised in the eastern city of Port Said.

Noha is a decoration artist in her early thirties. After graduating from Law School, she completed another degree in art. She lives in Haram district with her mother, two sisters and her three-year-old daughter.

<h1 style="text-align:center">Chapter Two</h1>

<h2 style="text-align:center">Narratives of the 18 Days</h2>

The terms "Revolution" and "18 days" refer simultaneously to the historical period and the historical event that stretched between January 25 and February 11. The words have been used interchangeably in official and media discourses as well as by ordinary people on the street, creating confusion about what the speakers are referring to, and such state of confusion, sometimes deliberately and at other times unintentional, creates fertile soil for misunderstanding and manipulation. These terms, among others, are used by the ruling authorities to legitimize their policies as well as by the protesters to give legitimacy to their demands and their cause. In this sense, the debate about the events of the 18 days is contentious. Narratives about the 18 days have been skewed and appropriated by the different parties for various purposes, making this period a crucial unit of analysis if we were to understand the debates and deliberations that permeated the transitional period after the ouster of Mubarak and that are bound to continue for decades to come. But in another sense, such variations in narration and the skewing and the manipulation thereof may not necessarily always be intentional. These narratives could also partially--but could also wholly-- be a factor of who the narrators are and the positions they occupy and from which they speak. The narrators might not be necessarily skewing, distorting, selecting and eliminating details on purpose. In all cases, however, at such uncertain times when people in power are trying to mold history in such a way that serves their interests, it is crucial to record history from the perspective of the individuals who are not in power, i.e. the subjects who are at the heart of this research.

This chapter aims to document the participants' accounts of how the events known as the Revolution unfolded with the objective of identifying moments of significance and debatable themes. This chapter seeks to present a kind of history composed by those who were involved in the protests and in so doing illustrating how the single event of the Revolution, or rather the series of events dubbed Revolution, has been narrated differently by the different participants and how such narrations shape the narrators' subjectivity. In sum, this chapter explores the link between narration and the making of the narrators as subjects of history and as members of a collective of which such narration is constitutive.

I- Production of History

History is produced and shaped by the people who narrate it and who are themselves part of the story they are narrating. Through their narration, they emerge as subjects of that historical event. Michel-Rolph Trouillot distinguished between two levels of history: history as a socio-historical process, i.e. as events that happened; and history as knowledge of that process, or what is said to have happened. That the distinction between these two levels is not always clear may in itself be historical (Trouillot, 1995, 3-4). Thus, what follows is the "story" of the "story" of the "story", the challenge of which is to analyze the process by which these stories unfold and to recognize "the edges of our stories and of the stories being told to us from the past, to work toward comprehending the forces emergent at these edges", as David William Cohen put it (Cohen, 1994, 21). What is at stake, then, is "not looking at a story but rather at a skeletal account of stories of stories" (Cohen, 1994, 21). In short, "history reveals itself only through the production of specific narratives. What matters most are the process and the conditions of production of such narratives", Trouilllot argued (Trouillot, 1995, 25).

And if one was to analyze these stories or "second-level" abstractions, as Trouillot described it, while being aware of the forces at play on the "edges" of those stories, one has to look at the question of power. One has to bear in mind how power is exerted and how it infiltrates and shapes any narrative. According to Trouillot, power is not a factor that is external to the story but is rather interwoven within the story. It enters not at one point and then remains there, but power intersects the story at different times and from different positions. It precedes the narrative and is a component in its creation and its interpretation (Trouillot, 1995, 28-29). And as Trouillot and Cohen argued, power manifests itself and exerts its weight through the mechanisms of silencing, remembering and forgetting.

The participants of this research might have told their narratives or parts of them before to their friends, families, or the media, and will probably narrate them over and over, with some of these narratives becoming hegemonic. While some details stand out clearly in the memory of the

narrators, other details fade, are confused with the intricacies of later similar events, or were altogether completely obliterated. As time passes, some more details will be eliminated, while others will remain and yet others may be re-remembered, all depending on a complex process that is shaped by the context and the circumstances. Cohen argued that remembering and forgetting are not contradictory but are in fact intertwined in the same process, whereby remembering certain details involves or requires the forgetting of others. Forgetting does not involve disappearance but is in fact reshaped by the onset of new conditions (Cohen, 1994, xxiv). Johannes Fabian further argued that memory as equated with remembering on the one hand should not be contrasted with forgetting as tantamount to not-remembering on the other hand. Conversely, remembering and forgetting should be understood as constituting "memory work", i.e. that critical work required to produce memory that could be shared through narration, exhibition and performance (Fabian, 2003, 490). Forgetting, according to Ashis Nandy, could be typified into "unwitting forgetfulness", which helps a person make peace with the world and live in it; "adaptive forgetfulness", which enables a person or a society to let go of unnecessary memories because they cannot afford to remember everything; and "principled forgetting", which is directed against the very enterprise of history and rejected by it since under that "historical mode" of constructing the past, remembering is superior to forgetting (Nandy, 1995, 47-48).

Trouillot argued that there is an interplay between silence and power and that not all silences are equal. Silences enter the process of historical production at four key moments: "the moment of fact creation (the making of sources); the moment of fact assembly (the making of archives); the moment of fact retrieval (the making of narratives); and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of history in the final instance)" (Trouillot, 1995, 26). "[A]ny historical narrative is a particular bundle of silences, the result of a unique process, and the operation required to deconstruct these silences will vary accordingly" (Trouillot, 1995, 27).

II- Narrative as "Truth"

Each person narrating a narrative claims that his or her version is the "truth", but some narratives gain more credibility than others. Arjun Appadurai argued that there are limits to what could pass as a credible narrative and that there are certain criteria regulating such debates about the past that are contested under a specific political context by contending social groups (Appadurai, 1981, 201-202). The four dimensions that form the minimal requirement for the cultural construction of the past are: authority, which involves the source or guarantor of the "past"; continuity, which describes the cultural consensus regarding the tie with the source of authority; depth, which involves cultural consensus on value assigned to the past; and interdependence, which signals the interdependence of the past in question with other "pasts" to guarantee credibility (Appadurai, 1981, 203). And for an historical narrative to be set apart from fiction, Trouillot argued, it is necessary for a historically specific group of humans to decide upon its credibility. "[T]he epistemological break between history and fiction is always expressed concretely through the historically situated evaluation of specific narratives" (Trouillot, 1995, 8). Therefore, any narrative claiming to be historical must be based on something concrete or evidence as opposed to fiction which is required to be based on no foundation other than imagination, and it should be accepted as such by a specific group of people. But Trouillot further explained why in some cases the truthfulness and the factuality of narratives is important: because the interests of particular collectivities are tied to the historical credibility of particular narratives (Trouillot, 1995, 13) and because even to people who have not necessarily lived through those past events, their making as subjects is closely associated with the constant creation of the past (Trouillot, 1995, 16).

Turning to this research, rather than being concerned with what "really" happened, it is about what people, in this case the participants, say about what happened, along the line of Trouillot's question: "how much can we reduce what happened to what is said to have happened?" (Trouillot, 1995, 13). The process of narration, how narratives about the Revolution are constructed, the language participants use to describe the historical event, and the meanings emerging from such processes are central to this inquiry. This research is more concerned with insight into what Javier

Auyero described as "the interests of the teller, the desires and the dreams beneath those interests", which one can gain insight into even through the "wrong" tale (Auyero, 2002, 170). Oral sources provide us with information not on what people actually did but more on what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did back then. The credibility of such oral sources derives not from their function in stating facts but rather in revealing the meanings attached to these facts (Auyero, 2002, 169-170).

Therefore, narration is a medium by which the subjectivity of narrators is shaped, i.e. "people are the subjects of history" (Trouillot, 1995, 23). "Their subjectivity is an integral part of the event and of any satisfactory description of that event" (Trouillot, 1995, 24). "[T]he collective subjects who supposedly remember did not exist as such at the time of the events they claim to remember. Rather, their constitution as subjects goes hand in hand with the continuous creation of the past" (Trouillot, 1995, 16). The following narratives of Egyptian youth about the Revolution as an event, will provide insight into the process by which their subjectivity was formed. As they sought to make sense of the events, they were also shaping their subjectivity as protesters and as Revolution supporters.

III- The Stories

In this part of the chapter, I use the accounts of seven of the research participants because they were the ones who witnessed the days when key events occurred. I focus in particular on Mona's narrative because she provided detailed descriptions compared with others. I also mention an eighth participant, Donia, in the last section. I have identified specific moments of significance based on the interviews during which participants either highlighted out of their own accord these specific moments when asked to give an account of the events or described them when asked to narrate what happened at those moments. The moments identified here are the same ones highlighted by the media and in books detailing accounts of the 18 days whether autobiographical or otherwise, such as renowned poet Abdel Rahman Youssef's "Dairy of a Cactus Revolution" (Youssef 2011), Mona Prince's "My Name is Revolution" (Prince 2012), and Hatem Rushdy's "18

Days in Tahrir" (Rushdy 2011). These moments are: January 25, the first day demonstrations started; January 28, the Friday of Rage when the first large-scale killing of protesters took place and the occupation of Tahrir Square started; February 2, the Battle of the Camel, during which those perceived as Mubarak supporters stormed Tahrir Square on camels and horses to attack protesters; and February 11, the day Mubarak stepped down. Within these days, there is another level of "moments of significance", which are the more personal and subjective moments, including those times when participants felt significant feelings of joy, solidarity, fear, uncertainty, hope and frustration, etc.

For the participants of this research, protesting and joining the sit-in were things they were doing for the first time -- they were novices and the events were a novelty. Through their narration, they were trying to recall minute details and make out blurry images to try to make sense of them to themselves in the first place but also to the ethnographer. While some struggled sometimes in the course of the narration, the task was easier for others. Sometimes, the narration was clear, while other times, it was a complete mess, and I would be left puzzled trying to work out what happened. I felt that some times, the participants were trying to help me clarify some things or were striving to be coherent in storytelling. The time gap between the "event" and the narration of the "event" ranges from several months to more than a year as the bulk of these accounts were collected between January 2012 and May 2012, with some pilot interviews preceding these and short follow-up interviews conducted afterwards.

Undoubtedly, the participants' narration is colored by their interpretation of current events and their mood at the time of the interview. What they say about these events now may not be the same as what they said about them a few months or a year ago. Their narration of the same events may even change further in the future. The narratives were also constructed against the backdrop of a wider and constantly changing nationally and publicly framed meta-narrative in which certain details were silenced while others were highlighted. Their narratives sometimes intersect with and echo the official government and media narrative and at other times, diverge from it. The meta-

narrative here refers to the version of the stories about the Revolution that are perpetuated by the ruling government, namely the Supreme Council for the Armed Forces. That is not to say that such a narrative is homogenous, but what makes it the "meta-narrative" is that it is the one that is constantly beamed on television channels and circulated widely in the media due to the powerful influence of its promoters.

In this section, I present the stories of the protesters about the moments of significance outlined above, whether those taking place at the epicenter of the protests in Tahrir Square, in the residential neighborhoods of the capital, or in the provinces. The three themes that permeate these stories and which participants associated with the protests and the sit-in are: novelty, peacefulness and co-existence. These three themes will be analyzed in the following section. I have, in most instances, used direct quotes in order to relay to the reader the language of the protesters--in an attempt to remain as true possible to the meanings intended by the speakers. All interviewees -- except John who spoke mostly in English-- spoke in their native language, Arabic, and all of them --except Ahmed who spoke only in Arabic-- peppered their sentences with English words. I have included Arabic translation of certain terms and expressions whenever needed.

A-The "first" time, January 25

Mona heeded the calls to join the demonstrations on the first day. She joined one of the marches entering Tahrir Square from Kasr El Nil Bridge on January 25. The march she was part of was not intercepted by security forces as were some other marches, particularly the one coming from Kasr El Eini Street, where the parliament an Cabinet buildings are located. It was Mona's first time partaking in such a large-scale demonstration as it was for thousands of others. She reflected on those first moments in the Square:

> "As soon as we entered the Square, some people kept saying 'Do not think that we have occupied the square. They [the security forces] will invade [it] at night'. A friend of mine kept convincing me that we should to leave, while other friends wanted to stay... they [the security forces] threw one tear gas canister from afar. It was only one canister and [its effect] was weak, but we all couldn't stand it. We were not [yet] used to tear gas. [She laughs and then I laugh]. It was still early, that was as soon as darkness fell".

Mona eventually acquiesced to the friend who kept asking her to leave the Square for fear that they

be caught in the battles between the protesters and the security forces.

Meanwhile, Essam had been following news of the unfolding protests on social media and

on satellite television channels, when he and a group of friends finally decided to take to the streets.

Essam remembered:

> "[On January 25], it was the first time in my life to stand in front of a [police] armored vehicle... They said they are about to fire. We formed lines in front of the tank to prevent them from entering the square, but what happened was that--as it was the first time for many people to go to a protest--as soon as the attack began, we ran off. There was tear gas. It was 12:30 [a.m.]. We ran. It was the first time for me to hear the sound of shots, the first time to see the spark and the canons flying around and so on. So we ran. The square filled with gas. It was impossible to remain there, we would have suffocated. We were running through white clouds. Of course, it was the first time for me to feel the effect of it. It was a horrible feeling... I was pushed into a dead-end street, and because I had lost my identification card, I had a feeling that if I were imprisoned, I will never come out [of prison]... I lost my friends again. It was a feeling of fear. We hid in a storage room and were locked in. We didn't know [the effect of water when mixed with tear gas], so we washed our faces with water, which made our faces burn even harder. For some of the time, I didn't know if I was in reality or in a dream. It was for me a bit shocking ."

John, who was also protesting for the first time, had a similar story:

> "When I first reached [Tahrir Square on January 25], it looked normal... There were some crowds. But when I entered Kasr El Eini street, I found a lot of people were running in the opposite direction [towards me], so [I knew] for sure that the action was straight ahead, so I kept dodging [people] until I saw the police firing tear gas, so I started throwing rocks. I still didn't smell the gas. I thought the gas was a smoke screen. When I first smelled it, I collapsed, figuratively *enhart* [he uses this Arabic translation of collapsed while narrating the rest in English]. I tried to throw rocks again, there was a wounded guy, I kind of escorted him to safety and then continued... There was a woman standing next to a lamp post that has electrical boxes. The woman was banging on one of those, so I told her 'let me do it'. So I started banging and then shouting *masr* ![Egypt!], one bang and then *masr*!... back then, I was hit with a small stone on my head. I tried to encourage most of the people to come with me to the front line but most of them were like '*Selmeya! Selmeya*! Let's stick to the backside. Most of the people in the front are thugs (*baltageyya*). So I continued to the front along with four or five others. After that, we were hit by tear gas. It was overwhelming so I had to kind of go back... One guy was trying to break a traffic light but people stopped him, anyone who was trying to break anything was being stopped."

B-Fighting for Tahrir, January 28

After she had left Tahrir Square on January 25, Mona had tried to come back to it in the following two days, but was prevented by the security police deployed all around the downtown area. She did, however, make a return on January 28. After agreeing with her friends before mobile-phone lines were cut earlier that day, Mona left her home in Heliopolis to "meet" friends some 20 kilometers away in a coffee place in Mohandiseen. Although no one spoke about aloud, everybody there knew why they were all gathering in this place at this time. After she finished her coffee, she lined up to go to the bathroom and winked at one of her acquaintances, signaling that they both knew why they were there and what was about to happen. Then, in groups of four or five, the customers left the shop, Mona among them, and headed out to the street, where they filed past a man-made cordon of black-clad security forces to join swarms of protesters-to-be in front of the Mostafa Mahmoud Mosque. As the Imam was announcing through loudspeakers the end of the Friday prayer and before he even finished his second prayer closure (*al salamou alaykom wa rahmatollah*), chants of "The people want to topple the regime!" (*El sha'b youreed isqaat el nizaam*) echoed out loud and rocked the area.

Earlier that morning of January 28, Mona's mother had given her a bunch of small bottles filled with vinegar, and she had taken masks, an abundance of them, so she could distribute to people around her. When the police started firing tear gas, she started running not knowing in which direction to go. She narrated:

> "You were just running not knowing [which direction] is worse. But I was scared that one of them [the canisters] would fall in the wrong position or fall beside me and I wouldn't be able to breathe... [Then she marched along with thousands towards Tahrir Square]... After entering the Square, she said: "I looked at my side and found the scene was completely nightmarish. I saw people holding a brass rod and they kept banging [on the railings]... I told them to throw away th[ose] chains so we would not be described as riffraff (*re'aa'*)... Then I headed further into downtown, I saw a man holding a dagger... all these were scenes that were completely surreal as if I was really in a nightmare. As much as I felt that we have succeeded, I was also wondering what was happening to us... [Then she bumped into a friend]... When Naim saw me, he told me 'Congratulations!' He was the one who made me realize that we have partly triumphed and that we are witnessing the beginning of something that will continue."

When the security forces fired tear gas and rubber bullets and used batons to hit the demonstrators, those who could fight back did. Essam witnessed some of those scenes as such:

> "There were some officers who ran off and officers who were scared somebody would kill them," he recalled. "But of course, everyone was like '*Selmeyya! Selmeyya*!' (Peaceful! Peaceful!). They caught a soldier from the front [rows], people were hitting him hard. He was one of the soldiers who were firing [at the protesters]. They surrounded the soldier and formed a cordon around him. People wanted to hit him but still we snatched him and took him to the battalion (*el kateeba*)... We started to withdraw back to Zamalek and people stopped at the entrance to Al Ahly club. They started to set up barricades and collect rocks. It was no longer peaceful (*selmi*) as we thought. It is wrong to believe that the protests broke the barricades peacefully because there are people who died trying to break these security cordons, breaking through them to allow other people to pass. There were clashes between people and the security at the barriers in which hands, rocks and any other possible things were used."

By the end of the day, thousands of protesters had occupied Tahrir Square after the security forces disappeared following fierce battles in which hundreds of protesters were either killed or wounded. The army was deployed and a 6-p.m. curfew was announced. That night, some protesters pitched tents, starting what was to become a two-week sit-in. Mona would visit the square almost every day, participating in different activities as needed.

C- In the provinces, January 28

A similar story was unfolding in Zagazig, a city in the Delta province of Sharqeyya, where Ahmed happened to be on a business trip. After he heard the protesters' chants, he decided to join them. He recalled:

> "Our numbers were increasing after the prayer... They [the security forces]... had instructions to fire [tear] gas right after the prayer.... they thought that once they fired the gas, we would go off running barefoot and leave our shoes behind and be scared and so on. But God willed it that way. It was unplanned. There were lots of things that were divine (*tawfeeq ilaahy*). They keep saying there were plans and so on. But what I lived through proves that all of this is not true. It was God's will that the people having been frustrated and having had enough (*men kotr el-zaha' wel-khan'a*), started running towards them [instead of running away from them]... they [the security forces] did not expect it... they thought in each area they would [only] have 200 people whom they could easily control... [On this day], it was as if [we were witnessing] something we were waiting for that God has sent to us. It came,

and everyone went out [to the streets] without any preparations (*tarteebat*) or anything. Tunisia has just happened before and triggered our enthusiasm and several people immolated themselves in front of the parliament and the cabinet buildings in addition to the rigging of the elections. All of these factors came together and created the state of frustration (*ghalayaan*) and the explosion that happened."

"With the pressure and with increasing numbers [of protesters], instead of them [police] surrounding us, they were the ones who were being surrounded from here and there. They were in the middle of us... Their strength and determination began to wane... and to prove to you that our revolution was not bloody--and there are documented images--when the soldiers threw their shields and batons and some youth wanted to attack them, we objected and stood in the way telling them that these soldiers are poor (*ghalaba*) and are like us and they have nothing to do with this (*malhomsh zanb*). The soldiers started to join us and the youth held them up on the shoulders, running around with them and chanting with them... but the pressure was still on the (higher ranking) officers."

D- Around the neighborhoods, January 26-28

John narrated how and why he ventured into the backstreets in a working class neighborhood near his house on January 27. He said:

"I found a lot of armored vehicles so I went through the side streets and encouraged people to come down to the street and do something about it and shouted 'Men of the neighborhood, where is the gas? We need gas [to set some tires on fire], these [security vehicles] are here to terrorize us', I said. I was shouting at people."

I asked him if he was afraid that people would condemn him for doing that to which he replied, "You're going against the cops, no one likes cops, no one unless he's a *mokhber* (informer). I got some of them (the people), I became kind of a leader, I remember this little kid going like 'Sheikh, you are the one who will lead us' (*ya sheikh enta elli hatqoudna*)". We both laughed. John grows a beard and is Christian. He went on to narrate his attempts to set some tires ablaze with the help of neighborhood residents. His narration was in line with the novelty theme discussed above. Such was apparent in a phrases like "I've never done this before" when he was trying to describe how to set the tires on fire. When I asked him why he wanted to set it on fire, he replied " So that they [the security] won't enter, it was kind of a barricade, they were entering and throwing [tear] gas". But John was intent on completing his mission: Urging people to participate in the following day's protest on January 28.

Albert also told me that he and his friends staged small-scale demonstrations in residential areas, such as Embaba, a working class neighborhood, on January 26 and 27. "Sometimes the protest starts off with 50 or 60 participants and grows up to 3,000 or 4,000. This was in Boulaq and Embaba. It[s momentum] increased because of the tear gas bombs they [the security police] threw in popular areas... and they used to arrest a lot of people," he said. He told me that he and his friends also tried to stage a protest in the upper class district of Heliopolis on January 28 but failed to due to the lack of participants after which they joined the bigger protests in downtown Cairo.

E-The Tahrir sit-in, January 28-February 11

As the security forces withdrew from Tahrir Square on January 28, some protesters stayed on in the square, while others left only to return almost every day for the next two weeks. A community evolved in the Square, of which Mona and others were part of. Participants usually remember Tahrir as a Utopia. Noha's version is such an instance:

> "The 18 days in and of themselves are a dream, a legend and all of that," she says. "I couldn't have thought that I would be like this in a state whereby one would be hand in hand with a bearded man while sitting around smoking and you're signing together (with him). We never had this state whereby Christians protect Muslims while they were praying... yes, we are like family and neighbors -- my life-time friend is Christian -- but I couldn't have imagined seeing this scene in my life or living through it...Unity, solidarity and victory... The scene of the Muslim men praying and the Christians surrounding them.... when the attacks start, everybody protects everybody else and it doesn't matter. This is unity. Bread that was distributed was being shared... dates that were distributed were shared. This is a state of unity and solidarity that gives you a feeling of victory."

Essam also saw Tahrir that way. He said:

> "When I went [to Tahrir] the next day [after the Battle of the Camel]... something strange happened to me, something like a shock. I couldn't believe what was happening to the people, the community of Tahrir was somehow utopian... everyone was helping everybody else, they were respecting each other, the number was very big and there was enthusiasm. People were talking. There was a lot of uninformed talk (*fatei*) but that was natural. We do not have political awareness in the first place. Even me... it was the first time for me to be in such a situation, the first time for me to know what revolution, protests, sit-in were."

Essam narrated a story about how while standing in long queue to buy Koshari, an Egyptian dish made of rice, lentils and pasta with tomato sauce, a man at the front who had already bought some insisted on giving him and his friends the six boxes he had bought. And when they offered him money in return he rejected. He added:

> "He said 'just give the money to some of the youth and tell them to buy some [koshari] for [the people in] the square', and that's what we did," Essam said. "Although the Koshari did not taste very good, it was one of the best times in my life to eat Koshari. I enjoyed it. I really felt that there is a good seed in Egypt that could grow -- regardless of political or revolutionary affiliations... there are really people who could transform this country into a good country."

Mona, however, saw it slightly differently. Mona narrated:

> "I did see how much co-existence there was. There was a group of people in a very nice tent and seated next to them were bearded men who were very conservative. But it was not the co-existence we see in movies (c*o-existence el-aflaam*) whereby everybody accepts everybody else. I saw an Islamist pointing to one of their friends asking why she was smoking cigarettes and doing this and that. Somebody responded to him saying that cigarettes are not *haram* [forbidden by religion] and that each person should do whatever he wants." "I am against the idea of over-romanticizing the matter. One time I was cleaning and then a bearded man told me not to bend over [so that her back doesn't show]. I felt that not because he thinks in that way, people should do that (*mish 'ashan enta mokhak keda, lazem el-naas te'mel keda*)."

F- The Battle of the Camel, February 2

One of those days when Mona was there, she witnessed what became known as the Battle of the Camel, when supporters of Mubarak, riding on camels and horses, stormed the Square. This was

followed by an exchange of rock throwing and a gun battle between supporters and opponents of Mubarak. Mona narrated what she saw:

> "The street that leads to Kasr El Nil Bridge, there is a triangle there, I was standing near that spot. Then, they started to say that there are people entering [the square] and then suddenly we started to see rocks flying like birds. People started to run and they started to break bricks, and I didn't know if it was right for me to break the bricks or what to do... I stood with the women who were chanting (she laughs) and I

started to chant with them... I remember that moment when our people pushed the others off the horses and took the horse and tied it beside us. It was absolutely like *Wa-Islamaah!*[6]. [They were like] "Allah Akbar! [We both laugh]. We started jumping up and down. I remember that while I was chanting, I kept crying because I felt pity for the people. And then I remember meeting my brother [by coincidence] and I kept arguing with him and telling him to leave because my brother is younger than me... molotov cocktails started to be thrown around the area of the entrances [to the square] and so on. It was a complete mess (*el-donia kanet habal tamaman*).... my mother called me and told me 'please come back [home]'... I remember the guilt I felt when I left. I left at the time of the Maghreb (dusk) prayer... we were leaving... and some veiled girls [inside the Omar Makram Mosque] kept telling us 'Come in! Come in! Take shelter in the mosque!' and we told them 'no'. I felt very guilty that we told them 'no'."

"I did not see any camels at all. I saw horses. I don't know why the camel did not pass in front of me. They got the horse and put it beside us. It was a white horse. I remember it... There were only women where I was standing. Women chanting. Women breaking bricks... That day, I chanted and ran, and that is it. And cried. That's what I did. Of course, it was horrifying (*mokheef*)."

G- The ouster, February 11

On the Friday following a speech by Mubarak in which he, contrary to protesters' and political analysts' expectation, refused to bow to demands that he step down, thousands of protesters decided to head to his presidential palace in Heliopolis. Mona and her mother were among these. They spent the whole morning of February 11 standing outside the palace. Security forces were trying to make them clear the area, but her mother, seated on the ground holding the hands of two other women, refused to go away until news broke out that Mubarak resigned. "Once we learnt [that Mubarak had stepped down], we gave each other hugs and we bowed in prayer of thanks to God (s*agadna*)," Mona recalled. "Everyone decided to go to Tahrir. "To Tahrir! To Tahrir!" We decided to walk there but I finally got into a cab. I was walking on the streets ululating and people were recording the sound of my ululations."

Essam also experienced such moment of celebration. He narrated:

"On Thursday before the address, I was very pessimistic... and when he didn't step down, I was seized by terrible disappointment... the next day, Friday... my mother called me to tell me that the president stepped down. I went out to the street and started swearing [at him]. I ran, I wanted to reach Tahrir by any means... in Tahrir,

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[6] She is referring to "Oh Islam!" an Egyptian film made in the early 1960s directed by Enrico Bomba and Andrew Marton. She was describing the scene of horses after the fight, which she was likening to scenes from the film.

we were standing and chanting 'Raise your head high! You're Egyptian!"... I felt that the clichés that were being said at the time--that for the first time we feel that the country is ours--are true."

Mo was not able to join the Tahrir Square protests until February 11. He had initially decided to join the protests on January 28 after the Friday prayers until his father, who works at the Egyptian Interior Ministry, intervened. He recounted:

"[My father] told her [my mother]: 'please do not let Mo go out because we have orders to fire shots.. So I was grounded... [then] there was the security vacuum, and we started to protect our neighborhoods. Because I was the only old male son, I had to stay in the street, so I was not able to go to the square... [After the Battle of the Camel], my thoughts were distorted, but when I went to work and started to really follow what was happening.... I realized that we are living through a revolution and not only demonstrations... [Mo finally made it to the streets just in time to celebrate the breaking news of Mubarak's stepping down. He heard the address on Egyptian state television transmitted through his smart phone]... When I heard the news of the ouster, I screamed in the square... I started to swear at him [Mubarak] of course. I reacted strongly. My friend kept crying and I told him 'It's over! He [Mubarak] went to hell' (*ghaar fee dahya*)."

Meanwhile in Aswan, Ahmed was witnessing similar events. He remembered:

"On February 11, when we were marching [in the streets of Aswan], we passed the building of the state security and people started to chant against them while others were surrounding it [to protect it from attacks]. Then as we passed the police station, people whose relatives were held inside started to attack it with rocks. Clashes broke out and there were attacks, and one of those standing in front of the police station was martyred. In Upper Egypt, people own land and like to possess weapons. So when that person was martyred, people said that they have to take revenge....but God willed that the president step down. So people started to rejoice [so the revenge attack was averted]. They started firing live rounds in the streets [in celebration]."

IV- Analysis of the Stories

In the previous section, participants narrated how the events of the 18 days unfolded, focusing on what constituted for them moments of significance. In so doing, they reflected on the nature and the characteristics of the protests and the sit-in and on their role as participating subjects shaping those events and being shaped by them. The main three themes about the 18 days that

recurred in the participants' narratives were: the novelty of the event, how peaceful or not the protests were, and what level of co-existence prevailed within the Tahrir Square community. All the participants acknowledged in one way or another the novelty, the unexpectedness and unplanned nature of the protests, while the themes of peacefulness and co-existence were more of contentious issues. Throughout the narration, the 18 days emerged as kind of a benchmark against which stories about subsequent protests, sit-ins and clashes with the authorities were contrasted.

The novelty they all spoke about included several elements: shock, lack of planning, being out of the ordinary, and the event being an opportunity for them to push their limits. They all acknowledged that they were novices and inexperienced when they took to the streets for the first time during the 18 days, mentioning instances when they did not know what to do or what to think about the unfolding events. They referred to the unexpected numbers as they all went out thinking the turnout would be small and scorned the security forces for not expecting such a huge turnout. Essam, for example, used the word "first time" several times throughout his narration: it was the first time for him to face a police vehicle, the first time to experience a revolution and a sit-in, and the first time to see a military helicopter hovering overhead. When the authorities said they were going to impose a curfew on January 28, he did not know what a curfew was. He used the word shocking in a good way or *sadem* to describe what was happening whether at the protests or inside the square. It was the "first time" for Noha to realize how much she loved Egypt when she saw the flags in Tahrir Square. Mona used the word "surreal" in English to describe the scene in Tahrir Square. Donia, who was once afraid of the police lest they arrest her and sabotage her private business, said she identified with the oft-cited statement about "breaking the barrier of fear" after she took to the streets on January 28. The experience of the 18 days made her stronger. She described scenes of blood that she "never in my life could have seen this". "One thing that I will never forget is the scene of blood on bloody Wednesday [February 2 or the Battle of the Camel day]," she said. "I saw an amount of bloodshed that I have never before seen in my life, and it is

still affecting me until now. [I saw] people who are dead, someone who lost a leg, things that one could have never expected to see in real life, only in movies."

The idea that the protests were unplanned had a double sense in the case of Ahmed. It was unplanned as an event in itself and it was unplanned for the participants themselves to take part in it. "I went out [to the street] by coincidence," Ahmed said of January 25 when he was in Zagazig, where his hotel room overlooked Orabi Square. "I stood on the curb watching," he said. "The words 'Mubarak! Saudi Arabia is awaiting you!' (*Ya Mubarak ya Mubarak! El Sa'oudeyya f'intizarak*!) and 'The people want the toppling of the regime!' attracted me. [There were] 200 young men. I started to interact with the revolution." He construed the protests as a divine intervention, attributing it partly to God's will (*iradet rabbena)*. Co-incidence also played a role in the case of Donia, who did not initially intend to join the protests until she, like Ahmed, looked out of her window. "There was no internet in the morning [of January 28]," she said. "I wanted to know what was happening, so I looked out of the balcony early in the morning... there was nothing. You know it was like the calm that precedes the storm... I said to myself the government and the police spoiled it... I looked at the mosque in the street... I saw two or three people... I said to myself everyone is afraid, nothing will happen... I felt annoyed... people will not go out, they will be afraid and nothing will happen... this is what made me decide to take to the street, because we wanted to increase the number of people... After the prayer ended, we started hearing a march coming from the direction of July 26th road or somewhere close to us. We were looking out of the window seeing people coming and the sound, and tear gas started to be fired... we saw the police standing in the middle trying to make people gather in the middle so that they could fire on them." She narrated how she and her colleagues saw a policeman in civilian clothes leading protesters on to a particular spot where police could easily fire on them. "So we went down to tell people to beware of that man... this is one of the main things that made me go [and join the protests]," she explained.

They all acknowledged the presence of solidarity, high levels of morality and safety inside Tahrir Square. They cited the example of food and blankets that were distributed. A contrast

between people in Tahrir and Egyptians outside was made. Albert, for example, said that there was something about Tahrir that made people act in a better way than they would otherwise. Construction of each participant's subjectivity as a revolutionary youth who belongs to a wider collective of protesters vis-a-vis the authorities, and a clear division between "us" and "them" emerged. It was clear in words such as "our people" that was used by Mona to describe the protesters in Tahrir Square in their fight against the attackers on the day of the Battle of the Camel. Essam also used "we" several times while narrating his participation. There was a sense of community that for Noha was characterized by unconditional co-existence. Mona did acknowledge that there was co-existence but rejected the over-romanticization of the Tahrir community.

The participants also reflected on the description of the protests as peaceful or *selmeyya*. While Ahmed defended the view that the protests were peaceful, Essam and John dispelled the myth of "s*elmeyya*", whereby this word is used to describe two different things. In the first sense, Ahmed uses *selmeyya* to describe the protesters -- that they did not attack the police or any other public or private properties (although there is a contradiction in his narrative and he does mention instances when protesters do attack the police and public buildings). In the second instance, Essam uses not-*selmeyya* to describe the attacks on the protesters, that they died while trying to break through the security. Even Ahmed, who dubbed the protests peaceful, did acknowledge that the higher ranking officers were attacked by the protesters. Regardless of the different viewpoints of the participants, debate over the peacefulness of the protests is an important factor in shaping the subjectivities of the protesters as being a "collective" that is under attack by the authorities or the police. The experience of being together--even if not physically in the same place--in a situation where they were the common target of police attacks heightens their sense of belonging to one collective, a collective of protesters. It is this particular historical event, the Revolution, and its narration as such--through these three themes-- that gives the participants a sense of being a collective. In narrating this past, i.e. their participation in the protests, they were also constructing themselves as constitutive of the collective as "political subjects" (Samaddar 2009) and as subjects

of the Revolution after being "atomized" (Bayat 2009) individuals and subjects of humiliation by the government (Ismail 2011). They were being transformed into subjects of the Revolution as they were taking part in the 18 days and constructing narratives about them. The subject gave and is still giving form to the collective, and the collective was shaped and is still shaping the subject of the Revolution.

The participants narrated Tahrir as a site of protest where fear was broken and where they pushed their limits. But there was also an allusion to "sites" of the Revolution beyond Tahrir Square and other main protest sites. Participants who were not at the epicenter of the demonstrations are also part of the larger story of the Revolution. And not being there -- why and what they did while not being there-- is also part the story. "There" became synonymous with Tahrir. Tahrir was not only highlighted by the media as being central in the making of "news" about the Revolution but it was also evoked in almost every conversation about the Revolution and reference was made to "there in Tahrir" to prove the speakers' involvement in the Revolution. It was through this association that "Tahrir" became synonymous with "Revolution." While most of the stories presented here highlight Tahrir Square--as do the local and international media and the official government discourse--the participants did indeed challenge that. I intentionally selected a participant who took part in the protests outside of Cairo--in Aswan and Zagazig. But participants themselves also alluded to what was happening elsewhere, such as in the neighborhoods. By not being at the site of the protest or the sit-in, participants were also contributing to the bigger-picture story. John spent most of the 18 days in the hospital after he sustained injuries and fainted on January 28, he received over a hundred rubber bullets in his body. Albert received a pellet and had to skip almost two days without going to the Square. Although Tahrir was central in the narrative of the participants and the collective they were referring to the locality of Tahrir, the realm of the Revolution and revolutionary subjectivity extended beyond the edges of Tahrir.

V-Conclusion

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This chapter dealt with narratives first as a mode of representing the past and secondly as a resource for content about how the subjects experienced the Revolution *for the first time*. Each participant presented his or her version of the 18 days, with such narration being colored by his or her own past, background, interests, desires, and affect. The narratives were constructed through the remembering of certain details and the forgetting of others, at times intentional and at other times, involuntary. In so doing, they partly reflected and partly diverged from the official government narrative which they were sometimes seeking to counter or challenge through these narratives. This was particularly clear in discussions about how peaceful the protests were. In an attempt to silence references to "violence" perpetrated against the peaceful protesters during the January 25 protests, the SCAF and the successive Egyptian governments have constantly stressed that the protests were "peaceful". The participants of this research all disagreed with this official narrative in as far as the government sought to intentionally "forget" the use of force and violence against the protesters. In the participants' narration of instances where violence was used, they were also constructing themselves as subjects of protest, subjects of history, and as part of a larger collective of protesters/revolutionaries.

Acknowledgment of their inexperience was key in their narration, as was the alteration of feelings of hope and despair, fear and courage. The novelty theme was central to their making as subjects of protest in that their participation in the 18 days marked a rupture with the past and the beginning of something new that was to continue thereafter. A statement like this "*khalaas maba'etsh akhaaf*" (It's over, I am no longer afraid) captures this particular rupture with the past. This claim of the "end" of fear (I say claim because it might be just a statement that does not necessarily reflect actual feelings of bravery but which is equally important) marks the "start" of a new life through their new subjectivity that was shaped by their participation in the protests.

Following Javier Auyero, protesters' stories, their recollections, are also crucial for the construction of the sense of who they are, i.e., their 'self-understanding' or their 'situated subjectivity''' (Auyero, 2002, 154). He says:

"[N]arrative's configuration of events over time makes them important to the construction and maintenance of individual and collective identities" (Auyero, 2002, 154).

They constructed their subjectivity as protesters who belong to a larger collective of revolutionaries (*thowwar*) or Revolution supporters whereby "us" is pitted against "them", which includes the state agents, the police, the regime and people who support them. The importance of these narratives is not only in that they are representations of what happened but also in that they are part of the present and will continue -- as a possibility and as a resource -- to shape the future.

Chapter Three

The Multiple Meanings of Protest

Since the onset of the protests on January 25, there has been much debate on and analysis of how this Revolution came about: Why protesters took to the streets, what demands were driving them, what goals they sought to achieve through such action, and what they actually did on the streets and at the protest sites. But what is missing is a focus on the subjects of protest and Revolution and the meanings they ascribe to their demands and their participation. This chapter will attempt to fill that gap by unpacking the multiple meanings of protest through examining participants' narratives about the reasons for which and the ways in which they partook in the 18 days. I examine the protesters' narratives about the demands and goals that drove their participation and about the actions and activities they engaged in during that period. This chapter examines how each participant makes sense of his or her participation in the 18 days and how this process of sense-making is shaped by his or her personal experience.

I use Bayat's "quiet encroachment" as a theoretical lens to make sense of how and why such "atomized" (Bayat, 2009) middle-class youth, who were not part of any groups or associations or political parties and who have never before engaged in "politics" per se were mobilized into joining the January 25 protests. For the sake of analysis, I use T.H. Marshall's framework of dividing up citizenship rights into three categories: political, civil and social/economic. I look at how each participant in his or her narrative gives varying or equal weight to each of these categories. The political rights category includes demands for fair elections; the civil rights category includes freedom of assembly and free speech and expression; and the socioeconomic category includes improvement of the education system and elimination of severe poverty. I argue that these middle-class youth protesters were motivated by citizenship entitlements and by the realization that socio-economic rights on the one hand and political/civil rights on the other were interlinked and inseparable. They did feel empathy with the millions of underprivileged Egyptians, but they also realized that even their middle class economic privileges were at risk as long as their political and civil rights were not guaranteed. This feeling of risk partly motivated them to join collective action.

The chapter also outlines modes of participation, describing the different forms through which protesters engaged in the demonstration or the sit-in site and with other protesters. I examine the different tasks and leisure activities that they carried out and that helped sustain the protests and the making of Tahrir Square as a site of not only battles with the authorities but also a reclaimed public space frequented by Egyptians of all walks of life. I will give examples of the different groups and structures that emerged in the Square, examining how public space was reclaimed by "the people" and re-ordered. I argue that the protesters took on roles that were ad-hoc and that emerged at the spur of the moment as they responded to the exigencies of the situation whether during the demonstrations or the two-week long sit-in in Tahrir Square. But in taking on these roles, the participants also capitalized on their personal experiences, i.e. what they were trained to do. It was these roles and the practices they engaged in that gave rise to new subjectivities, or "re-signified" subjectivities (Keraitim and Mehrez, 2012). I observed several modes of participation including the entertainer, the fighter and the supply manager, which I discuss in detail later in this chapter.

For analytical purposes, I use the term "demand" and "goal" synonymously to refer to the factors that participants say led them to join the protests. I have attempted to ask them that question in varying forms depending on each participant and on the flow of the conversation with each one of them. What is it about their country, or *el balad* as they themselves call it, that they did not like and wanted to change that shaped their decision to join the protests? What purpose or goal do they see this Revolution aiming to achieve? I analyze these demands by looking at their characteristics and the factors that shaped them and why such demands are important to the participants. I look at three levels of characteristics as described by the participants: How far they fit T.H. Marshall's citizenship right's categorization (civil, political and socioeconomic), how far these demands are personal or public or both, and whether the participants' demands are vague/general or clear/specific. I wish to acknowledge that there is some overlap between these categories. For example, a demand could be both political and economic as well as public and private. The

conceptualization of demands and goals as such provides useful framework to understand why these participants were disgruntled with life in their country, what is it that they wanted to change, and how this shaped their participation.

The literature on social movements and collective action helps elucidate some of the research questions posed in this chapter, such as what drove the participants to decide to join the protests or how the mass protests gradually gathered public support. For example, Mancur Olson's rational action theory highlighted the idea of cost and benefit in determining an individuals decision to join collective action (Opp, 46), while P. Eisinger argued that political opportunities, such as government responsiveness, impacts such individual decisions (Opp, 161-162). Charles Tilly argued that identities are a determining factor in making individuals realize their common interest, and thus decide to join collective action through what he calls "contentious politics" (Tilly, 59). Even though these and other theories--a detailed mentioning of which is beyond the scope of this thesis--give varying weight to structure and agency, their goal is to explain the phenomenon of protest on the aggregate level--even if they study individual protesters. What I wish to clarify through the particular focus on the perspective and the narratives of the youth is the different ways in which each of these subjects "rationalize" and "make sense" of their experiences through constructing meanings in a process that is informed by their affects, desires, aspirations on the one hand and by the political and historical structure within which they act on the other. And it is through this process that their subjectivities as protesters emerge.

I- Purpose of Participation

The January 25 protests was the first time for all of the participants in this research to join such large-scale demonstrations, and the idea that it was their first time to protest, i.e. novelty, was key in shaping their experience and their subjectivity as discussed in Chapter Two. Only a few of them had previously taken part in a demonstration here or there. Albert once took part in a demonstration led by judges in 2006 to protest attacks on demonstrators the previous year when hundreds took to the streets on May 25 to oppose the constitutional referendum. Noha took part in a

demonstration in solidarity with Palestinians that was organized at her university campus a few years back. Mona joined a few protests over the killing of Khaled Saeed--an Alexandrian man who became an icon during the January 25 protests--when she was studying in London. On April 6, 2008, Mo observed a march led by a group of youth calling for political reform and regime change while being surrounded by security police who tried to prevent anyone else from joining them. Mo eventually joined the march in order to understand what they were talking about. Although a few of the participants of this research did sporadically join protests, they were not regular participants, and they never experienced such a large-scale demonstration as the ones that took place after January 25. So until the start of the Revolution, they were all what Bayat calls unaffiliated "atomized" individuals (Bayat 2009). After going through the experience of the 18 days, however, they have become regular protest participants, and some of them joined political and social change groups as will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

Since it was their first time, not all participants in this research necessarily had a clear idea from the very first day as to why they were joining the protests. As discussed in the previous chapter, coincidence played a role. Some of them just happened to be close to a protest site and first joined out of curiosity and then ended up taking a larger part, like the case of Donia. And as they continued to go to protest and sit-in sites, they started to develop clearer ideas about what kind of demands and goals they were after or to identify with the demands raised by the other protesters. But what was common to all of them, however, was that they harbored a general feeling of discontent at how the country was run, with their discourse falling under three broad categories: lack of human dignity, bad government practices, and poor socioeconomic conditions. This discontent was experienced through encounters with the Egyptian state agents that involved random identity checks, arrests, bribery, and the lack of personal and political freedoms or through observation of injustices around them, such as police brutality, inequitable income levels, poverty, and a bad educational system. Yusery Ahmed Ezbawy observed that the demands of the youth "took on a snowball effect", initially raising grievances about the security forces' heavy handedness

and opposition to passing on power to Gamal Mubarak. These demands later grew in scale, culminating in one big demand: overthrowing Mubarak (Ezbawy, 2011, 26). For the participants in this research, taking part in the protests and the consequent sit-in made them gradually start to formulate more specific ideas about what demands were most important to them. For some of them, this became even clearer after the 18 days. That is to say that the crystallization of their demands happened through a process of engagement with the physical site of the protest, i.e. Tahrir Square, and with other protesters around them through conversations and debates.

In my discussions with John and Donia, for example, they both used the word "general" to describe what demands they were after. Donia was dismayed over the situation of the country, citing examples such as police brutality, bribery, and corruption in general, and she had initially not intended to participate in the protests despite knowing they were scheduled to take place on January 25. So when I asked her which of the demands that were voiced back then she identified with, she said, "toppling of the regime." "You, as Donia, did you have any particular clear thing or demand in mind that you took to the streets for?" I followed up. She replied:

> "I don't think so, I am trying to think. But they were all general things. I identified with all the things that were being said, such as change, dignity, bread, freedom, social equality. All these things were on my mind. I wasn't after a particular thing. I just felt that there are many things that should change. Everything that I see as negative should change."

One of her major concerns was "educational and cultural ignorance", so she believed the Revolution created an atmosphere that is conducive for such issues to be tackled by making possible opportunities, such as forming women groups. She aspires for this Revolution to be a conduit for the amelioration of women's status and an opportunity for elevating the level of education and culture *(thaqafa)* in Egyptian society. Donia started to observe the Square, engage in conversations and go through certain situations that gradually made her identify with the issue of women's rights, especially when she found out that there was no female representation in the first youth coalition formed during the 18 days. This is also partly an outcome of personal experience:

Donia is a woman in her thirties, she runs a private business, and she constantly has to stand her own ground. I will discuss this in detail later in this chapter.

Throughout their narratives, the participants articulated the different categories of demands along the lines of Marshall's conceptualization of citizenship rights: political rights, civil rights, and socioeconomic rights. The participants did not use the term "citizenship" or *mowatana*[7] but nevertheless made references to political, civil and socio-economic rights that they are supposedly entitled to by virtue of being Egyptian and living in the Egyptian state. There were variations among the participants in terms of the importance they give to each of these categories. However, they all somehow recognized that all rights were interlinked. Mohammed Bamyeh observed that during the 18 days of protests, "radical political demands were so elevated that all other grievances--including those concerning dismal economic conditions--remained subordinate to them" (Bamyeh, Feb. 11, 2011). Although Bamyeh's observation was made early on, it did reflect the opinion of some of the participants of this research, such as Albert, who gave more salience to political and civil rights than to economic demands . He joined the protests because he wanted to live "as a human being", which for him means being able to have a say in choosing political leaders and not live in fear of the police or the authorities in general. "For me, the economic issue is not such a big deal," Albert explained. "Thank God, I have a good job with a good pay, but what I lacked was to live like a human being, to have a say in what is happening, to be not afraid that a police officer would do something to me." Essam had a different take on the matter. Essam described himself as a Trotskyist and is involved in a leftist student movement that works closely with workers. In his narrative, he made a distinction between civil and economic demands and gave higher value to the latter. "For me, this Revolution is for bread and social equality (rather than for civil freedoms)," Essam said. "During the 18 days, I had hoped that the Revolution will set in motion the establishment of a state that is built on the principle of social equality, and start solving the problem of unemployment and minimum wage for workers..."

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[7] This term was used extensively by the Mubarak regime and became circulated a lot in the Egyptian media after the Revolution. But it is not commonly used in the everyday life of Egyptians.

Even though the participants are all middle class and urban, they did express concern for others who are less economically fortunate, and at the same time, despite their comfortable income levels, they saw themselves threatened by the bleak economic outlook of the country and the lack of civil and political freedoms in it. This was articulated through a sense of empathy towards the poor and sometimes guilt of being in a better position. There was also a sense of anxiety, such as that expressed by Mo. He said:

> "Thank God, I am in a good economic situation, I could buy a car and I live in a good place. But what about the rest [of the population]? What about afterwards? What if my income becomes no longer sufficient?"

Similarly, when I asked Mohamed which demands he identified with, he said:

> "Social justice. Even if I personally am not affected by it, 70 percent or 80 percent of the people are affected by it... [actually] me too, I am affected by social equality. I came here [to Cairo] from Port Said to work because when I was working in Port Said, I was only making 500 pounds [a month]."

Along with all the participants in this research, he cited economic conditions--which he is not necessarily directly affected by but witnesses on a daily basis--as a reason for being disgruntled at the situation (*el wade'*) of the country. Noha works as an interior designer and as part of her job, she was commissioned to draw paintings to decorate the ceilings and walls of villas and palaces of businessmen, politicians and actors. She felt the contrast between these mansions and other luxury residential gated communities and the other parts of Egypt, where people fight over bread and transportation and eat from rubbish bins. Jailan, who works as an architect, shared the same sentiment as Noha. When I asked her what was it about poverty that troubled her, she said:

> "When I go to the health insurance [hospital], I see how people look and how they are treated. I say to myself, just because I have some money, I will be able to save myself. But what about these? There was nothing that I could do, or maybe there was but I didn't know. This [thought] was killing me."

Therefore, all of the participants had encounters with social injustice and poverty, whether through their work, such as Mona who worked in an NGO in a slum, or through merely walking down the

street and seeing people who are less privileged than them. And it was these encounters that haunted them and made them have empathy with people from a different class but who share the same collective with them, that is Egypt.

Furthermore, despite their middle-class status in society, they sensed they were being marginalized in matters related to choosing their political leadership and felt threatened by the oppressive state apparatuses. For these middle-class participants, comfortable income level was just not enough. Mona and Albert both mentioned how they felt they were "like cattle" being goaded by the leaders and that they were vulnerable to harassment by the police. Albert said:

> "Mixing with people from the west and foreigners, I [realized that there is] freedom and democracy abroad. This is something that I want to have here. I won't accept to live like a sheep in a herd. So the problem was not so much economic as it was about rights and freedoms."

Mohamed, who grows a bread, said he used to be stopped for identity checks and questioned by the police because of the way he looked. He was concerned that people were living in their country without dignity.

Although the demands over which the participants were protesting were inspired by things they directly experienced in their daily lives, such as widespread bribery or humiliation by state agents, they were also able to identify with demands and grievances that have not necessarily touched them directly but which they see around them every day, such as as police brutality and poverty. I will call the ones that affect them directly "personal demands" and the ones that do not affect them directly "public demands." So a middle-class university student, such as Essam, calling for the application of a minimum wage, is a public demand. On the other hand, when Donia calls for the reinstitution of a quota for women in parliament, she is making a "personal" demand since it directly emanates from her subject position in society even though if realized, it will impact a larger segment of society, i.e. all women. I propose this distinction as an analytical tool to understand how and why people may be calling for demands that will not necessarily have a direct positive impact on them but is good for the society as a whole. There is also an overlap: a demand could be both

public and personal, as in the case of Mona. Mona's brother grows a beard and has been stopped for questioning by the police several times, and she has lived in fear for him under the authoritarian regime of Mubarak. This was personal. So she went out to protest for freedom and dignity. But she also worked in community outreach program and saw for herself the extreme poverty in the slums and was therefore also protesting for social equality. This was more of a public concern that together with the personal one pushed her to protest. But also the personal concern, i.e. her brother's encounters with the police, echoes a larger concern that Mona had, which is widespread police brutality and torture in police stations. She said:

> "[I had] a general feeling [of dismay over] torture and the suppression of freedoms in Egypt. My brother grows a beard and he is a Salafi. So all the time, you are living in fear that any second he could be arrested. It's not that I had my brother [directly] on [my] mind when I took to the streets to protest... but it is one of the things that is always making me live in fear... So it was extreme anger that made me take to the streets."

She went on to explain why for her civil, political and social rights are all important but for different reasons:

> "I am not poor, I have money and I make enough money to live well. So that which represents me more is when we say [chant] 'Freedom!' and 'Human Dignity!'. But at the same time, I want those around me to live [well]. I believe that it is unacceptable that some people live a luxurious life in mansions... Even if I live an acceptable life, this doesn't mean that I see it okay for some people to live like this [well] and others to live like that [in poverty]".

Throughout the previous narratives, the participants alluded to how their encounters with the government involved humiliation, lack of dignity, bribery and corruption. Even though, they themselves were not touched by extreme poverty, they observed the poor around them and felt guilt and empathy towards them. But they just remained "passive" or "inactive" thinking that participation in political and social change is not worthwhile. This is captured by the phrase "*mafeesh fayda fel mosharka*" or "*el mosharka makansh leeha lazma*", both translated as "there was no use in participation." However, for different reasons and under diverse conditions, they were mobilized into action by the outbreak of January 25 during which their demands started to

crystallize through a process of engagement with the protests. While coincidence played a role in triggering some of the participants into action, others were motivated by a personal desire to see an end to injustice in their country.

The participants in this research acknowledged--albeit subtly--the interconnectedness of socio-economic and political/civil demands. They realized that economic comfort was not everything and that their economic status is not secure as long they do not have political and civil rights. They wanted to be treated as "human beings" and not "cattle" as some put it. It is this feeling of discomfort, injustice or even being "at risk" that mobilized them into action to use Bayat's idea of "quiet encroachment" (Bayat 2009). Bayat argued that it is when the interest of the previously quiet masses are threatened and their gains become at risk that they are mobilized into political action and confrontation with the authorities (Bayat 2009). Similarly, these middle class youth some how felt threatened by Mubarak's neoliberal repressive regime, and there was no choice but to join collective action. The main difference is that Bayat described collective action of a group of identical people, such as street vendors, or middle-class women or youth (Bayat 2009), whereas the case of January 25 protests brought together people from different backgrounds. However, what is useful in his framework is that he deals with unaffiliated and "atomized" individuals, which fits perfectly well with the case of these middle-class youth.

II- Modes of Participation

The first days of the revolution started with marches from gathering points, mainly outside mosques and professional syndicates towards main squares, interrupted by battles with the police and culminating in sit-ins, which were sporadically a target of attacks by opponents. Tahrir Square was the symbolic heart of the Revolution and all major squares that saw protests and sit-ins were dubbed Tahrir by the media. Commentators and political activists in talk shows and in newspaper columns started to utilize that plural form, the Tahrir Squares in Egypt (*mayadeen el tahrir fi masr)*, to highlight what they saw as the equally important sites of protest outside of Cairo, such as El Qaid Ibrahim square in Alexandria or El Arbaeen Square in Suez. These squares emerged as the physical

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space for interaction among the various protesters, whether those camping out in the square or those who paid regular visits to the square, for the battles between the protesters and the authorities, and for the occasional clashes between the protesters and their opponents, whether civilian regime supporters or ordinary citizens or shop owners disgruntled by the protests. It was in these squares, but not exclusively, that protesters created a physical and symbolic "community." Within this reclaimed public space in Tahrir, each participant played a certain role, no matter how minor it was--as minor as just being there physically to make the crowd look bigger. Mona, one of the participants of this research, told me that one of her friends described their presence in "like ants" filling the space. Tahrir Square, as Sahar Keraitim and Samia Mehrez argued, was about the re-signification of public space and public order as well as the re-signification of collective and individual subjectivities (Keraitim and Mehrez, 2012, 15).

Protesters pitched tents and brought in food supplies and blankets, while field hospitals were established by volunteers and professional physicians, and even makeshift toilets were built up. The volunteers also set up television screens, radios and internet connections and spread out newspapers on the ground for all to see as a way of linking up the square to the outside world. Entrances to the square, where streets branched out, were manned by male and female guards who proudly wore hand badges labeled "Square Security." Patriotic songs blared out of loudspeakers and several podiums were set up for singers and poets to perform. And when the square came under attack by regime-sponsored thugs, the protesters mobilized to protect it, setting up barricades to prevent the attackers from entering and using rocks and stones as weapons. Geographically, the middle circle, which is called *el kahka el hadideyya* or the iron bun, was mainly for sleeping and socializing, and the edges of the square, especially facing Mohamed Mahmoud Street (which leads to the Ministry of Interior) and Abdel Moneim Riyadh square on the other end, acted as a frontline in confrontations with the police and regime supporters.

Throughout those 18 days, the square signified several things for the participants of this research other than simply being a place of protest and dissent, including, as Keraitim and Mehrez

argue, it being a carnival-like site (Keraitim and Mehrez 2012). For example, Essam said he would observe and listen to what he called *halaqaat el tanwir*, which is translated in English into "illumination sessions," whereby a group of people would sit around in a circle and engage in discussions about politics. Essam said he learned a lot from engaging in discussions with the leftists he met in the square. So in this sense, the square was a place of learning. In another instance, it was an art gallery. Jailan said she loved to go to the artists corner, which was located on the pavement in front of KFC (which was closed then), and look at their works of art. So in a way, the square was many things for different people at the same time. Over the course of the 18 days, the square was transformed from being a public space controlled by the authorities to becoming the prize or the war bounty paid for in blood of the martyrs that fell during battles with the security forces. It was the day of January 28, 2011 that marked the major transformation of the square as the property of the people or *al-sha'b* after which they rewrote its history, according to an account by Sahar Keraitim and Samia Mehrez. As they eloquently put it:

> "The battle of January 28, 2011 was the marker that transformed Midan al-Tahrir in the collective imagination from a place of strife to a space of harmony, from a temporary site of protest to a permanent symbol of the people's will, from a war zone to a liberation zone, from a physical space to a symbolic one" (Keraitim and Mehrez, 2012, 40).

However, it was the square as a carnival or a place for festivities and the production of humor that sustained its momentum. Keraitim and Mehrez likened the square to a *mulid* -- which is formal Arabic translates into birth and is a "popular celebration of the birthday of a venerated spiritual figure (Mehrez, 2012, 15)-- in the double sense of the word, literally as the birthplace of freedom and as a place where the rituals of the *mulid* celebrations "within this revolutionary context, acquire new politicized signification (Keraitim and Mehrez, 2012, 34). *Mulids* "momentarily undo established social, gender, and class boundaries, allowing villagers and town folks, poor and rich, young and old, men and women, to share the same public sphere" (Keraitim and Mehrez, 2012, 44). And it was this familiarity with the ritual celebrations of *mulid* that drew

millions of Egyptians, including families, even those who have never before been to a *mulid* but are familiar with it through literature and movies, and that nurtured the "Independent Republic of Tahrir" (Keraitim and Mehrez, 2012, 35-36).

Amidst this carnivalesque atmosphere, Egyptians used one of their most precious weapons: Humor. Jokes were written or caricatures were drawn on banners, and small funny acts were performed in the square. The jokes developed with each political development and were shaped to suit whatever the government would say or do. For example, state media claimed that the protesters in Tahrir were spies and that they were receiving free KFC meals and Euros for such participation. Shortly after that claim was made, the square was full of all kinds of ways to mock that allegation. I saw a man wearing a blond wig and holding a banner saying he was a spy and that he was receiving money and KFC meals for participating in the protests. Another man was walking around the square holding a plate full of dates and offering people in the square from that plate while sarcastically shouting "Come and get some Kentucky!" The Square, thus, became a public space that was reclaimed through a mix of violent battles and a "quiet encroachment" by the protesters.

And in each of these different significations of the Square, participants started to take on certain tasks and cast themselves into various roles. They did not necessarily consciously have a concrete role in mind that they knew they had to play or were playing as it transpired from my conversations with them. Yet they did acknowledge that they were committed to certain tasks as part of their membership in the Tahrir community. Some had roles that are more defined than others. While some presented themselves to me clearly as slogan chanters (*hatteef* sing.), others presented themselves merely as observers, who formed a significant segment of the protest goers[8]. These roles partly depended on their experience before the 18 days and their aspirations for the future. Jailan said her first visit to the square was more for exploration rather than anything else. She explained:

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[8] This is the impression I got by observing the square and talking to different people.

"I used to walk, look at the artists and those coming with their children. I used to listen to what people were saying. They were so politicized... On the Friday before Mubarak stepped down, people were praying, journalists were standing on rooftops. I was contemplating. This is what I was doing."

Gradually, Jailan started to make sense of why she was there, and her real involvement did not happen until after the 18 days when she helped in the organization of the one-million man march on May 27. Albert, for example, had wanted to engage more in collective action before the 18 days but did not have an opportunity. The Revolution offered him that opportunity. He became a makeshift protest leader, staging a protest in Embaba, a working class neighborhood in Greater Cairo, on January 26 and 27 and helping draft political statements about what was happening in the Square during the 18 days. He also became a founding member of a group calling for the achievement of the goals of the Revolution. Depending on how long they spent in the square and through their interactions with other protesters and with the progression of events, protesters took on clearer roles and engaged in more structured and purposeful or goal-oriented activities that were partly in response to the exigencies of the situation. Mona did not really have a specific role in mind, but as the square turned to more of a living space during the camp-out that started on January 28, she started to take on different tasks, such as sweeping the floor or contributing to the supply of food and drinks. Through a process of engagement with the Square and the community therein, they all developed their roles and emergent subjectivities, which were also partly an outcome of their past experience, i.e. work experience or some particular skill they had.

Based on participant observation in the square during the 18 days and the interviews conducted with the participants, I classified modes of participation into eight categories, with participants possibly carrying out more than one role and/or shifting roles depending on the situation on the ground. The categories are as such: the ***contemplator***, who goes to the square to observe what is happening and listen to what people are saying; the ***supply manager***, who buys and distributes food, drinks and covers; the ***fighter***, who defends the square and engages in battles with transgressors; the ***security guard***, who stands at checkpoints around the square; the ***public relations***

person, who talks to skeptics and critics inside and outside the square and lobbies for the cause of the Revolution; the *entertainer*, who sings or reads poetry or dances in the square to lift people's spirits; the *activist* or the *politician*, who hold banners, lead slogans chants and form groups; and the *nurse* or the *doctor*, who treats anyone injured in battles with the opponents. These categories are by no means exhaustive of the possibilities of modes of participation. I believe, however, that they do capture a fairly wide range of activities that were taking place in the protest and sit-in sites.

When I was talking to Donia, for example, I got the impression from her narrative that she was acting like a public relations spokeswoman for the square. She narrated:

> "I used to wake up early and go [to the square] and come back home as if it was my job. I would spend a lot of time standing from the morning until night talking to this person and that. As I am used to talking with strangers as part my job, I had taken it as a mission to do so [in the square], especially in the last days when people wanted to know more [about what is happening]. I would speak to them in their language... if someone is coming from a low-income neighborhood or someone who is a little bit older. I was trying to make them understand and give them examples using their own language. I was successful many times. I think that I started to help people outside the square realize what is happening in Tahrir."

Donia then went on to help bring together a group of women to form a group[9], which I will elaborate on later. So it was her work experience as a woman head of business, which involves talking to people from different walks of life, that was key in determining what kind of role she takes on. At the same time, she realized that the Square or the Revolution needed a public relations person or a spokeswoman to explain what was happening.

A discussion of the role of the participants is very important here since the majority of them joined the protests as individuals rather than as part of organized groups. Understanding these roles is essential in understanding the "re-signified subjectivities": how these individuals carve out a place for themselves from the grassroots level rather than in a top-down manner as in other instances of collective action and how they situate themselves in the loose structure and organization of the protests in an ad-hoc manner. In doing so, they were constantly reshaping the

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[9] I removed the name of the group to protect Donia's anonymity.

organization of and the signification of the Square. From the narratives of the participants, it was clear that each settled into a different role not through a pre-devised plan. As was discussed in the previous chapter, the protests were unplanned. They rather settled into these roles each depending on his or her skills and depending on the situations in which they found themselves, i.e. their roles were emerging as part of a process. For example, when Noha found herself caught up in the fighting between the supporters and the opponents of Mubarak on February 2, she started to throw rocks. She was, therefore, transformed into a fighter even if momentarily after which she switched back to just being an observer.

In this process of going back and forth between roles, including the taking up of new roles (Noha had never fought before in her life), new subjectivities emerged. These subjectivities prepared participants to engage more in the life of the square, including joining some of the groups that were being formed as the protests were still ongoing. This process involved networking, dialogue and negotiation with the other participants in the Square. This on-the-ground process was in a way transforming not only public space but also the participants' subjectivities. It was these "political practices" (Samaddar 2009)--of engagement of protesters with each other-- and "new desires" (Samaddar 2009)- for a new political and social order that were giving rise to these subjectivities. In Chapter Four and Chapter Five, I will elaborate more on how these participants emerged as "political subjects" (Samaddar 2009) through engagement in the political process that followed the ouster of Mubarak. But part of this process of becoming "political subjects" was that participants started to join different social and political change groups while the protests were still ongoing, i.e. during the 18 days, as will be discussed below. The subject of Revolution was thus constantly emerging and changing with every practice, action, or event he or she engaged in, and along the way, was transforming the political. His or her personal trajectories and desires crisscross with those of others and with the larger structures and processes which he or she act.

The protests that broke out on January 25 were called for by several youth and activist groups, including the April 6 Movement, the We Are All Khaled Saeed Facebook page, the

National Association for Change, Kefaya, and the Justice and Freedom movement. The call was disseminated through the internet and other social media. Dina Shehata argued that in the ten years leading up to the January 25 Revolution, these and other youth-led movements played a key role in mobilizing a new generation of Egyptian into politics through the introduction of original tools of mobilization, framing of a new cross-ideological political discourse and created ties between political and social activism (Shehata, 2011, 105). Although it was these organized groups that first called for the protests, the vast majority of participants were individuals who are not associated with any movement or group. Yusery Ahmed Ezbawy argued that the way people were drawn into the protests was through a snowball method, starting off with a small core of politically active youth, who were labeled as the "Facebook youth" and ending up with a larger mass of protesters that include marginalized citizens. That core group was able to draw in and appeal to a wider circle of apolitical youth by raising issues that touched the latter group's daily lives, such as rampant corruption. The third circle, which was made up of the economically and politically squeezed middle-class, joined in large numbers followed by the fourth circle of people who live on the "fringe of society" (Ezbawy, 2011, 26). And as the protests persisted and continued to grow in size, some protesters started to either join existing groups or form new groups. For example, The Coalition of the Youth of the Revolution, The Movement of the Free Egyptian, and the Federation of Revolutionary Youth all emerged during the 18 days. Some continued to work in the year after the 18 days and are still active until the time of writing, such as the group Albert helped found. This group was founded in the early days of February with the aim of "completing the goals of the revolution". The group consists of individuals with different political ideologies, all of whom are secular (*madaneyeen* as opposed to Islamists). Thus, the square was a sort of recruitment space for various pre-existing groups and it was equally a fertile ground for the birth of new groups and movements and re-signified subjectivities. In a way, this was the start of new "politics" of engagement.

When Donia heard that a coalition was being set up by youth from the square to better coordinate action and represent the protesters, she was enthusiastic and wanted to join them until she realized that the leadership of the group did not include a single woman even though women have stood side by side with men all along. She spoke to a friend of hers and another acquaintance both of whom had previous experience with joining such groups, and they were both very upset that the coalition excluded women from its top ranks. "That is when we got the idea to form a coalition for the female youth of the revolution... I started to pass by the tents in the square during the 18 days and ask them if they are interested in joining me and I took their contact information," Donia explained. She then managed to set up a group for women, and in the following biggest sit-in in July, 2011, she pitched a tent in the Square to represent the group.

Although the primary focus of this research is on the protest and sit-in site, i.e. Tahrir Square, I would like to make reference to other sites, where subjects were also involved in participating in and shaping the Revolution. Even though the 18-day protests and sit-in mainly took part in public space and it was largely about the reclaiming of public space from the oppressive authorities, it would be naive to ignore what was happening elsewhere in the country, whether on the peripheries of such iconic squares or in private spheres. Jessica Winegar contended that the home, where the family's women mostly stayed during the 18 days, was also a sphere where the Revolution was being experienced and even shaped. The home, where day-to-day practices take place, is an important site in that it could either support or impede social change (Winegar, 2012, 68). Winegar concluded: "Focusing only on the iconic revolutionary - and by extension, iconic notions of revolutions - means missing the myriad, everyday ways that social transformation is experienced, enabled and perhaps impeded, always in relationship to space, gender, and class" (Winegar, 2012, 70).

Similarly, some of the participants in this research also contributed to the Revolution in other sites, including the workplace, over the Internet and in their neighborhoods, mainly by defending the cause of the Revolution through discussions on social media websites and protecting

their residential areas as part of popular committees or *el legaan el sha'beyya* after police withdrew from the streets on January 28. Mo, a 23-year-old government employee, was unable to join the protests until a couple of hours before Mubarak stepped down. Besides being hampered by work commitments, his father, who works for the Ministry of Interior and his mother, banned him from leaving the house for most of the 18 days. He spent that time away from the Tahrir Square protests engaging in "electronic warfare" and in discussions with people to defend the Revolution. As the oldest among his siblings, he joined the popular committees in his middle-class neighborhood in Old Cairo. Mo said:

> "I would talk to people on the street, in public transport or at work. I would talk to people who badmouth [the Revolution], they may be badmouthing [it] because of a misunderstanding. I was trying as much as I could to defend it. I succeeded with many people."

Thus, these modes of participation the Revolution that extend beyond the contours of Tahrir Square show that the collective of the "protesters" or the "revolutionaries" and the subjectivities shaped by the Revolution are not necessarily tied to the physical location of the Square but is rather an outcome of a shared consciousness, a shared subjectivity. That is to say, they all had self-knowledge that they were taking part in the Revolution, and in so doing, they were shaping it and determining its outcome, even if they were not on the frontline fighting riot police or in the Square writing manifestos. Taking into account these modes of participation also does justice to the desires of the subjects, such as Mo, who wanted to be there physically in the Square but could not because of constraints that go beyond him. When his parents did not allow him to go to Tahrir, he used social media to engage in the Revolution. Here, I would like to stress the importance of "desire" in the formation of subjectivities as Ortner argued (Ornter 2009). Desire for change, for engagement with the affairs of their country was central to the participants' formation as subjects of Revolution. These desires do not emanate from within the individual but are rather shaped by their daily experiences and their personal histories as much as by the structures within which they live. For example, mingling with foreigners gave Albert an insight into the "freedoms" they enjoy in their

countries. He also witnessed and read about injustices, such as police brutality in Egypt. As a result, a desire for changing injustices in Egypt was born within him. This desire for change was central in shaping him as a subject of Revolution.

III-Conclusion

This chapter tried to answer these questions: Why and how were these middle-class youth mobilized and what demands were they pushing for and why? And what kind of activities were they engaged in during protest? What did this participation mean for them? I have focused on the meaning of protest for the different participants by analyzing their goals and demands that were divided into three main categories--civil, political and socioeconomic--with each protester giving a different significance to each but with an acknowledgement that they were all related. I have argued that protesters were partly motivated by aspects of what we think of as "citizenship" although they do not phrase it as such. They nevertheless, stressed that they were making claims for rights. Throughout the process, their personal itineraries intersected with public concerns, giving rise to their desire for change and mobilizing them into action. Perhaps the main slogan of the January 25 Revolution -- "Bread, Freedom, Social Justice and Human Dignity"--best captures this link between the public and the private, in this particular case of middle-class youth, and between the political and the economic. Bread and social justice fall within the socio-economic demands category, while freedom and human dignity fall within the political/civil rights category.

During the 18 days, Tahrir Square gained re-signified meanings --ranging from a battlefield to a carnival. The occupation of Tahrir Square on the night of January 28 marked a rupture with the past in that the protesters were able to reclaim public space from the authorities and re-order it in a way that suits their goals and reflects a utopian society. That reclaimed public space was the site of victory, of sacrifice, and of festivities among many other significations. In all of this, participants' subjectivities were reformulated as they took on various roles that were ad-hoc in response to the exigences of the moment and were informed by their previous experience. These activities and roles were also shaped by the participants' aspirations for the future. But most importantly, the

experience of protest will have a longer lasting effect on the participants than just the 18 days, which I will elaborate on in the following chapter. Their experience in the Square will thus be extended beyond that social space of protest and into the "real" society once the 18 days were over. And with that, further "resignified" subjectivities will emerge.

Chapter 4

Revolution as Increased Involvement

The onset of the Revolution set in motion a process of change both on the national level, for Egypt as a country, and on the personal level, for those who participated in its activities as well as for others who did not take part in such activities but watched from a distance. That change is gradually evolving and its impact is being continuously redefined. The relationship between state and subject underwent an immediate yet not necessarily a deep-rooted transformation in that the authority and the grip of the state on the lives of citizens has been challenged and public space that was previously under the control of the security forces was opened up by and for the people. There has also been a "radical transformation of the relationship between people, their bodies, and space; a transformation that has enabled sustained mass convergence, conversation, and agency for new publics whose access to and participation in public space has for decades been controlled by oppressive, authoritarian regimes", as Samia Mehrez put it (2012, 14). The experience of Tahrir had a "dramatic, immediate, and continuing impact on Egyptians and their relationship to space (both public and private; real and virtual)" (Mehrez, 2012, 14). "This newfound power of ownership of one's space, one's body, and one's language is, in and of itself, a revolution" (Mehrez, 2012, 14). As a result of the departure of Mubarak and the partial breakdown of his coercive security apparatus, a free space opened up for the citizens, most remarkably the "subaltern subjects, to reclaim their societies," as Bayat argued (March, 3, 2011). Banned political parties came to the light, new ones were formed, and grassroots organizations emerged as workers, farmers and students organized to demand their rights. "These all represent popular engagement of exceptional times. But the extraordinary sense of liberation, urge for self-realization, the dream of a new and just points, these societies have moved far ahead of their political elites..." (Bayat, March, 3, 2011). So after the ouster of Mubarak, one-million man demonstrations in Tahrir Square were called for to continue the achievement of the goals of the Revolution, and labor strikes, road blockages and government employee protests erupted exerting pressure on the government to listen to the people's demands. And even if government policies remained largely similar to those of the previous regime and political elites failed to keep pace with the grassroots, state and public discourse changed, with

terms such as "people," "rights," and "citizens" gaining unprecedented salience and new meanings. At least, there was mobilization at all levels of the society.

The Revolution increased opportunities and opened up new channels particularly for youth to engage on a wider scale in social and political change efforts and gave some of them a reason and a cause for such engagement. They felt they have more of a say in running the affairs of their country, especially after the experience of the popular committees when people formed neighborhood watch groups to fill the gap left after the security forces' disappearance from the streets on January 28. People felt they were reclaiming their country from unjust rulers and in some cases, they developed an emotional and physical connection with their immediate locales, such as the neighborhood, the university and the workplace, all of which in turn emerged as important sites for political and social action. Patterns of engagement with politics and what constitutes "politics" and the "political" were reformulated as a result. As was the experience of protesting a novelty for most of the protesters, so were the activities in which they took part after the 18 days, such as going to the polls. The participants in this research did not necessarily consider taking part in the 18 days a political act. Although they had different ideas of what constitutes the "political," they all made a clear distinction between "revolutionary work" and "political work."

Engaging in "politics" has always been regarded with suspicion and distrust on the part of the Egyptian citizens. Larbi Sadiki explained this disengagement with politics using the concept of *demokratiyaat al-khubz*-- conceived by Ahmed Shalabi and akin to Edmund Burke's "democratic bargain." Arab citizens show political deference to the rulers in return for subsidized social and economic services, such as education, healthcare and employment. Under this system, politics is "deferential and non-participatory" and contingent upon the state's ability to provide services to its people. As a result, people are distrustful towards their government and end up avoiding politics. A consequence of this kind of situation is what Algerian intellectual Malik Bin Nabi called "Bulitiq" (a bastardization of the word "politics"), which designates politics as an "undesirable game of power, subterfuge, and counter-subterfuge; as talk but no action" (Sadiki, 2000, 79-80). "It conveys

a general feeling of distrust, which leads to the avoidance of politics," Sadiki explained. The term "Khubziste"-- derived from Khubz, which means bread -- embodies this sentiment of lack of trust towards the political system. The person's tribe or family network offers him or her the support he or she needs and helps him or her avoid contact with the ruling authorities (Sadiki, 2000,79-80). Sadiki attributes this de-politicization of the Arab populace to the Arab states' welfarist system in the 1960s and the early 1970s, which eventually broke down and lead to the several bread riots in Egypt in 1977 and in 1988 in Algeria (Sadiki, 2000, 81). I agree with the previous in as far as it explains the mistrust that Egyptians felt towards "formal" or institutionalized politics. However, I disagree that people avoided "politics" altogether. Under the neoliberal state, there were some limited freedoms and cracks in the system that were used by the people to engage some form of "politics" through what Bayat called a "quiet encroachment" that does not involve the institutional channels of political parties and so on (Bayat, 2009).

According to Philip Marfleet, the successive Egyptian regimes since independence have kept people out of national politics by using both techniques of coercion and co-optation. Whenever there was a wave of mass protests or strikes, the regime responded by being even more repressive than before, leading the mass of society to harbor more tense and distrustful feelings towards their rulers. People started to feel alienated and increasingly angry in the domain of contemporary politics and socio-cultural life (Marfleet, 2009, 15). Organized activism, Assef Bayat argued, requires a political opportunity when the mechanisms of control exercised by the political authorities are challenged by economic or political strife or external pressure on the regime, like for example what happened during Lebanon's Cedar Revolution following the assassination of then Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. But otherwise, under normal circumstances, authorities in the Middle East have shown little tolerance towards sustained activism, forcing the political class either to quit the political scene even if temporarily or to conduct their activities underground as the price for being caught is too high, including torture, arrests, etc. (Bayat, 2009, 9-10). It is in this context that we can understand the case of the Egyptians, especially youth, staying away from what they see as

"engaging in politics," or more generally collective political and/or social action. They abstained from involvement in "politics" out of fear and distrust towards the regime, as the narratives of the participants below show.

The onset of the Revolution and the participants' partaking in it changed their conception about joining social and political action. Albert and Jailan felt that the circumstances after the Revolution have become more conducive to engaging in "politics," and for them, this meant engaging in institutional politics by joining a political party. On the other hand, someone like Noha, still distrusts the very concept of "politics," saying "it is not for me" and preferring to engage in what she calls "revolutionary work," i.e. the street protests and the awareness campaigns. So even though, Noha still rejects involvement in the old category of "politics", she nevertheless acknowledges the new possibilities for involvement that were opened up thanks to her involvement in the 18 days. What Noha still distrusts here are institutional politics--she refused to take part in the elections or join a political party--unlike Albert, who believes it is necessary to engage in institutional politics for the Revolution to succeed.

This chapter traces the change participants express in terms of their increased involvement in social and political action. I discuss how participants describe and make sense of the change they have witnessed as a result of participating in the 18 days of protests and sit-ins and what is it about taking part in those events that shaped such change. I look at how the subjectivities of these participants were shaped as a result of such increased involvement. The chapter describes the three levels of change as articulated by the participants: engaging in collective action, taking part in voting, and forming political ideas and/or identity, all of which amount to an increased interest in engagement in political and social action. The third level describes their engagement in dialogue about and reflexivity over ideas that are considered political, such as political ideologies and whether they fit or not within any of the ideological trends in Egyptian politics, such as Leftist or Liberal, and so on.

All participants in this research acknowledged some change in at least one of these levels. In this chapter, I argue that the 18 days triggered within the participants a new political consciousness that drove them to want to get involved in a myriad of social and political actions, even if they themselves do not describe it as "political." It is political because they are making claims on their rulers, such as fairer political representation, claims that the "Khubziste," for example, would make. These claims go beyond day-to-day demands, such as bread. In so doing, they are engaging in a new way of dealing with the political, or rather they are altogether redefining the "political" through incorporating more elements of the "political", such as voting, into the ordinary domain. This goes again back to the realization that political and socio-economic rights and demands are interlinked.

For the sake of analysis, I divide this chapter into three sections, each describing a level of change articulated by participants. But this is not to say that these levels are separate. On the contrary, it is clear through participants' narratives that these three levels overlap and emerge simultaneously. In addition, there are elements of continuity that permeate such change, and furthermore, change in some aspects is not inevitable. Just as the 18 days resulted in some change in the participants' perspectives, it undoubtedly--as some have testified--left other aspects unchanged. It is also important not to fall into the trap of attributing to the Revolution every change that participants acknowledge. Any change could rarely ever be explained only by linking it to the Revolution through a simple cause and effect formula. Change occurs through the coming together of a myriad of factors rather than one and is non-linear, and sometimes contradictory and unintended. Still, the Revolution is a key factor in bringing about the change described in this chapter. All participants in this research stated that their participation in the Revolution was key in driving them to participate in social and political action following the ouster of Mubarak and it was key in determining their selection of vehicles for such engagement. As a result of one or more aspect of the 18 days, they all became more interested in the affairs of their country and they all became active in engaging in them . They have become regular participants of protests, with some joining a political party or a group, while others remaining independent actors.

I- Engaging in Collective Action

After Mubarak stepped down, participants in this research continued to participate in protests, rallies, sit-ins or political awareness or electoral campaigns after the 18 days as opposed to before when they never participated in such events. Additionally, some of them became part of an organized group that works for social and/or political change or became members of a political party, while others remained independent. With all of them professing to varying degrees of increased interest in engaging in collective action, some are still skeptical of institutional politics, i.e. joining political parties, and of the whole concept of politics and prefer to identify what they do as "engagement in the Revolution" or "revolutionary work." Some changed their perception about the effectiveness of working towards political and social transformation and the means through which they could effect such change. Rather than just participating in charity work or development work, now new vehicles of change opened up and participants have become more enthusiastic about them. Mona, for example, was previously engaged in development work through an NGO, while Jailan was involved in some charity work. Most of the participants in this research had said they would have never imagined going to a protest or joining a political party or an organized group before January 25, so the Revolution helped extend the realm of the possible for them. Many were uninterested in social and political action, partly because they saw no possible channels for or potential outcome from engaging in such action under the former regime's authoritarian grip. Therefore, the 18 days and the stepping down of Mubarak symbolically and logistically marked a rupture in that it changed the youth's thinking about possibilities for and the effectiveness of engaging in such activities and in that it opened up actual channels for such participation, such as the newly formed groups and political parties.

This section traces the change they have witnessed, through outlining the various social and political activities research participants have engaged in and the groups they have joined and how their choice of such activities and groups has emerged as a result (or not) of their participation in the 18 days. The particular political and social activities that are lumped under the term collective

action here include: awareness campaigns, protests, sit-ins, marches and rallies, and electoral campaigns. Following the military attacks on protesters outside parliament, activists started organizing anti-military marches known as part of the *Kazeboun* or Liars campaign[10]. Some were also engaged in electoral campaigns and marches in solidarity with martyrs of the Revolution. This section will also attempt at understanding whether and how locales, such as the university, the neighborhood, and the workplace, rather than just the main squares, downtown sties and areas surrounding government buildings, are becoming important sites of political and social collective action, and how participants navigate these different sites.

Seven out of the ten participants in the core sample of this research were part of either an organized group or a political party throughout the duration of this research. Three of the participants engaged in political and social action as "independents" or *mostaqelleen* (sing. *mostaqel*), with one of them, Mo, joining the presidential campaign of human rights lawyer Khaled Ali and another, John, helping out in campaigns organized by different groups, such as April 6 Youth Movement. Ahmed only participated in protests and attended meetings of several groups, without becoming a member of any of them. The issues around which they mobilized ranged from women's empowerment to supporting workers' strikes. Some of the participants said they already had the seeds of those interests before the Revolution, and after that, these interests were consolidated. For others, it was their participation in the Revolution that was key in determining the type of activities they engaged in after February 11. Participants' awareness, political and otherwise, has been increased as a result of taking part in the Revolution and some of them see a new role for themselves: they want to pass that experience onto others through engaging in such activities.

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[10] After a series of attacks by military soldiers on protesters outside parliament and in Tahrir Square in early December, activists launched the *Kazeboun* campaign to expose the violations committed by the army. This campaign included organizing marches in residential areas and showing footage of the attacks on makeshift screens in public places. Dozens of people were either killed or wounded in the attacks for which the army never took responsibility. The military has until this day denied any links to these attacks.

The 18 days were determinant in giving participants the drive to join collective action and for some, the choice of activities they engaged in or groups they joined emerged directly out of their experience in the Square. Such was the case for Jailan and Albert. On her numerous visits to Tahrir Square during and after the 18 days, Jailan became friends with people who started to campaign for the then a newly formed party. She started looking for a suitable vehicle through which to engage in social and political action, and for her, the most important aspect of this was engaging in campaigns to raise people's awareness. Believing that joining a party was the best way to do so, Jailan finally made the decision to join a party. Albert never thought about joining any group before the onset of the Revolution. "It did not make sense before the Revolution. But after that, space opened up for taking action and taking action actually results in change... before that, protesting never changed anything, there was no use before," he explained. And he has a clear idea of why the political party is the best vehicle for action. "In the time being, nothing could be achieved through individual effort. You need a huge effort. The more organized and unified that effort is, the more it will bear fruit," he explains. He believes that best vehicle for carrying that out is through a political party. "What's important for Egypt now is that there should be a continuity in work that is organized over a long period of time. That is why a political party is important," Albert said.

Others like Noha and Mohamed chose not to join political parties, but rather other organized groups whose goals are directly linked to the Revolution: The Second Revolution of Rage[11] and Masrena[12] respectively. The aim of those two groups is to continue the achievement of the goals of the Revolution. This is different from political parties, whose existence does not depend solely on the state of a continuing revolution and whose participants join them for the achievement of objectives that transcend those of the Revolution, such as power sharing or state policy change. Noha said:

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[11] The group started as a Facebook page that drew in people interested in working on raising political awareness through organizing debates in public squares. I once witnessed a public debate organized by the group in the downtown Talaat Harb Square, where they engaged with passersby in political discussions.
[12] The group was founded by several activists, including Wael Ghonim, to continue the goals of the Revolution.

"I never thought that one day I would join a movement. This was unimaginable for me. I joined the Second Revolution of Rage's page on Facebook because since its inception and its call for the May 27 protest, they are the ones that are really working on the ground. They don't stay in closed circles and they don't make political deals with others....these are the ones who really want to make the Revolution succeed. Their goal is to make the Revolution succeed and after that the movement will be dismantled."

Similarly, Mohamed chose to join Masrena in order to contribute to the achievement of the goals of the Revolution. He is a founding member of the group, and he calls his participation "revolutionary activities," which includes organizing protests and rallies. He was involved in organizing *Salasel El Thawra*[13], a campaign where participants stand on the sidewalks or in any public place holding up banners with a specific message the aim of which is to trigger discussion with passersby, and in so doing, partly increasing awareness about certain issues related to the Revolution.

John and Mo refused altogether to join either type of group, opting instead to be independent actors joining collective action as they see fit. While acknowledging that the 18 days were key in determining which activities they pursued afterwards or which groups they joined, participants showed flexibility and willingness to jump from one group to another depending on circumstances in a way that best serves their objectives and gives them meaning. After the 18 days, Mona joined a political party and a youth group, and said that if any of these groups become defunct, she would move to find other conduits for political and social action. "One should try all the time, and if something dies out, one should direct one's effort to something else, I keep trying," she said.

One important aspect that emerged in the wake of the Revolution is the growing importance of the peripheries and localities, such as neighborhoods and universities, vis-à-vis the core of the city and the country as a whole, as sites of protests. The expansion of the space in which acts of protest take place was happening in tandem with the increase in the core of active protest participants. Some participants in this research displayed such a pattern of increased engagement in

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[13] *Salasel* literally translates into chains and in this context human chains which participants form.

their locales. Noha and Albert, for example, have separately as part of their respective groups organized marches in the neighborhood of Shobra. Essam, a student at a private foreign university, is also a case in point. In the few months after Mubarak stepped down, he came together with a group of like-minded Leftist students to form the university's first Leftist group. And since then, they have been involved in organizing small student rallies and sit-ins in solidarity with workers in their struggle for better working conditions. Essam said he believes that the Revolution should permeate institutions (*el mo'assassaat*) such as factories or the universities, rather than remain solely on the streets. When I asked him if he was planning to join a protest in April, 2012 in Tahrir Square, he replied that he preferred to take part in supporting strikes and protests on his campus than join protests outside his university, at least at that time.

As a result of taking part in the 18 days, the notion of the "collective" itself gained new significance as participants were in contact with other protesters and developed a sense of common goal and belonging. After the ouster of Mubarak, participants continued the practices of the 18 days, such as the protesting, the rallying, the writing of political statements, and so on. It was through these practices that the ethos of the 18 days remained alive not only in the main protest sites, such as Tahrir Square, but also in other localities, such as the university and the residential neighborhoods. It was also through these practices that their subjectivities as protesters were being reinforced. Because of the partial success of the January 25 Revolution, i.e. the ouster of Mubarak, the participants realized that taking part in collective action is indeed useful and worthwhile. This was clear in their narratives because whenever they talked about protests that took place after the ouster of Mubarak, they often harked back to examples from the 18 days.

II- Voting

Elections gained new salience after the Revolution as the authorities in charge of running the country, namely the SCAF and the Cabinet, urged "the people" and the "citizens" to go to the polls and make their political choices. The eligibility of Egyptians to vote in what were labeled as free and transparent polls was portrayed as one of the grains of the January 25 Revolution. Egyptians

living abroad gained the right to vote for the first time in history after a long legal and political battle. The legislative elections that took place from November 2011 until March 2012 were described as the "the ceremony of democracy" or *ors el demokrateyya* as if it were the continuation and the culmination of a democratic process that started with the January 25 protests, according to the official narrative of the ruling authorities. But this view did not resonate well with individuals and groups that were still active in organizing street protests and that were generally dissatisfied with the way the transitional period was proceeding.

While the state's official view was that the Revolution had concluded and its goals were accomplished, giving way to a political process at the heart of which were the elections, activists and individuals identifying themselves as "revolutionaries" rejected such a narrative, believing instead that the struggle for the goals of the Revolution was ongoing. Furthermore, the legislative elections, which started on November 28, came in the wake of clashes between police and protesters near the vicinity of the interior ministry during which dozens were killed or injured. As a result, some of those who participated in the January 25 Revolution decided to boycott the elections. Others, however, opted to go along with the existing conditions and make their voices heard through their voting choices in the parliamentary and later presidential elections.

This section is dedicated to understanding how the 18 days changed, if at all, participants' perception of their participation in voting, possibly as a manifestation of increased interest in politics and political engagement and in effecting political and social change in their country and how they make sense of their electoral choices, including boycotting the poll. I look at how some use the event of the Revolution in their narratives as a justification or a pretext for going to the polls or boycotting them and how, their experience during the 18 days of the Revolution and its aftermath shaped their ideas about voting.

During the course of this research, Egypt witnessed a constitutional referendum in March 2011, legislative elections from November 2011 until March 2012, and presidential elections in May and June 2012. The political and historical context in which the referendum took place was

very different from the following two elections. It took place one month after the ouster of Mubarak when the clout of the SCAF has not yet been established and before the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamists gained political power. The parliamentary elections, however, took place shortly after and during battles between protesters dismayed by the transitional period and the security apparatus, represented by the security forces or the military police.

Most of the participants in this research said they have never voted in any elections before the Revolution and one participant, Mona, had intended to vote in the parliamentary elections in 2010 but was unable to do so because she did not have a voting card. All of the participants in this research went to vote in the March 2011 Referendum, but not all of them went for the parliamentary and presidential elections. Most of them did not completely buy into the state's official line that the elections were truly democratic, with some acknowledging some improvement compared with the elections under the former regime. They, nevertheless, seized the opportunity to become participants rather than observers, an opportunity that was born thanks to the Revolution regardless of their misgivings about the circumstances under which the elections were conducted or about the electoral process and the candidates. At least two participants, Mona and Jailan, even regretted that they had not participated in previous elections, saying had they been more pro-active in the past, change may have come earlier. Participants acknowledged that their voting choices change with the circumstances and were largely affected by the political circumstances at the time.

Mona and Jailan both believed in the importance of voting after January 25. Jailan, who has never voted before in her life because she did not find any candidates that represented her, said that going to vote was now a "duty." She said:

> "[Before], the ruling regime had everything. You only had two camps: the ruling regime and the Muslim Brotherhood. After the Revolution, that was completely changed... there were so many lectures [about the referendum], and I thought I must know that if I were to vote with yes or no, I had to know why I was doing that.... So I attended so many lectures that presented analysis... I was making a lot of effort... during the run-up to the referendum, I felt that we were studying for an exam that we had to pass... it was my first experience with elections and it affected me a lot... after that [I went to vote in] the parliamentary and Shura Council elections."

She said she blamed herself for not getting involved in general earlier. "Why did we not interact with them [the activists who were calling for change]. The Revolution could have come earlier and the country could have been better now... I was very happy [with the elections] although that results were all negative. I am not really convinced with this parliament but as a start, that's fine." I asked her if the Revolution made her change her mind about voting. She said "of course, it made me go out and vote." Mona reflection's are similar to Jailan's. She said:

> "[After the Revolution], I got a feeling of guilt because before the Revolution-- during the 2010 parliamentary elections-- , we kept on saying that we will not take part in this farce [the 2010 parliamentary elections]... after that I started to realize that it is possible to achieve something when we are a lot and how come we never did that before. If everyone of us had went [to vote], they wouldn't have been able to rig the elections in this flagrant (*safla*) manner."

Like Mona, Mo spoke about his choice to go to the polls in a pragmatic way. Mona said that calls to boycott the parliamentary elections so as to render the elected parliament illegitimate were unrealistic, and it was more important for her to cast her ballot in order to help limit the electoral gains of the remnants of the former regime (*foloul*) and Islamists. Mo also said he went to the polls to curtail the influence of Islamist parties. Albert, who campaigned for candidates of his party [The Egyptian Social Democratic Party] but did not vote, said he participated in the elections as a campaigner not because he believed they were transparent and democratic, but because he saw it as a learning opportunity for future election experience. "If we want a democratic future and I want to work in politics, I have to go through this experience to see on the ground what an election campaign is and how monitoring and vote counting are done, and I had to see it with my eyes," Albert said.

For Mohamed, voting was a continuation of the process of the Revolution: the 18 days of protests resulted in the dismantling of the upper and lower houses of parliament, so it's his duty to go to the polls in order to bring those institutions back into function. He said:

> "I tell people that participation in voting after the Revolution is like eating and drinking. Some would tell you that [voting] is a political activity (*nashat seyassi*). (I

say) that is not a political activity. Voting should be for normal human beings...for people in developed countries, that is normal."

Here then, Mohamed does not see voting as part of *el seyassa* or politics, from which he distanced himself not because he was necessarily against it--as in the case of Noha, who openly said she does not want to get involved in politics--but because he was not qualified for engagement in politics. So voting in that sense is part of the normal everyday life domain.

Despite the huge state campaign urging people to vote, some chose to boycott. Many of those who boycotted have been heavily involved in protests and have witnessed violence perpetrated by the security forces firsthand in what was known as the Mohamed Mahmoud Battles and the Cabinet sit-in in which dozens were killed and wounded. Noha, who had never voted before the January 25 Revolution, said she boycotted the parliamentary elections that started on November 28 because she did not sense that the elections would be transparent after she realized that the committee overseeing the elections was headed by the same judge that oversaw the rigged 2010 elections. John also expressed a similar distrust of the elections calling them a "farce," the same terms that were used to describe elections under the previous regime. "When I find that the judicial committee overseeing the elections is independent and respectable, yes for sure, I will go and vote. But these elections, I will boycott," Noha concluded.

Although the above narratives were infused with misgivings about the conditions under which the elections were held, they showed a shift in the participants' willingness to engage with elections as opposed to before the 18 days when going to the polls was completely unimaginable or viewed as entirely useless. Despite exhibiting some skepticism about the transparency of the poll, they said they are more optimistic and willing to vote in future elections when the circumstances are better, like for example, with the selection of an Election Commission with integrity. The meaning of voting was different for each one of them. While Noha viewed voting in the context of the parliamentary elections as a betrayal of the goals of the Revolution, Albert and Mona, saw it as a means to continue the process of change that the Revolution started. At least there are no more

state- or ruling party-orchestrated attacks on opposition voters or widespread open rigging. So the participants in this research did not necessarily change their view about the effectiveness of voting nor did they necessarily see it as a "political" act. However, new dynamics emerged, wherein voting is viewed as "normal" and as an option among many possibilities available to effect the change they want to see in their country. But at least, there was an initial acceptance of the effectiveness of going to the polls: they all went to vote in the March Referendum fresh with euphoria resulting from Mubarak's departure. The idea that change could be effected through the ballot box gained more legitimacy in the eyes of the participants because of the onset of the Revolution. For those who did vote, they were emerging as subjects of politics as their subjectivity was being shaped by that very practice of voting. But even those who did not vote, the very practice of engagement in the voting process--by rejecting it and challenging its validity--was a condition giving rise to their political subjectivity.

III- Forming Political Views

Organizers of the protests and the sit-ins of January 25 stressed that people participating in such events did so as "individuals" or as "Egyptians" rather than as members of their political parties or groups or members of their religious communities. Whether Islamists, Leftists, Nationalists, Muslims, Christians or others, participants should put all their differences aside for the sake of Egypt, according to the organizers and the participants. To use Bayat's words, they were "atomized" unaffiliated individuals (Bayat 2009). Nevertheless, the two-week sit-in in Tahrir Square and the events that took place over the next year and a half turned out to be fertile ground for Egyptians to gain exposure to different political ideas and ideologies, engage in deep discussions about them, and for some, even embrace some of those ideas and formulate what could be described as a "political identity." The Revolution expanded the space dedicated to discussions of "politics" whether in the media, among family and friends or on the streets. The Revolution provided a physical space (in the squares and the venues where people came together to protest) in addition to creating a general historical, social and political context where discussions about politics

became the norm. After Islamists made gains in the political field, especially after winning a majority of the seats in the now defunct parliament, a schism occurred between what became popularized as "the secularists" and "the Islamists", and as I am writing, this the gap is growing even wider. After the 18 days and in tandem with the changes that were taking place on the political scene with regards to the salience of ideologies, participants in this research started to formulate their views. This section examines how participation in the Revolution impacted participants' political views and helped some formulate or consolidate their political ideology, as well as how participants' experiences before the Revolution helped shape this process.

The extent to which the Revolution helped shape participants' political ideas and identities varied, but all participants acknowledged that the 18 days and their aftermath with their different facets were definitely seminal in increasing their political awareness and giving clearer shape to their political views. Mo and Albert both started to read more about politics and about the experiences of other countries. The significance and relevance of political ideology to the different participants also differed. For some of them, it seemed important to have a clearly defined political identity, while for others it mattered less. Albert and Mo stated clearly that they were Social Democrats or belonged to such a party; Jailan joined the Social Democratic party; Mona described herself as a "leftist;" Noha said she preferred Socialism; and Essam described himself as a Trotskyist. Ahmed, Mohamed and John said they did not subscribe to any ideology.

The process of formulating political views during and after the 18 days was no doubt affected by their experiences prior to the 18 days, including factors, such as their academic experience and the influence of their parents and friends For Mona and Essam, the period of the 18 days was rather an experience that helped them consolidate ideas and beliefs they are already had before but thanks to the Revolution had become clearer. Mona had been exposed to Leftist ideas through her professors when she was studying at a Leftist institution in the UK. She had given this issue some thought but never too seriously until one day during the sit-in in Tahrir Square when one of her friends came up to her to ask her about her political ideology. It was then that she started to

seriously think about her political identity and realized that her ideas were closer to the Left. She also realized that having a political ideology is only meaningful when there is scope to work in politics, i.e. after the January 25 Revolution. She said:

> "Before the Revolution, I never identified myself as being closer to the Left...I wasn't too concerned to see whether I am Left or Center or Right...I felt that it was useless to try to figure that out because at the end, there was no (real) opposition, the opposition served Mubarak's regime, so there is no difference if you're Right or Center or whatever."

A similar case is Essam's. He had interest in and read a lot about Leftist ideas and thought of himself as a Leftist, but he did not know which stream of Left he identified with. The 18 days and their aftermath gave him the opportunity to meet Leftist activists and engage in discussions with them, which helped him identify Leftist ideas he agreed with the most, thus finally finding the what suits him the most, which is Trotskyism. After that, he went on to join the Revolutionary Socialists and became a founding member of a Leftist student movement at his university. For Albert, the onset of the Revolution made it necessary for him to read more about the political ideas he believed in and to solidify his understanding of them. The Revolution highlighted the importance of subscribing to and even made it necessary to have a political ideology, especially if one was to work in politics (*yestaghal fel seyassa*), i.e. institutional politics. Albert was already convinced by the Social Democratic ideas when the January 25 protests broke out. After the Revolution, the issue of having a political ideology gained new importance. He said:

> "Anyone who wants to work in politics should have a specific political orientation or else [he or she] would be working in vain... one could not work without deciding [which ideology he or she belongs to]."

However, not all research participants stated that the Revolution necessarily prompted them to search for a specific political ideology or try to find out where they fit in the political spectrum. But still, participation in the 18 days did help them gain exposure to and deepened their understanding of political ideas. For Donia, subscribing to a political ideology or having a clear

political identity is not a prerequisite for working towards political and social change. She seemed less concerned than Essam and Albert about deciding what her political ideology is. True, she was concerned with women's issues, but she shied away from calling herself a Feminist, although others see her and label her as such. She did not have enough theoretical background information about these ideologies to decide. Donia said:

> "I have a problem that since a long time ago I have not been able to label myself (*awwassaf nafsi*), but after the Revolution a lot of people started to want to label me... I have personally never thought of myself as such (as a Feminist) even until now I do not know exactly what Feminism is.... people, journalists and women's movement members call me as such...they ask me since when I have been interested in Feminism, but I don't know what Feminism is... I do not label myself, what I know is that I just go with my feelings and I don't know whether what they say is right or wrong, but they are all trying to put labels on me in different ways."

Mohamed, who identifies himself as a *Salafi*, said the Revolution opened up horizons for him and made him learn more about Socialism and Liberalism. However, the question of embracing a particular political ideology is irrelevant. He is not in need of a political ideology as, according to his beliefs, the political domain is not separate from the religious domain. Religion has answers and is the framework for everything: economics, judiciary, politics, inheritance law, etc. He said:

> "As a Muslim who adheres to his religion, there is no separation between religion and politics; my belief in political ideas is part of my religion... I do not need to subscribe to political orientations... why should I subscribe to liberalism or leftism."

But he also said it was important to know how other people think and try to understand them. According to John, there is no need for a set or clearly defined political ideology. "I am more of a leftist... but I don't believe in ideologies...I take from all ideologies and leave some things out of them too," John said. When I met him for the second interview I asked him again, he replied: "The idea of labels, I never care much about it... I never define myself as X or Y or Z..."

The participants in this research, therefore, viewed the 18 days as a learning opportunity during which they were exposed to different political ideas and people belonging to different political ideologies. Therefore, it was an opportunity for them to reflect on their own political view

and their political identity in some cases as well as reflect on the meaning and importance of politics altogether. For some, it was an opportunity to even embrace some of the ideas they were exposed to, especially that all of them planned to continue to work towards social and political change after the ouster of Mubarak. The new political subjectivities emerging were shaped by these political debates amongst protesters and their own internal reflections on these issues. They were witnessing a historical moment that imposed new exigencies, including the need to think about what political views they believed in, with the talk about politics proliferating the streets and the media.

IV- Conclusion

The 18 days marked a rupture and an exceptional historical moment that created the conducive atmosphere that made a lot of people, including the youth in this research, want to be part of the social and political change that was expected to follow the ouster of Mubarak. But these opportunities and spaces that opened up were not granted by the regime as a gift to the people but these were spaces and opportunities that were gained through a struggle and the collective action of the youth and other protesters. Gains, such as freer and more transparent elections, the relaxing of political party formation rules, were only possible through the contentious actions of the protesters. These gains in turn expanded the realm of the possible for these participants. Whereas before they never imagined taking part in social and political action, they now engaged in collective action, voting and negotiation of their political views and identities. This chapter showed that such change in "practices" of the participants is constitutive of their political subjectivity.

By outlining the various forms through which the participants became more engaged in their social and political setting, including joining political parties, going to the polls for the first time in their lives and being regular participants in street protests, this chapter showed that what constitutes the "political" for the participants has been reshaped as a result of the experience of the 18 days. But what constitutes "politics" and the "political" differs among them. For example, Noha sees voting as part of the formal political process that she rejects, while Mohamed sees it as a normal part of his life after the Revolution. But for Mohamed, there is no separate political realm since it is

included in the religious domain. Participants did make a distinction between Revolution and politics, and that each has a separate itinerary. However, for some, in order for the Revolution to succeed, one has to get engaged in politics. It now became "normal" for them to participate in the elections or take part in protests. It might not necessarily be that these participants have become politicized or political. Rather, what constitutes the normal or the ordinary or the mundane has become infused with the political, it has become politicized. A process of normalization of "politics" was at work.

Chapter 5

Reclaiming *El Balad* and the Emergence of the "Active" Political Subject

Over the past twenty years, the prevalence of neoliberal policies and political repression has caused a large segment of Egyptians to become disenchanted with living in their country. Groups such as youth and low-income earners have been increasingly marginalized by the government in

socio-economic and political matters and excluded from the decision-making process that directly affects their lives. On a personal level, many Egyptians lamented what they felt was a weakened sense of belonging to the collective of Egypt, evident in statements such as "I do not feel part of this country" (*ana mish hassess enni goz' men el balad dih*) or "I do not belong to this country" (*ana mabantameesh lel balad dih)*. This weakened sense of belonging to the "collective" led them to withdraw even more from or take every opportunity to avoid encounters with government agents after realizing the hollowness of the promises of the provision of rights in exchange for duties, which has been the rhetoric of the modern Egyptian state. As was shown in Chapter One, the term "citizen" was rendered obsolete by a state that was ambiguous in dealing with its subjects. This ambiguity was reflect in the state being present only as a coercer and a violator of rights and not as a service provider or an upholder of citizenship rights. As a result, Egyptians' relationship to the collective of Egypt *el balad*--as Egyptians, including participants of this research refer to it--became strained. For them, *el balad* evoked humiliation, lack of dignity, police brutality, social injustice, oppression, corruption, random identity checks, lack of political representation, etc.

The concept of *el balad* recurred in the narratives of the participants, and many of the rights for which they were making claims and their aspirations for their future were framed with reference to *el balad. El balad* is used by Egyptians in multiple contexts to denote a myriad of meanings, including the physical territory or the people of Egypt. But more importantly, the word has been widely used during and after the 18 days in the media and by the government to shape the discourse about the Revolution through statements such as *el balad kherbet* (the country has been destroyed), *kharbeen el balad* (they are destroying the country) were used to discredit the January 25 protesters, while statements such as *el balad beta'etna* (the country is ours), *hannadaf el balad* (we will clean the country) were employed by those who took part in the protests. The words *el hokouma*, the government, *el dawla*, the state, and *el nizam*, the regime, have also been used in juxtaposition to *el balad*. The importance of *el balad* in the context of the Revolution and this research is that it is used by the participants to denote a certain collective within which they lived and under which their

subjectivities have been conditioned by oppression, humiliation, marginalization, exclusion, and oppression before the Revolution. And this conception of belonging to that collective shaped their experience of participation in the Revolution and their political subjectivity.

"Belonging" is generally a rather slippery term, and it is seldom used on its own. Versions commonly used are "national belonging" and "social belonging," both of which are used in studies of immigrants and citizenship as is the case in Christina M. Getrich's article on second-generation Mexican youth protests in 2006 (Getrich, 2008). In Arabic, the word is translated as *intimaa*. I will use it here to describe how far the participants feel they are members of the collective of Egypt. The onset of the January 25 Revolution did not necessarily change Egyptians' sense of belonging to the collective of Egypt, but it did indeed make Egyptians question and reflect on their previously held beliefs and perceptions about and feelings towards the collective of Egypt, or *el balad,* and their role in it. The Revolution and its partial success--at least in toppling Mubarak--gave those who participated in it a sense of regaining *el balad* as if they won it back from unjust rulers. The claim of "regaining the country" was evident in the narratives of the participants of this research. It also transpired through messages dabbed on city walls, circulated by e-mail or mobile phones, or written on car bumper stickers, urging Egyptians to "protect their country". "Starting today, this is your country," read one message circulated on social media networks and via text messages. The message contained a list of instructions warning Egyptians against throwing rubbish or paying bribes, and so on.

In this chapter, I examine what *el balad* and "reclaiming the country" mean to the different participants in the context of the Revolution, i.e. the subjects of the Revolution. I also examine the subjectivity that was formed and produced in this context and how participants make sense of their "new" role in it in an attempt to understand how "politics creates its subject, the subject who is not the slave of a politics guided by others, but who authors politics" (Samaddar, 2009, xviii). In a sense, the January 25 Revolution and its aftermath represent "contentious situation[s]" from which its participants emerged as "political subjects"--a concept that describes what other categories, such

as "citizen" and "political society," fail to capture (Samaddar, 2009, xiv). It describes "all who are most of the time in the non-citizen circumstances, for whom citizenship as a legal category makes increasingly little sense" (Samaddar, 2009, xvii). I attempt to contribute to answering the question of the link between the subjects' participation in the 18 days, the reconstitution of their relationship to *el balad*, and the emergence of a new political subjectivity. I argue that participants' relationship to the collective of Egypt was reconstituted as a result of their experience of partaking in the 18 days, whether as a result of the act of protest itself or other situations they encountered during the Revolution. This reformulated relationship is the outcome of and is translated into new practices the subjects of the Revolution engaged in, such as voting and joining political parties and other kinds of political and social action groups. The realization of being able to effect change made the participants recognize that they are not longer just the passive receivers of whatever the regime imposed upon them and gave rise to this new subjectivity: that they are "authoring politics" to use Ranabir Samaddar's words (Samaddar, 2009, xviii). It was against this reformulated relationship with *el balad* that the "active political subject" emerged.

I-*El Balad*: Between Reality and the Utopia of Tahrir

Despite its "absence" and "softness," the Egyptian state was very much felt through its heavy-handed security apparatus. Fear of the state as the holder of the exclusive rights of the legitimate use of force, which it uses arbitrarily, against its citizens was widespread not only among those who were engaged in "political" activities but also among the disempowered citizens who are frequent targets of the security apparatus. Random identity checks, especially for male youth, are widespread, and torture became a state policy. That the Egyptian state, as a service provider and a upholder of citizenship rights, is almost non-existent is not an overstatement in so many cases and under a myriad of circumstances. Potable water and other amenities lack in so many areas, both urban and rural, and government bureaucracy made the lives of Egyptians difficult. The provision of basic services in many places are provided via charity or "development" campaigns by either private corporations, such as mobile phone operator Vodafone Egypt, or civil society, including

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local and international Non-Governmental Organizations and the Muslim Brotherhood, which until 2011 was a legally banned group. Not only did they lack those rights, but they were also subjected to techniques of humiliation. The emergence of the subject in opposition to the government or the state is reflected clearly in the narratives of the participants of this research, who often refer to themselves as *ihna* "we" versus *el hokouma* or government (they use this term rather than *el dawla,* which literally translates into state). They all also somehow identified with the "humiliated" subject to which Salwa Ismail refers (Ismail 2011).

It was in this context that Tahrir--as a utopia and a reality--was born. Tahrir presented an alternative conceptualization of how *el balad* could be, posing a symbolic and actual challenge to the Egyptian state. The enclosed community of Tahrir--literally closed off by the barricades put up by the protesters in the aftermath of the Battle of the Camel on February 2--was a reminder to its participants and to the regime of the failure of the Egyptian state, thus undermining its already weakening legitimacy. In the same way (as discussed in Chapter Two) that the 18 days were constructed in the narratives of the participants as being a benchmark against which all other events were measured, so was Tahrir constructed as this Utopian community against which the "normal" Egyptian society was contrasted. In Tahrir, there was a different image of the "Egyptian" or "Egyptians." In that community, Egyptians were civilized, polite, well-mannered, cooperative, all these terms that the participants in this research use. A glorification of the Egyptian people--who in Mubarak-era government rhetoric were to blame for the misfortunes and ills of the country (for example, former Prime Minister Nazif and Finance Minister Youssef Boutros-Ghali blamed Egyptians for the high birth rates)--was at work and still is whenever a reference is made to *El Tahrir.*

Throughout the 18 days in Tahrir, Albert saw the "Egyptian that I wished to see." "I loved the community of Tahrir, the people who were in the square who were cleaning and organizing. There was freedom, complete freedom. Everybody respected everybody else. This was one of the things that pleased me and that I wanted to see outside of the square," he said. Tahrir showed its

participants "something else," which is contrasted to the society outside. Egyptians' identification with and sense of belonging to the Tahrir community offered them a glimpse of what is missing for them to be able to feel the same way about their country as a whole. "Tahrir was a state within a state," retorted Mo, referring to the organizational structure of the Square that offered Egyptians what the Egyptian state failed to offer them. Jailan had a similar view:

> "I felt that I have to be in Tahrir... it was the place that will bring back my faith in this country because of all the positive things that were happening... even after people were brutally attacked on January 25 and 28, they still came back to the square and the numbers increased... they believed they were doing something for the country."

A subjectivity revolving around the Revolution, that of *el thawry*, or the revolutionary, or s*habab el thawra*, youth of the Revolution, also emerged as I have shown in Chapter Two and Three. The enactment and the performance of that subjectivity took place not only in Tahrir Square, but also in the streets surrounding it and in other localities, such as in the neighborhoods when youth joined watch groups to guard their homes when the police disappeared on January 28 or when they were with family, friends or acquaintances. Inside Tahrir, then, was another better version of the Egyptian people and the Egyptian state. In the same way that a humiliated subject emerged out of the constant encounters with the government over the past thirty years, a "revolutionary" subject was born in Tahrir and with it was born a different and alternative *imaginaire* about the collective within which the participants could live and belong to, namely *el balad*. In that sense, *el balad* was both a bad reality that the participants wanted to change and a possibility or a dream they wanted to achieve.

When speaking about *el balad*, Donia complained that ignorance was rife among Egyptians and that the state was not paying enough attention to that domain. When she said she wanted to make the country better, she believed she could do so through improving *el thaqafa*, or culture, and *ta'leem*, or education. She also wanted to see the amelioration of the status of women in the country, such as better working conditions and better representation in parliament and the

government. It was also during the 18 days that she met Egyptians from all walks of life and realized that there are people like her, people who want to change the country. This made her want to work with the people on changing *el balad* to the better.

Mohamed said he wanted to vote for a president that will make *el balad* better. When I asked him what he meant by that, he said that included its economy and institutions as well as the moral and religious righteousness of its people. He also stressed that the country should safeguard the dignity of its citizens. He conceptualized the relationship between citizen and country in terms of benefit exchange, whereby the citizen should contribute to his country and his country should give him benefits, or *manafe'*, in return. He stressed that the country should give its citizens a "dignified life." He said that Egyptians were "humiliated" in their own country: their freedoms were being breached by the security forces, there were no employment opportunities, and they had to pay bribes to get things done. He felt that before the Revolution he was living as a stranger in his country as he could be randomly stopped by the police and asked for his identity card just because he grows a beard. The Revolution presented him with a different possibility for his country. He said:

> "After Febuary 11, I felt that this country is mine... we went out to clean the streets and we were very happy... I felt that this land over which I was walking was mine, I was walking in my country. Everybody was happy and the whole world believed that we achieved something."

Noha had a romantic vision of how the concept of *el balad* changed after and because of the Revolution. She said:

> "After being a territory that you live in, the country became a homeland *(watan)* that lives within you... the 18 days made me feel how much I love this country, made me feel empathy towards the poor people, made me feel how much you want to clean[14] this country. It is a matter of life or death... I became active in it and I want it to be better than any other country... [by] achieving social justice and giving it back its dignity on the international level (a*rraga' karametha barra*)... [I started to feel that] I am an effective member of society, and that I have an opinion... my presence in the street [through protesting] will have an impact on society, my presence in [things such as]... awareness campaigns...[will have an impact]."

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[14] *Tennaddafi* derives from *tandeef*, which literally means to clean. Noha uses it here figuratively.

Essam felt a sense of alienation while living in Egypt. He said:

"Before the Revolution... the state was not our state, it was not the state of the people... *el balad* was run by the police, the military and the intelligence. Everything was run by those who are in control of the country and by businessmen... so before the Revolution, there was always this feeling that the country is not ours... after the ouster [of Mubarak], people started saying that we will work and we could build... [this] gave me hope that there could be real economic revival in Egypt that would really benefit the people."

I asked him how he felt--on a personal level--that the country was reclaimed. He replied:

"I felt that I could speak freely, therefore, my struggle will be worthwhile, it will be worthwhile to support [a workers'] strike, and I would then feel that I did something... I would feel that there is a need for me in this country."

Mona said the following:

"Before [the Revolution], I really felt as a stranger in this country... the simplest [proof] is the way you are being treated by government bureaucrats. You always feel like a third-class citizen... there was an alliance between people in power, Mubarak's people, and people who had money... they were robbing the country,"

But after the Revolution, that changed. She said:

"I felt I have a responsibility [towards the country] more than before...a responsibility to work towards what I see is right... [for example], I saw that I should urge people to participate in the referendum[15]... so I rode on the metro and spoke out in a loud voice telling people 'I am reminding you that the Referendum will take place after eight days' [she laughs], so I started to do things of that kind. I never in my life thought that I could do such things... I carried this attitude that [this country] is ours, by the way, this country is ours."

She tapped on the table twice as she repeated the last sentence. When I asked her for clarification,

she added:

"It meant that I have a say and the street is ours, I will walk on the street and say what I want... After February 11, everyone was happy it was as if we reclaimed public space, all of this was ours as if we reclaimed the country (*el balad reg'et lena tani*) and that now we could do something... about all the negative things we see."

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[15] She was referring to the referendum on constitutional amendments in March, 2011.

Thus, the participants' narratives about *el balad* oscillated between the reality of oppressive practices by the state that constrained their freedom and stripped them of their dignity on the one hand, and on the other, the utopia that they saw in Tahrir and wanted to see in real life. *El balad* embodied their affect and their desire for a more just society. The meaning of *el balad* was shaped by what they saw as wrong in Egypt in the past, or more precisely before January 25, and what they hoped the Revolution would achieve in terms of change or improvement in the situation of the country. *El balad* is an ethos and a set of values that was lacking in the participants' encounters with the state and which they hoped would be embodied in the new Egypt after the Revolution. This ethos and these values expressed in participants narratives included: solidarity, bravery, social justice, and dignity. The concept of *el balad* was central in their narratives and it was key in shaping their shared consciousness and their shared subjectivity in the context of Tahrir Square and the Revolution. This entailed a feeling of renewed ownership of their country as territory and resources, as well as politically--that now they would be able to have a say--, and feeling of identification with other members of that collective around them, i.e. the other Egyptians like themselves, their compatriots.

II-For the Love of *El Balad*

There is an ongoing debate about "love of Egypt," how it was utilized during the 18 days and how it continues until this day to shape political debates through statements such as "*ashan maslahet masr*" (for the interest of Egypt) or "*ashaan el balad*" (for the sake of the country). Politicians and the ruling authorities, including military council members, use statements such as "I am doing this for the sake of Egypt" to justify some laws or measures, and counter-Revolution forces also employ the same rhetoric in a bid to gain legitimacy. The protesters themselves, including participants in this research, also often used a patriotic discourse with reference to *el balad*. As much as all of these statements could very well be emanating from sincere feelings of

love for the country, what is interesting is how such rhetoric is employed either for political gains or for gaining the sympathy of or emotionally affecting the Egyptian public.

Although the January 25 Revolution was not staged against a foreign occupier as in the revolutions of 1919 and 1952 against the British, I argue that protesters' participation was partly shaped by at least one aspect of patriotism, that is the love for their country or *el balad*. The enemy in this case was Mubarak and his regime, and they were all Egyptian, just like the protesters demonstrating against them. Yet to discredit them, the protesters used metaphors of loyalty and betrayal, accusing the regime of being traitors working against the interests of the country and the people on the one hand, and on the other hand, describing Mubarak opponents as being patriotic or *shakseyaat wataniya* (patriotic personalities). The protesters oftentimes told me in conversations "they (former regime officials) sold the country" (*ba'ou el balad*) and shouted the slogan "Mubarak, you Traitor! You sold our gas to Israel!" (*ya mubarak ya 'ameel! be't ghazna le isra'eel*). Similarly, the state also used nationalistic rhetoric, among other means, to discredit and delegitimize the demonstrators, accusing them of being spies and affiliated with Hezbollah, Iran, Hamas, the U.S. and Israel. They were blamed for causing panic and fear among the citizens and for causing an economic slowdown by their mere presence in Tahrir Square and other areas of protest. This is similar to how the Egyptian state uses nationalistic rhetoric to delegitimize NGOs (Abdel Rahman, 2004).

The singular "Egyptian" or *el masry* emerged as a superior being and pride permeated the chants of the protesters, such as "Rise your head up high! You are Egyptian!" From the very first day of the Revolution, a symbol that is very strongly associated with patriotism appeared: The flag. The calls for the demonstrations included a request for the participants not to hold any banners indicating their affiliation, whether political or otherwise, and to carry only the Egyptian flag.

The participants in this research noticed the outburst of patriotic manifestations around them, with all of them citing the flag and the nationalistic songs as displays thereof. Some articulated their participation in the protests and their relationship to *el balad* in patriotic terms,

using the language of "love for the country" to either describe either why they joined the protests in the first place or characterize their participation in them. In our conversations, the participants echoed such debates, whether by professing patriotic sentiments or by rejecting regime accusations that the protesters were being unpatriotic and were serving the interests of foreign governments. Mona recalled one of the days when she was in the square, some people started shouting that the government was accusing the protesters of Tahrir of being spies. At the mention of this, the crowds started singing the national anthem. Mona said she felt awkward because she does not identify with the idea of taking pride in being Egyptian. However, she did feel happy that the Egyptian people, of whom she is part, were able to achieve something good, such as the toppling of Mubarak. Noha identified with displays of patriotism that I described above, acknowledging feelings of "love" towards Egypt. She said the first time she realized she loves this country was when she saw the flags in Tahrir square. She eventually changed her desire to live abroad. She said:

> "I never thought I love this country that much. I never thought I would love it more than my mother and my daughter. I never thought that in my life... I want this country to be the best country in the world. Instead of leaving it... why not live in it and improve it for my daughter... it's the first time that I feel if I stayed here for 100 years and it has still not improved, I would still not leave it… [When I think of el *balad*] I don't see the streets or the Nile or the pyramids or history or civilization or any of that. [*El balad*] is a condition that lives inside of me."

Albert, on the other hand, said his feelings for the country have not changed at all because of the Revolution and that for him, nationalism was tantamount to racism. However, he did feel a sense of belonging to the Egyptian society and people, because it is among them that he has always lived. This shows that there was some form of reconstituted relationship if not with Egypt as a nation then with the idea of Egypt as a collective of people. The words of the participants show that they did not necessarily think of Egypt as a nation, i.e. homogenous and tied to a state as is theorized about in the classical theories of the nation, but they had a new conception of Egypt as an entity. This conception was shaped by the historical moment of the Revolution and no longer obeys the old

categories. In that sense, "nation" does not convey what these narrators mean when they refer to Egypt *el balad*.

The fact participants felt they now had a stake in their country and were agents of change and "authors of politics" contributed to the birth of such feelings of reconnection with and, in some cases, love for the country. At the same time, they were challenging the regime's monopoly on "love for Egypt" that was used to quiet any voices of dissent. It was a rejection of the chauvinistic nationalism devised and promoted by the state, such as in football matches, the most salient example of which was when Egypt was playing Algeria in the Africa Cup of Nations in 2009/2010. Instead, it was a display of a patriotism that was shaped by the exceptional historical and political moment of the Revolution and the realization that Egyptians could do something exceptional and are thus worthy of having pride at belonging to their country and their fellow patriots. I distinguish this form of patriotism from nationalism in that the the latter emphasizes the supremacy of the "nation" and its members against an "other," while the former does not necessarily do that. Nationalism also has negative connotations, such as exclusion and racism, and that is why it is rejected by many, including Albert. Albert did acknowledge some sort of love or appreciation, which was not directed towards the abstract entity of the nation or the homeland, but rather towards his compatriots.

III- The Emergence of the "Active" Political Subject

As illustrated in the previous chapters, all the participants in this research have to varying degrees attested to becoming more "active"--with all using somehow similar terms to describe such a change--and engaging in a "new" role in their society as a result of their participation in the 18 days. The participants used different phrases to describe what happened to them, such as: "the birth of hope," "abandoning apathy," "breaking the barrier of fear," "the return of dignity," and "pride in being Egyptian." They all expressed a sense of empowerment after being able to "topple the regime", and this empowerment has driven them to continue to remain engaged in effecting change. How can we understand this subjectivity that was shaped by participation in the

Revolution, by the new conception of *el balad,* and partly by patriotic sentiments or "love for the country"? This "active political subject" emerged through a process that entailed certain practices as well as a degree of reflexivity. It is true that a rupture did occur at particular moments within the 18 days, like for example the first time a participant joined a protest and the first time he or she joined a political party. But this subjectivity--that of the "active" member or subject of Revolution--was shaped more by the overarching process within which these moments of rupture occurred. This process involved participants' marching in rallies, chanting slogans, sleeping in the Square, mingling and chitchatting with other protesters, engaging in post-Mubarak election campaigning and political and social awareness campaigns, voting, and so on. Their subjectivity was being formed by all of these actions and practices. This subjectivity is also shaped by their past encounters with the government, as Ismail argued (Ismail 2011). The individual self or subject that took part in the collectivity that protested against the regime was shaped by his or her experiences of interacting with the government that was full of humiliation, especially vis-a-via the police. These experience were not individual, but there was intersubjective understanding of it that gave rise to collective feelings of anger towards the regime that mobilized the individuals to act collectively, argued Ismail (Ismail, 2011, 990). "Through critical reflexivity on encounters with government, a self, formed against government ... crystallized as part of a collective (Ismail, 2012, 991). Here Ismail makes reference to the idea of reflexivity, which was also raised by Ortner in her discussion on the formation of subjectivity (Ortner 2006).

The participants in this research reflected on their role, and they all agreed that "*odow fa'el*" (an "active member" of the country/community/society) describes how they see themselves and their role in Egypt in the wake of the Revolution (one of the participants came up with that term when I asked him how he saw his role changing as a result of the Revolution and taking part in it, and then I suggested it to the rest, all of whom agreed that that description applied to them). "*Odow fa'el*" was constituted around participants' belief that they "reclaimed their country" and that they were an important to it, and this made them engage in collective social and political action. As Mo

described it: "It became your country, you feel that you became *fa'el* (active) in it." Mo said that he wanted to help bring corruption cases out to the light (it was not clear how he will do that). This new perception of himself as *fa'el* meant that he will be more involved in political and social change campaigns, such as being part of the Khaled Ali presidential campaign. This shows that he felt it was worth becoming "active" and engaging in political and social action once he felt he had a stake in his country.

This subjectivity was tied to a new sense of hope and optimism that was born straight out of the 18 days. Essam spoke about what "we," the Egyptians, did during the 18 days and his new perception of himself as being "important" for the country. "We felt we have done something... people started to feel that they could do something real for their country by themselves," he said. Essam's participation in the Revolution and the fact that the Revolution did succeed--even if partly -- was what made him feel that he is important to this country and that he "could really do something for this country." The immediate concrete manifestation of this "something" that Essam did for the country was the formation of his university's first leftist student group. It is this sense of hope that Noha also highlighted. She said that she had thought about quitting taking part in demonstrations several times, but the hope that was born in the 18 days and the determination and the belief in the importance of her role were keeping her going and engaged despite of all the disappointments. It is precisely her participation in the 18 days that maintains her desire to remain involved in whatever she was doing for the country, such as going to protests and being involved in awareness campaigns.

This "active political subject" was therefore shaped by a sense of belonging to their country and reclaiming it, which triggered hope and optimism. This subjectivity was essentially political in in that the January 25 Revolution was a "contentious situation" from which its participants emerged as "political subjects". "The political subject emerges not through discourses, or the ideological thought of a great philosopher, or even by some sacred text called the Constitution, but as a result of certain conjuncture of conflicting circumstances" (Samaddar, 2009, viii-xix). This concept of the

"political subject," as Samaddar argued, describes what other categories, such as "citizen" and "political society," fall short of explaining, because as I have shown throughout this thesis that the subjects were excluded as youth--sometimes even by their own free will--from formal politics and institutional politics. So they were engaging in politics through practices related to the Revolution, even if they themselves shied away from calling what they were doing "politics," such as the case of Noha who preferred to label her involvement as "revolutionary work" and not "politics." So there was still distrust of "formal" and institutional politics among these subjects of the Revolution. However, by the mere engagement in that kind of "revolutionary work," they were indeed transforming the realm politics in that their voices now count in government decision making at least in some instances. What someone like Noha sees as "revolutionary work" and "not politics," such as rallies and campaigns, could very well have an impact on the political process that could possibly be as significant as parliamentary elections, i.e. institutional politics.

The previous discussion showed how subjects perceived their participation and the outcome of such participation in terms of reshaping of the relationship with their country and of the emergence of their subjectivity as "active members." There was a discrepancy between the reality of the country--lack of rights under the state, etc.--on the one hand and how participants would like to see their country on the other. It is thanks to this gap between the two, between the reality and the aspiration, that to a large extent many participants went out to the streets to demonstrate and why many of them will continue to remain "active" participants in their country (to improve *it)*. The "active political subject" was born out of a desire to change the reality of the country, their practices toward that end, and a belief that they were authoring their own politics and history.

IV- Conclusion

This chapter tried to explain what happened to the relationship between the participants and the collective of Egypt. The relationship between Egyptians and *el balad* was reconfigured as a result of and after taking part in the myriad aspects of the Revolution, such as engagement in protest, interactions and dialogues in the Square with other protesters, post-Mubarak electioneering

and voting. This reconfiguration manifested itself on several levels. For some, such participation heightened patriotic sentiments they harbor towards their country and increased their sense of belonging to the collective. In a way, they were authoring a new way of belonging, of engaging in the affairs of their country, and of expressing their love for it. It was these new practices they engaged in that defined this reformulated relationship with *el balad*. In sum, this reformulated relationship was concretized through these real-life practices related to the Revolution and the post-Revolution period.

Through these practices of protesting and voting that showed participants a different side of their country, a new conception of *el balad* was born, one that is an extension of the Utopia lived in Tahrir Square. In their narratives, protesters articulated a different vision of how they wanted their country to be--a vision that is not dictated by their unjust rulers and the failed state under which they were living. In so doing, they were rejecting the everyday techniques of humiliation and oppression that were imposed on them by the state and its agents. *El balad* for them represented an ethos, a spirit that was constantly being violated by the oppressive state and its agents but that was reincarnated in a different form in Tahrir. Only through engaging in political and social collective action by performing those new practices of the Revolution will they keep this spirit alive. This process, which included all of these practices and involved reflexivity gave rise to a new subjectivity of being *odw fael*, or an "active political subject". That reconfigured subjectivity is reflected in their desire and willingness to remain engaged in changing their country for the better.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

In this study, I contributed theoretically and methodologically to the production of histories about the series of events identified as the January 25 Revolution and to the exploration of political subjectivities emerging out of such contentious situations. I documented the narratives of a group of middle-class youth whose first experience of protest was during the 18 days of demonstrations and the sit-in in Tahrir Square and who joined the Revolution not as part of any organized group or

political party but as individuals. I attempted to explain how and why such youth were mobilized into joining collective action for the first time in their lives, how they narrated such historical events, and what does this narration and participation mean in terms of shaping their subjectivities.

I followed an approach that focuses on "politics from below" that examines the grassroots levels rather than "elite politics" of rulers and governments in an attempt to present the perspective of the subject, i.e. the protesters, without however ignoring the historical, social, economic, and political structure within which these subjects act. I argued that it is not only through the participation in the events of the Revolution that political subjectivities are shaped but also through its very narration and production as an historical event. By such narration of events as a shared experience, participants were constructing themselves as members of a collective of protesters or revolutionaries and were reconstituting their relationship to the collective of Egypt and to their Egyptians.

The narratives of the protesters were constructed through the remembering of certain details and the forgetting of others, at times intentional and at other times not. The main three themes about the 18 days that recurred in the participants' narratives were: the novelty of the event, how peaceful or not the protests were, and what level of co-existence existed within the Tahrir Square community. All the participants acknowledged in one way or another the novelty and the unexpected and unplanned nature of the protests. This was central to their making as subjects of protest in that their participation in the 18 days marked a rupture with the past and the beginning of something new that was to continue thereafter. They were witnessing and engaging in the creation of new emerging meanings that are not scripted or predesigned but that were being born out of practices. In narrating their collective past, the participants were also constructing themselves as belonging to a shared collective of revolutionaries.

I explored the multiple demands raised by the protest participants throughout the 18 days and the myriad ways through which protesters engaged in the protest sites of Tahrir Square as well as other sites that contributed to the Revolution, such as the residential neighborhoods and places of

work and study, and on social media. I argued that these middle-class youth protesters felt at risk under the neoliberal repressive regime of Mubarak and were motivated to join collective action by citizenship entitlements and by the realization that socio-economic rights were interrelated to and inseparable political and civil rights. In protest sites, the participants engaged in tasks and leisure activities that emerged at the spur of the moment as they responded to the exigencies of the situation whether during the demonstrations or the two-week long sit-in in Tahrir Square. For example, some fought with security forces and secured the Square with barricades and logs, while others took charge of bringing in food and other supplies to the protesters camping out. Tahrir Square and other protest sites during the 18 days gained re-signified meanings--ranging from a battlefield to a carnival. These activities and practices were transforming not only Tahrir Square as a public space but also the participants' subjectivities as "revolutionaries," or as subjects of Revolution, and as members of a larger collective of protesters.

I also looked at how participants described and made sense of the change they have witnessed as a result of participating in the Revolution. I argued that their participation in the 18 days triggered within them a new political consciousness and gave them a reason and a cause to get involved in social and political actions. They all became regular participants of protests, with some joining a political party or a group, while others remaining independent actors. Some of them changed their views about the effectiveness of voting and went to the polls in the elections that took place in the year and a half after the ouster of Mubarak. Others started to reflect on their political ideology and embraced new political ideas. Overall, their modes of engagement with politics changed as a result, and in the process, they were starting to change the very meaning and practice of the the political and politics.

Furthermore, I explored the concept of *el balad,* or the country*,* which recurred in the narratives of the participants**.** The concept of *el balad* was central in their narratives and it was key in shaping their shared consciousness and their shared subjectivity in the context of Tahrir Square and the Revolution. The Revolution and its partial success--at least in toppling Mubarak--gave

those who participated in it a sense of reclaiming their country. I argued that participants'

relationship to the collective of Egypt was reconstituted as a result of their experiences of partaking

in the 18 days, whether as a result of the act of protest itself or other situations they encountered

during the Revolution. This reformulated relationship is the outcome of and is translated into new

practices the participants engaged in, such as voting and joining political parties and other kinds of

political and social action groups. It was against this reconfigured relationship with *el balad* that the

subject of Revolution became also an "active political subject" in his or her society, and this

subjectivity is bound to continue to evolve with the change in the historical, political and social

contexts.

Therefore, that the Egyptian Revolution consisted of a series of historical junctures--the

outbreak of protests on January 25, Egyptians joining protests, inhaling tear gas, going to the polls,

or joining a political party for the first time in their lives, etc.--, should not make us overlook its

processual nature. Throughout this process of transformation, the social world is being re-ordered

and certain social and political categories and practices are gaining re-signified meanings. The

significance of the words "citizen," "youth," "politics," and the "collective"--to cite a few

examples--has changed as practices such as assembling, protesting, striking, voting and

electioneering have become somehow normalized and more integrated into the everyday lives of

Egyptians as part of that process of change. A growing segment of Egyptians are engaging more

and more in what was before thought of as "s*eyassa,*" or politics, and are getting involved in

domains that were previously monopolized by a smaller group of the population. This thesis is an

attempt to contribute to making sense of that change and to track that process of emergence.

As I am writing this, the process of the Revolution is already entering a new stage. The first

post-Revolution constitution was approved by almost 64 percent of the population in a referendum

in December 2012. The period preceding the vote witnessed unrest as country-wide demonstrations

were organized to protest the then proposed charter, which was seen as unrepresentative of the

Egyptian population, and dozens were killed or wounded in clashes between regime supporters and

opposition protesters. "Nothing has changed" was the lament voiced by many people disenchanted at what the media called "national discord," whereby the so-called "Islamists" and "secularists" are pitted against each other. It seems to these people that we are today witnessing the same cycle of events since the onset of the Revolution two years ago--the eruption of demonstrations, attacks by riot police, unrepresentative elections etc.--, with similar protagonists--alienated youth and protesters, fallen martyrs, a brutal police force, and rulers and politicians disconnected from their people. The same uncertain state that was felt two years ago still lingers and the same questions that were raised back then are still left unanswered. Yet if we attempt to analyze the situation and answer those same questions now, they are certain to yield new meanings.

What is this Revolution about? How will this process evolve? How will the Revolution participants and the millions of others who took to the streets during the 18 days continue to be engaged in politics? How will they narrate these events in the future? How will their stories be different? How will their future narratives reflect the changing topography of Egyptian politics and power relations? How and when will the Revolution succeed? What constitutes the success of the Revolution? All of these questions will continue to be asked and every time the answer may be different as the attempt to answer them will always be part of the historical and political context in which they are asked. The Revolution, thus, is an historical event that is constantly in flux and that is being continuously remolded by the very social actors engaged in it as well as the larger political and social formations encompassing it. Change in this context could not be understood solely in terms of rupture nor could it be fully grasped in its totality. This thesis was an attempt to engage such change not as a moment of rupture but rather as a range of moments that are part of an ongoing process of emergence.

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