LUND UNIVERSITY
Center for Middle Eastern Studies

The Promise of the Revolution Three Years On:

Egyptian Youth Working for the Butterfly Effect

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Author: Lidija Levkov

Advisor: Dalia Abdelhady

Abstract

This thesis explores the experience of being young, Egyptian, supportive of the 2011 revolution, and active in civil society in the post-revolutionary period in Cairo and Alexandria. It draws from 5 in-depth interviews, and aims to understand the reasons behind youth's engagement in the revolution beyond the framework of youth economic exclusion. It looks into their expectations from the revolution, one the one hand, and their views on sociopolitical developments in Egypt on the other, and traces how these shape the participants' experience and influence their civil society engagement. The data were approached using a mixed theoretical framework, which encompasses youthfulness (Bayat), habitus (Bourdieu), and a heuristic, as opposed of analytic, use of social generations (Mannheim). The thesis identifies some aspects of continuity, and some of change, that influence the participants' circumstances, and highlights expressions of their agency.

Keywords: youth, post-revolution, Egypt, youth exclusion, civic engagement, Egyptian revolution, generation

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Acknowledgements

1 Introduction

As a graduate student in Middle Eastern Studies in Sweden in 2013 and 2014, I was observing from afar the dramatic events in Egypt after the revolution in 2011, which had fascinated me. Unfolding before my very eyes were the fluidity of the post-revolutionary circumstances, the ferociousness of the clashes between opposing parties, and the hard-to-understand cost in human life that I, who had also gone through a popular revolution in my home country, felt was shockingly high. Most importantly, there the sense that I was witnessing in real time the struggle over the direction in which Egypt will be steered in the years to come, and that everybody knew that the stakes were high. This made me wonder about the experience of being young and personally involved in these issues in Egypt during this period. I wondered how one preserves one's own political compass in the turmoil, what that compass conveys about the person, and what the hopes of young Egyptians, expressed during this period, for the future were.

1.1 Statement of the research problem

Although the 2011 uprisings and the Egyptian revolution have attracted a lot of scholarly attention, not much has been done on the everyday experiences of "regular" youth (Woodman 2013) who supported the revolution (Abu-Lughod 2012, 2014 is an exception). Scholars who did examine youth in the context of the revolution have mainly focused on the small group of prominent revolutionaries who were at the very forefront of the protests (Rennick 2015, Herrera 2014). After Herrera's pioneering work on the experiences of "regular" youth in Egypt in the early 2000s (Herrera 2006a,b, 2010, 2012), this topic has been largely understudied post-2011.

Moreover, following its coalescence in January 2011, the revolutionary movement arguably entered the phase of institutionalization (Tilly 1978); suggesting that it would be worthwhile to look into the experiences of youth who supported the revolution and subsequently came to be engaged with the civil society. While the predicament of young activists and civil society workers in a setting of political transition has been explored in other contexts, for example Serbian (Greenberg 2014) and Kenyan (Press 2012), studies that would focus their attention on this issue in Egypt post-revolution have been scarce. Instead of focusing on the experience of civil society workers, the studies on civil society in Egypt after the revolution mostly examined contextual factors contributing to youth mobilization (e.g. Sika 2012) or donor funding strategies (e.g. Behr and Siitonen 2013), which is perhaps understandable given that

scholars and policy makers alike were entirely unsuspecting of the surge of activism that would occur in January 2011, and subsequently had to re-adjust their discourses of youth engagement and their funding policies for civil society initiatives. Hence, I hope to contribute to the understanding of what it means to be a young supporter of the 2011 revolution who subsequently institutionalized the desire for change through civil society activism, in the Egyptian context.

This thesis explores the experience of being young, supportive of the 2011 revolution, and active in civil society in the post-revolutionary period in Cairo and Alexandria. It aims to understand how youth's expectations from the revolution, one the one hand, and their views on sociopolitical developments in Egypt on the other, shape their experiences and influence their engagement.

1.2 Disposition

After the introductory chapter, where I outline the purpose and significance of this study and provide the contextual background, in Chapter Two I review the literature on youth in Middle East from the perspective of the post-revolutionary period, and also the literature on civil society workers, in order to draw from earlier scholarly insights for the formulation of the research questions.

In Chapter Three, I position this thesis in the field of relevant theory, departing from the 'classical' notion of sociological generations and presenting one line of critique of its premises and consequences. Also relying on Bourdieu and Bayat, I form the theoretical framework to be used in this thesis.

In the following chapter I outline and account for the research design of this thesis, explaining the method employed, and provide information on the on limitations of this study, ethical issues, and personal biases, among other issues.

In Chapter Five, I lay out the main empirical findings of this thesis, which I then analyze in Chapter Six and summarize in the Conclusion, pointing out to possibilities for further research.

1.3 A note on terminology

In this thesis, I will be using the term "2011 uprisings" to denote the popular uprisings of 2011 in Middle East/North Africa. I decided to forego the term "Arab Spring", even though it has been widely used by commentators and scholars alike (e.g. Dabashi 2012, Bahgat and El-Mahdi 2012). I did so because the people who participated in the uprisings do not use this term, and have, more importantly, explicitly opposed it (Alhassen 2012, Khouri 2011). Among other historical events in the European context, the term evokes the Prague Spring in 1968, a period of political liberalization in Czechoslovakia that was promptly brought to an end by Soviet military invasion. Hence, many participants in the 2011 uprisings see the term as implying that the "Arab Spring" was a short-lived, ephemeral phenomenon. Also, they point out to the denial of agency implicit in the term "Spring", since seasons "just happen to people", while the uprisings of 2011 were an expression of perseverance, determination and activism (Khouri 2011). Moreover, "Arab" has its serious limitations, since it excludes non-Arab participants in the uprisings (Alhassen 2012) and dangerously facilitates "lumping all Arabs as a single mass of people who all think and behave the same way" (Khouri 2011).

1.4 Context

After a young Tunisian man in mid-December 2010 set himself on fire to protest police harassment, lack of economic opportunity and lack of government accountability, to which he had been exposed when the police had seized his fruit stand, his only source of likelihood, harassing him, and when several public officials had declined to hear him out, mass protests started in Tunisia, demanding the end of president Ben Ali's regime. Amid ongoing protests in Tunisia, an Egyptian man set himself on fire on Cairo's Tahrir Square on January 1 2011. That same day, over 20 Copts were murdered in a bombing of a church in Alexandria, causing clashes between enraged members of the Coptic community and the police. On January 16th Tunisian president Ben Ali stepped down. Then in mid-January 2011, the administrators of an Egyptian Facebook group "We are all Khaled Said", which they had made to commemorate 28-year-old Khaled Said who was beaten to death by the police in Alexandria in late 2010, called for demonstrations to protest police brutality on January 25, the National Police Day. Other activist groups and individuals active on social media joined the call and followed suit. On January 25, thousands of peaceful protestors across the ideological spectrum gathered in Cairo and other

cities, demanding Mubarak's resignation, to which the police responded by teargas and beatings. On January 28 a dramatically growing number of protestors defied the curfew introduced the previous day, and the number of casualties rose. General strike, the return from exile of Nobel Peace Prize laureate and dissident Mohamed el-Baradei, widely seen as a possible successor to Mubarak, as well as continuing protests in major cities in Egypt with an ever increasing numbers of participants, culminating in hundreds of thousands, amplified the pressure on Mubarak and on February 11 he stepped down, turning over the power to Egyptian military's Supreme Concil of Armed Forces (SCAF).

The visibility of young people during the protests, and the fact that youth-led movements and networks called for demonstrations in the first place, led many scholars, analytics and commentators to conclude that youth were at the forefront of the revolution. In fact, youth movements had been at the forefront of oppositional activity for a decade, and scholars have emphasized how these engagements seasoned the people involved in how to send their message, how to forge coalitions, and how to do street activism in an authoritarian context (Korany and El-Mahdi 2012, Rennick 2015). The *Popular Committee for the Support of Palestinian Intifada* in 2000 and *Kifaya* movement 2004-2006, with its unofficial youth wing *Youth for Change,* organized bigger public gatherings than any other in the decade that preceded them. In 2008, a youth-led Facebook campaign supporting a strike of factory workers became *April 6th Movemen*t, which mobilized to support the strike and organized protests throughout the period leading up to the revolution.

In the wake of Mubarak's resignation, a number of young activists from fourteen different youth groups across the political spectrum formed the coalition *Revolutionary Youth*, in an effort to form a platform for representation. The following months were marked by youth's protests against the rule of SCAF and violent response by the police, an increased isolation of youth from the common Egyptians who had supported the revolution, and increased discord within the coalition. The group disbanded after Mohamed Morsi the candidate of Egypt's largest and oldest Islamist party, the Muslim Brotherhood, was inaugurated as president, having won the presidential election in 2012, which marked the end of SCAF interim rule (Muhammad Taha 2012).

On June 30 2013, hundreds of thousands of people went to the street to demand the resignation of president Morsi. The military issued an ultimatum to Morsi, and he was deposed by the military on July 3. Mass protests of Muslim Brotherhood supporters ensued, including six-week-long sit-ins at the Rabaa el-Adawiya mosque and al-Nahda square in Cairo, effectively shutting down a major traffic node of the city. The sit-ins were violently dispersed by the police August 14-16, killing over 850 protestors in an action widely condemned by human rights organizations (e.g. HRW 2014).

Since the military deposed Morsi, and especially since SCAF chairman Abdel Fattah al-Sisi became president after an election in the summer of 2014, government pressure on civil society has substantially increased. A number of international and local civil society organizations have been shut down by the government. The law currently regulating citizen associations dates from 2002. Since the fall of 2014, its restrictive measures, alongside newly made amendments to the penal code that enable the judiciary to issue very harsh sentences under very vaguely defined circumstances, has been implemented to scrutinize and increase pressure to the national and local NGOs (AI 2015). Moreover, an unprecedented number of activists have been imprisoned, with an estimated twenty-two thousand people arrested between July 2013 and 2014 alone (Stork 2015).

2 Literature Review

People younger than 24 make up more than 50% of the population of Egypt (DESA 2015), a consequence of the Middle-East wide demographic trend often referred to as the youth bulge. Youth in any society stand to gain a lot from positive social change. This is especially the case in Egypt, where youth are arguably subject to social exclusion due to particularly high unemployment rates and high cost of marriage (Singerman 2013). There is wide consensus among scholars and commentators that youth have been prominent, if not at the forefront, of the 2011 revolution. Youth participated in online activist campaigns that articulated discontent in the lead-up to the revolution, like the Facebook group "We are All Khaled Said". Most notably, it was youth-led social movements that called for protests on January 25. While these movements did not have a mass support base, there were many young faces among the millions of Egyptians who joined the protests after January 25. Having reached the point of coalescence at the peak of the revolution, these youth-led social movements arguably have entered the phase of institutionalization (Blumer 1969, Tilly 1978), during the last two to three years in the aftermath of the revolution's initial or perceived success. After the revolution, the number of non-government organizations (NGO) and citizen initiatives soared, and many young people in Egypt chose to be active in civil society in the post-revolutionary period (Beinin 2013).

In this section, I aim to provide an overview of the arguments presented within the literature on youth in the Middle East after the 2011 uprisings, and ethnographic studies of civil society workers, in order to better approach the issue of youth post-revolution who choose to be active in civil society, and of their relationship to their sociopolitical context.

2.1 Social exclusion of youth

While youth are commonly identified as one of the main agents of the 2011 uprisings, scholars have differently problematized their role in the uprisings and their predicament in the post-revolutionary period. Some have argued that youth's political action should be attributed to their socioeconomic, political and cultural exclusion. Building on this premise, others emphasized that youth have developed new ways of engaging politics, enhancing their political capital (to borrow the term from Bourdieu 1973) in the face of social exclusion. Drawing from these novel forms of youth's political behavior, yet others have observed how politics is inscribed into youth's

everyday life and stressed the importance of examining youth political action beyond the conceptual realm of formal politics.

Youth exclusion has also been a prominent analytical lens of policy/development literature on youth in the Middle East (for example Dhillon and Yousef 2009, Silver 2007, Chaaban 2009). Globally, youth have come to the fore of the development agenda since 2000, as demonstrated by the exponential growth of World Bank's investment in youth-related issues (Herrera 2006b). The issue of education, with an emphasis on civic education as a condition for youth political and social participation has also been probed, for example by Faour (2012). Studies that focus on Egypt have broken down youth exclusion to dimensions of education and learning, potentials for forming families, work opportunities, and channels for exercising citizenship (Assaad and Barsoum 2007). Handoussa (2010) and Biomy (2010) have looked into the situation of Egyptian youth from the perspective of human capital, with Biomy focusing on the issue of youth economic responsibility. In her comparative study of youth exclusion in the Middle East and in Europe, Silver (2007) has argued in favor of social exclusion approach in comparison to the human capital or life transitions approaches. From the life transitions perspective, Gebel and Heyne (2014) examined transitions in terms of schooling, employment, marriage and forming a family.

Among other scholars, Linda Herrera (2009) has commented on the approach to youth taken by the development and policy literature, having pointed out that, first, the human-capital framework, which sees youth as a developmental resource, does not ponder the questions of justice and equity. Second, Herrera stressed that this approach "treats youth either as subjects to stimulate neoliberal development, or as essentially religious and ideological beings with either politically radical or benign tendencies", seeing them as objects rather than subjects or agents (Herrera 2010:127). Third and most importantly, Herrera argued that this literature rarely examines the perspective of youth themselves on the issues relevant to their lives, such as the type of citizens they strive to be, the kind of future they are hopeful for, or the struggles they face trying to realize this future (Herrera 2010). In short, Herrera has argued that the perspective of youth has been lacking, and that consequently the lives and desires of youth have been very little understood (2006a).

Accordingly, a body of scholarship has directly engaged the youth's perspective. A significant body of literature (e.g. Singerman 2013, Shehata 2008 and 2011, Mulderig 2013, Nevens 2012) has pointed out that youth in the Middle East are situated at the nexus of multiple lines of social, economic and political exclusion, and that precisely this circumstance provided them with a particularly strong incentive to rebel and demand political change. For example Singerman (2013) has shown how the economic circumstances in Egypt have made it difficult for young people to make life transitions such as employment and marriage, which are necessary for them to be socially recognized as adults, and to accordingly be granted social status and respect. Instead of being able to achieve adulthood, youth have been stuck in the limbo of "waithood" well into their thirties. In addition, youth have been facing political exclusion, as any expression of dissatisfaction with the status quo has been prevented and silenced. This predicament, according to Singerman, "may explain their propensity to rebel once it seemed new political horizons were possible" (9). In a similar vein, Shehata (2008) argued that youth political activism can be explained by the combination of three factors: the demographic fact of "youth bulge", the socioeconomic fact of youth exclusion, and the fact that youth maintain high expectations for their future. In 2011, Shehata observed that youth had come to be increasingly engaged in activism, while the state had become increasingly permissive.

Likewise, Mulderig (2013) explicitly dismisses the view that particular political regimes were the real target of youth in these protests, and argues that their involvement should rather be seen as an expression of dissatisfaction with their socio-cultural marginality. Mulderig emphasizes that youth exclusion is not unique to the Middle East, but that young people face difficulties with each and every trajectory towards socially recognized adulthood only in the Middle East. Importantly, Mulderig notes that "the deeply entrenched socio-economic problems that caused Arab youth frustration did not simply disappear with the overthrow of a given dictator" (4), stressing that the social, economic and cultural conditions, which caused youth to express political dissent, are far from gone after political change has been achieved. Nevens (2012) sees the youth, who have led the uprisings, as sidelined in the aftermath of the protests. Building on such arguments, it would be worthwhile to explore what youth in Egypt today say and think about the revolution and its goals, and which arguments they invoke to support their stance. Do they see the revolution as targeting youth's socioeconomic marginality, as Singerman, Shehata and Mulderig suggest? Do they share the disappoints of those who led the revolution, as

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Nevens argues? Do they see youth marginality as persisting after the revolution, as Mulderig notes? Or, do they stand to gain from the political changes that resulted?

2.2 Boost of youth's "political capital"

Building on the accounts of economic and social marginalization of youth in the Middle East, a number of authors (e.g. Herrera 2006a, 2010, 2012, 2014, Herrera and Sakr 2014, Anderson 2013, Cole 2014) argue that marginalization of youth coincided with an increase in youth's political capital, to use Bourdieu's (1973) term. Those studies point out the new ways of organizing, as well as new discourses on citizenship and places for the political in the everyday life (Kiwan 2015, Salime 2015, Abdelmagid 2013), that youth have developed.

For example, Herrera has inquired into the views of youth in Egypt on social institutions, development policies, and regional politics, while taking into consideration their family background and gender (2006a). She finds that youth have been developing an emerging generational consciousness, built around the issues of rights, employment and justice, rather than religious politics (2010), as shown from her interviews with Egyptian youth on their hopes for the future (2006a). She also probes into Egyptian youth's relationship to politics and citizenship, and finds that many of them, while not formally politically active, have very clear political views, demand political and social change, and even engage in practices in which they aim to spread these ideas (by disseminating alternative narratives of events that contradict the official versions, or anonymously advocating for a change in societal ethics that would necessarily require political change) but systematically avoid expressing these views publicly for fear of government retribution (2010).

Herrera and Sakr (2014) and Herrera (2014) argue that youth are the new poor globally, and subject to grave exclusion in the Middle East. However, they crucially add that, at the same time, youth have the advantage over other age groups in being more technologically skilled and educated. In fact, youth today are more skilled and educated than any subaltern group ever before in history, and Herrera considers youth's prominent role in the 2011 uprisings to be an expression of social change that largely transcends the narrowly conceived political domain. Similarly, Anderson (2013) explicitly dismisses the possibility that youth's role in the uprisings can be explained away by demographics.

The novel values and behaviors that youth have developed, as elaborated by Cole (2014) and Herrera (2014), include valuing horizontal relationships in learning and organizing, which enables them to quickly organize in efficient, loose, agile and flexible horizontal networks (Anderson 2013). In addition, the "Arab millennials" (Cole 2014) value knowledge and technical skill over traditional social hierarchies. Their hostility towards gender, religious and age discrimination is coupled with their tendency to use new communication technologies to communicate across lines of difference, enabling them to advocate for equality across traditional frontiers of social division. Compared to the older generations, they have the audacity to speak back to power and to forge alliances with other actors while preserving their own political vision.

Furthermore, youth have also articulated new discourses of citizenship. For example, Salime (2015) looks into Moroccan youth's use of the slogan "I vote sing" to protest the political arrest of a rap artist, while Abdelmagid (2013) examines social activism of a graffiti art collective in post-revolutionary Cairo. Both argue that, in these cases, youth conceived and expressed ideas of citizenship while consuming or producing art, thus "carving out a space for the political in everyday life" (Salime 2015: 136). Likewise, Kiwan (2015) stresses that, during the uprisings, youth have constituted themselves as citizens in new ways, through politically expressing themselves in cultural forms. Prior to the uprisings, LeVine (2008) has looked into youth as cultural producers who provide a critique of society in inventive and unexpected ways, having engaged young heavy metal musicians throughout the Middle East. LeVine found that they were often devoutly religious, espousing and extending through their public presence a subversive worldview and a critique of contemporary political and religious hegemonic forces.

In this diagnosis of youth's predicament, an important factor is youth's productive use of the Internet. Herrera (2014) uses the term "wired youth" to refer to youth's use of the Internet to connect with one another, access information, and create influential and accessible counterpublics. Herrera and Sakr (2014) argue that, in trying to devise new alternatives to social trajectories against which they had been systematically marginalized, youth have developed new manners and spaces of being and doing politics, which are overwhelmingly situated online. For example, Herrera (Herrera and Sakr 2014) describes how Egyptian youth initially began to blog in order to express themselves, rather than to engage in self-consciously political activity, and how bloggers subsequently spontaneously came to be citizen journalists, publicizing alternative,

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and often subversive, versions of events. Importantly, she contends (2014) that the Internet can very well also be a weapon of mass oppression.

Non-hierarchical organizing, communication across lines of difference, use of the Internet and Internet-based social networks, and demands for justice for all – which boosted youth's political capital according to the above analysis – are among the essential features of the youth-led social movements which, in January 2011, first called for protests that would later result in the toppling of president Mubarak. Blumer (1969) and Tilly (1978) have argued that social movements go through four stages: preliminary stage, coalescence, institutionalization and decline. Arguably, in the wake of the Egyptian revolution, youth-led social movements that were at its forefront started going through the institutionalization phase. The number of citizen initiatives and civil society organizations soared after the revolution, as the uprisings "provided a sudden boost to civil society activism across the Middle East" (Behr and Siitonen 2013:14).

Therefore, after the revolution that was catalyzed (and arguably made possible) by youth-led social movements, it is worthwhile to examine more institutionalized forms of youth's engagement, in order to see how young people active in the civil society view the revolution, current sociopolitical situation in Egypt, their own civil society engagement, and whether and how they link their engagement to the goals of the revolution. In the following section, I will review the literature that focuses on civil society workers, and ethnographically examines their views of their work.

2.3 Civil society workers' motivations: against the binary between altruism and egoism

In this thesis, the term "civil society" is employed as a broad term encompassing, among others, agencies for international cooperation and development, international organizations, national and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), grassroots activist organizations, charities, unions, and professional associations.

While some (for example, Behr and Siitonen 2013) have viewed civil society as a necessary link in the process of democratization and positive social change, at least under certain conditions, others have criticized this notion. For example, Plaetzer (2014) argues that using the analytical tool of civil society to study post-revolutionary contexts of Tunisia and Egypt leads to

re-inscribing social and economic injustices that prompted people to rebel in the first place. Plaetzer argues that " 'civil society' has integrated an open and contingent arena into the closed structures of reproduced sovereign statehood" (2014: 255). Moreover, NGOs have been criticized as the vehicles of neo-liberalization that effectively legitimize and facilitate the withdrawal of the state from basic service provision, or as agents of professionalization of civil society engagement (Hilton et al. 2013), which negatively impact the possibility for more radical grass-roots resistance (e.g. Jad 2004, Choudry and Shragge 2011). In the field of development studies, a number of scholars have critically examined developmental policies and practices, giving rise to the field of critical development studies.

However, other authors (e.g. Townsend et al. 2004, Abu-Rabia-Queder 2007) have pointed out that both an uncritical praise and an undiscerning dismissal of civil society organizations (CSOs) are in fact sweeping generalizations, and instead argued for studying concrete cases of CSOs, and for showing how they can be complex sites of both co-optation and resistance. Moreover, responding both to uncritical advocates of development policies and institutions and to the scholars of critical development studies, the ethnographers of aid ("aidnographers") have similarly advocated for ethnographic study of international development institutions (e.g. Leve and Karim 2001, Lewis and Mosse 2006), and some (e.g. Mosse 2011), have argued for studying aid givers, aiming to redress the imbalance between the traditionally strong scientific interest in aid recipients and the understudied aid givers.

While "aidnographies" can yield important understandings of particular organizations, other studies have shifted the unit of analysis to the groups of workers at CSOS and studied their values and attitudes in various countries around the world. Henry (2011) studied Burmese civil society workers and their attitudes towards political violence during the Burmese civil war. Having found that civil society workers and members of armed groups had overlapping and interchangeable attitudes on political violence, Henry problematized the idea of civil society as the antipode to violence. Smith and Jenkins (2012) and Junge (2012) explored the relationship between dominant discourses and civil society workers' understanding of their work. Smith and Jenkins studied life-histories of mid-level local development workers in India, and showed how those workers' subjectivities are shaped by the interplay between "articulations of personal ambitions and aspirations, global and development discourse, organisational narratives, and

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national political economy" (2012: 641). Junge's (2012) investigation of the meaning of participation for grassroots community leaders in Brazil exposed the way that community leaders' attitudes are both shaped by, and shaping, the hegemonic discourses on development and participation.

Others, for example Fechter (2012), White (2015), Lewis (2011), and Yarrow (2011, 2008) found that civil society workers have complex motivations for, and relationships with, their work. Fechter (2012) showed that international development workers experience ambivalent feelings concerning their and their colleagues' lifestyles faced with the discrepancy with the lifestyle of the poor people they serve. Moreover, White (2015) looked into the motivations of development workers and argued that "it is likely that most people go into development work with some expectation of receiving as well as giving" (White 2015: 10), having found that motivations of a single development worker often range from a common development ethos valuing progress and modernization, to expectations of professional and personal gain, often at the same time. Furthermore, Lewis' (2011) study of life–histories of NGO professionals in Bangladesh has shown that working in the non-governmental field is professionally advantageous for promising university graduates, highlighting the professional gains of civil society work.

Moreover, Yarrow (2011) studied local NGO activists in Ghana and found that, rather than having an opportunistic, principally pragmatic or even cynical relation to their engagement, as is often assumed by the critical development studies literature, activists see their engagement as part of a wider ideological project they are committed to. While these workers face complex practical and moral dilemmas, they evaluate their own and others' work based on demonstrated consistency between actions and ideological commitment. Indeed, Yarrow (2008) shows how ideological commitment provides the local Ghanaian NGO activists with a moral framework that enables them to subordinate individual gain to the goal of transformation of society. Andrews (1991) examines commitment of lifelong political activists, and brings to light factors that are arguably also relevant for civic and social activism. These factors include personal experience and exposure to an ideology, often through personal relationships, which connects the personal experience to prescriptions for action.

Therefore, motivations for professional civil society work are varied, and not precisely determined. Studies imply that the assumption of a strong opposition between altruistic reasons

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for engagement predicated upon giving and egoistic reasons predicated upon expectations of receiving, are not warranted.

Hence, I argue that youth in Egypt post-revolution are not only victims of exclusion, but also bearers of potent new ways of engaging politics. I go against the development/policy literature and, following Herrera's (2010) emphasis on the importance of involving youth's perspective on these events, I aim to look into the experience of post-revolutionary period from their point of view. A significant factor shaping this experience is what they were hoping the revolution would bring. I go against deriving hypotheses on youth's views, expectations and hopes from economic and demographic tendencies (Mulderig 2013), and argue in favor of empirical, in-depth examination of these issues. While I am aware that civil society has its limitations, I argue that it is worthwhile to explore the outlook of youth who has been engaged in civil society work post-revolution, in light of the prominent role of youth-led movements in the revolution, and drawing from the insights of new social movement theorists (Blumer 1969, Tilly 1994) that coalescence of a social movement is followed by its institutionalization.

Thus, the research question is:

How have young Egyptians active in civil society, who supported the revolution, experienced the post-revolutionary period in Egypt?

The sub-question is:

- How have the expectations of the revolution influenced the civic engagement of young Egyptians in the post-revolutionary period?

3 Theory

As a theoretical approach that thematizes the interface between youth, the worldview and sociopolitical circumstances, sociology of generation speaks to the research problem of this thesis. After a number of scholars in early XX century, most notable among them being Karl Mannheim, had put forth a number of theorizations of social generations, which is in this thesis termed 'classical', others (e.g. Wohl 1979, Bourdieu 1993, Purhonen 2015) have criticized this conceptualization. Yet others (e.g. Woodman 2013) have used their conceptualization as a departure point for improved versions and for tackling its shortcomings. This section will provide an overview of one line of evolution of the idea of sociological generations, and isolate the theoretical strategy that is, in my opinion, the most useful for the purpose of this thesis.

More specifically, German sociologist Karl Mannheim argued in the 1920s that sociological generations are more than mere age cohorts, since members of a generation share a worldview and a set of attitudes characteristic of the predicament of being young at a certain point in space and time. Criticizing this 'classical' version, scholars (e.g. Bourdieu 1993, Purhonen 2015) have argued against treating social generations as a societal 'given' and not as social constructs and have, what is more, pointed out that, for the social generational framework to be empirically meaningful, the framework has to bear a link to the biological age, which then renders it theoretically untenable. Following the argument I will put forth in this chapter, I will concede that theorizing generations as 'givens' and not as constructs is indeed problematic, but will also argue that the latter problem may be resolved if generations are thought of as a heuristic, rather than an explanatory device. I argue that Woodman (2013) employs the notion of generation in this manner, although Woodman himself does not articulate his use as such. As a result, I will include the approach of social generations in the theoretical framework used in this thesis, but only as a heuristic device. Other elements of the framework will include Bourdieu's theorizations of struggle within fields (1984), Bourdieu's (1985) and Purhonen's (2015) emphasis of the importance of representation, and Bayat's (2010a,b) conception of youth as possession of youthful habitus. This theoretical framework will allow me to adequately conceptualize the diversity of experiences of the participants, and yet track continuity and change in their predicament, as well as their agency.

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3.1 Mannheim and the 'classical' formulation of sociology of generations

Although a number of European theorists have put forth similar conceptions of generations as social groups in the early decades of the XX century, Karl Mannheim's conception (1952, first in German 1923) is widely taken as having garnered the most influence. Strongly influenced by Marx, while at the same time aiming to distance himself from Marx somewhat, Mannheim was writing from the perspective of a scholar seeking to conceptualize youth-led class struggle, or youth-led struggle for socioeconomic equality. However, a number of premises in Mannheim's argument has been influential across various ideologies.

According to Mannheim, generations consist in people born in a similar time, in a similar place and context, who thus assume a shared social location (Mannheim 1952). Social location is defined by Mannheim in opposition to the social group, termed by Mannheim "concrete group", in that social group requires members' commitment to a common purpose. In contrast, a common social location only opens up the possibility, but does not effectuate common commitments. To elaborate on the meaning of social location, Mannheim draws a parallel between generations and class: class location is the consequence of distribution of wealth/power in society, while generational location is the consequence of life cycles and biological facts of being born and of aging. However, Mannheim stresses that neither class nor generation can, as sociological concepts, be explained by economics or biology, but only on sociological grounds.

Furthermore, social location is an objective fact, regardless of whether an individual is conscious of it or not, and it can only potentially give rise to the forming of a social group. The generational location conditions its members' "possible modes of thought, experience, feeling and action, and restricts the range of self-expression open to the individual to certain circumscribed possibilities" (Mannheim 1952: 296). Generation as a location becomes an "actual generation" once "a concrete bond is created between members of a generation by their being exposed to the social and intellectual symptoms of a process of dynamic de-stabilization" (Mannheim 1952: 303). De-stabilization is the capacity and willingness to re-think and re-make social circumstances, which arises out of awareness of a changing social and historical situation. Thus, common generational location gives rise to an actual generation when the individuals have the same understanding of what the challenges and the questions of their time are. This understanding is what binds them together (Mannheim 1952).

Moreover, the questions of one's time do not provoke the same intellectual and social responses across the individuals within an actual generation. Various sub-sets of the actual generation respond differently to awareness of the same circumstances. These sub-sets are generation units. In other words, generation units are "groups within the same actual generation which work up the material of their common experiences in different specific ways" (Mannheim 1952: 304). Generation units "do not merely involve a loose participation by a number of individuals in a pattern of events shared by all alike though interpreted by the different individuals differently", like actual generations do, but involve "an identity of responses, a certain affinity in the way in which all [individuals] are formed … by their common experiences" (Mannheim 1952: 306). Generational units are concrete groups, as they bind together individuals committed to a common cause. Examples of generational units given by Mannheim, which are roughly applicable to both his and, in a different way, our times, are liberal (or 'progressive', or 'revolutionary') youth and conservative youth. Within any actual generation, therefore, there can be a number of distinct, and even antagonistic, generation units. They are bound by a concern with the same problems of their time, although they advocate for very different solutions to those problems. This point is one of the key elements of Mannheim's argument as it allows us to conceive of the experiences and attitudes of the members of the same generation as varied and diverse.

3.2 Bourdieu, Bayat, and the emphasis on the importance of theorizing generations as a social construct

A number of assumptions underlying the 'classical' formulation of social generations have been criticized. The direct linkage between the biological age and societal dispositions, as well as envisaging social generations as a societal 'given' and not as social constructs, have been powerfully, albeit only in passing, criticized by Bourdieu (1993). Moreover, Bayat (2010a,b) has employed Bourdieu's (1992) notion of habitus, stating that youth is the possession of youthful habitus, and stressed how youth not only arises from the specific social position between being a child (being dependent) and being an adult (having dependents), but is also socially acquired. Further, Purhonen (2015) used Bourdieu's (1985, 1987) account of the formation of social groups to further advance the argument of generations as social constructs.

While the theme of generations was tackled by Bourdieu only marginally, at least as concerns explicit discussions on the subject (Purhonen 2015: 2), in the interview "Youth is Just a Name" (1993) Bourdieu states that he sees generations as a social constructs resulting from the struggle of social and cultural capital, which is in line with his general theoretical framework theorizing social fields and capital. Bourdieu's concept of field denotes the ensemble of social norms, possibilities for adaptation, and social relations available to a social group, and may be connected to the group's class, spatial location, or profession; the rules of engagement with the field, by which the field is structured, are intelligible and identifiable (Scott and Marshall 2009). There are multiple fields, among them cultural and economic. Furthermore, cultural capital is the ensemble of preferences, tastes and ideas that can be strategically used in social action as resources (*ibid*). Theorists have also added to Bourdieu's conception of cultural capital the notion of social capital, denoting an individual's connections and contacts (*ibid*).

Moreover, Bourdieu emphasizes that the "relationship between social age and biological age is very complex" (Bourdieu 1993: 95), since social age complies to field-specific norms, which vary across fields: "each field has its specific laws of ageing" (*ibid*). He stresses that generations are predicated upon the particular rules of a field, as well as the divisions that emerge as actors struggle in the field, rather than biological age. Further, Bourdieu explicitly states that "Merely talking about 'the young' as a social unit, a constituted group, with common interests, relating these interests to a biologically defined age, is in itself an obvious manipulation" (*ibid*). Elsewhere in the interview, Bourdieu employs the term "generation" referring to an age cohort, which in conjunction with what has just been discussed makes his usage unsystematic. It is, however, clear that he rejects the association between social and biological age, an assumption made by Mannheim (Purhonen 2015).

The biologically young, like other actors, engage in struggles within fields, according to Bourdieu's wider framework. Namely, younger age cohorts can engage with older cohorts within a field, and try to impose their habitus on others and thereby assume an advantageous position, which results in the construction of two opposing generations within the field. Also, biologically young people can struggle among themselves, and some can try to use their capital for reproducing their privilege over others trans-generationally. Finally, the young can strive to take

advantage of shifts in field-specific rules, or to dictate the rules in newly arising fields if they are not yet determined (Woodman 2013).

What is more, Purhonen (2015) has argued that generations always have to be dependent on biological age in one way or another. For example, following Bourdieu's point that social age arises out of struggles of actors within the fields, and that what counts in those struggles is not biological age of the individual but their newness to the field, Purhonen pointed out that, while "newness to the field" would be a theoretically consequential marker of social age, it is not viable as an analytical criterion as it is simply too undetermined and "fuzzy". This is why Purhonen argues that biological age has to be linked to generation. However, this again renders generations susceptible to the kind of criticism put forth by Bourdieu, as already discussed. In Purhonen's words, "it may be impossible to have a 'sociology of generations' that would be totally free of generationalism" (Purhonen 2015: 16), where generationalism refers to the shortcomings and naivete of the 'classical', Mannheimian view of generations.

Bayat's (2010a,b) influential approach to conceptualizing youth as a habitus sees youthfulness as the essential characteristic of youth as a social category: "'Young persons' turn into 'youth' by developing a particular consciousness about youthfulness" (2010a:119). Youthfulness is an ensemble of behavioral and cognitive dispositions, and Bayat follows Bourdieu (1992) in terming this ensemble a habitus. According to Bourdieu, habitus is an ensemble of acquired, unconscious interpretive schemes that govern practice, and are developed through experience. Habitus is expressed in taste, style, and other practices in which people engage without reflection or self-awareness (Scott and Marshall 2009). While youthfulness is associated with the social location, found first and foremost in modern cities, between being a child and being an adult (i.e. between being dependent and having dependents), Bayat crucially also theorizes it as socially acquired, developed, and articulated, describing how young people develop common youth identities and practices.

Purhonen (2015), who heavily criticizes the 'classical', Mannheimian sociology of generations, takes Bourdieu's discussions of the nature of class (1987) and of the processes of social classification trough which social groups are formed (1985) and argues that those insights on formation of social groups in general can be usefully applied to the generation as social group. Purhonen (2015) points out that Bourdieu (1987) called for looking into "struggles of

classification" (i.e. process of production of classes) instead of focusing on "class struggles" (i.e. assumption that classes are already existing social entities). Bourdieu denied that social classes as theorized by sociologists are actually existing groups. Instead, the objectivity of any statement on social class should always be seen as relational, as it is always in relation to a particular position in the social space that other positions (including classes) are conceived. Having rejected the 'theoretical' social class as an 'actually' existing group, Bourdieu argues that class comes into being through the process of delegation, of representation, which renders class 'actual' on the symbolic level: "class exists if and only if there is someone who can plausibly represent it" (Bourdieu 1987: 15). People then stand behind the spokesperson(s)' representation as class members.

Hence, Purhonen invites to shift the focus from generational struggles and the view that generations are a social given, towards the study of struggles for classification in generational terms, whereby generations are seen as products of these struggles. Following Bourdieu's theorization of classification, representation is constitutive for the making of a group, and in the following section it will be shown how representation becomes one of the central political issues to look into when researching social generations.

3.3 The issue of representation

Following Bourdieu, the issue of representation has been put forth as one of the central issues in theorizing social generations by Purhonen (2015), but also by Aboim and Vasconcelos (2014) and Timonen and Conlon (2015), among others.

As already pointed out, according to Bourdieu (1987), group spokesperson(s) as representatives, their speech, and the visible presence of group as a discursive formation (to use Foucault's term), are what renders the group 'actual'. Delegation of representation of class, and the issue of naming, which are both constitutive for a social group, thus become of high political relevance. The agent that has the power of naming also has the power to choose which of the possible viewpoints of the group to bring to the fore over all the others, and establish it as the determining feature of the group (Purhonen 2015).

The centrality of representation means that discursive construction of generations should be at the forefront of generational research, including the questions of who speaks for a generation and why. The critical focus on claimants to generational representation can serve to

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address the issue of intra-generational inequalities, scrutinizing the privileged positions that enable the claimants to win the struggle for representation. This approach focuses the process in which "some kind of vanguard ('the elite'), which represents an entire generation by proclaiming itself to be its spokesman, automatically creating a counterpart, namely the others in the peer group, who are thought to be represented (the 'masses')" (Purhonen 2015: 16). Further, this approach asks about the sources of production of discourse on a generation, labels that people identify with, and "all the reflective articulations of generational experiences: speeches, manifestoes, writings, labels, terms, and so on, which are explicitly concerned with generations" (Purhonen 2015: 14, see also Aboim and Vasconcelos 2014; Timonen and Conlon 2015). Focusing on discursive production of a generation and the actors involved also enables tracing continuity and change in formation of a generation.

3.4 Generation as a heuristic device for capturing continuity and change

As shown in the previous sub-sections, Bourdieu's critique of the conception of class and his theorization of social groups can be used to forcefully criticize the "classical" formulation of social generations. Moreover, Purhonen pointed out that, for the social generational framework to be empirically meaningful, it has to bear a link to the biological age, which then renders it theoretically untenable (2015: 15). Woodman (2013), however, argues that, in spite of these shortcomings, the concept of generations is especially well equipped for arriving at findings that capture both change and continuity without treating them as binary opposites

Woodman's (2013) argument is primarily aimed at the scholars of youth studies who approach the problem of youth from the analytical optics of social inequalities (class, gender, race, etc). Namely, Woodman argues that examining the experience of youth from the standpoint of class, gender, or race, among other lines of social stratification, emphasizes continuity in the social circumstances at the expense of social change. Woodman draws from the argument of Ulrich Beck (Purhonen 2015) that major shifts and changes have been taking place in industrialized societies in late modernity. For example, Beck argues that the basic circumstances surrounding the way we work have fundamentally changed, in the context of the global flow of capital and new technologies. Woodman underlines that these, and other fundamental changes cannot be tracked down in research solely focused on identifying the existence, and more or less subtle manifestations, of enduring inequalities. Woodman seems to use Beck's approach more as

an illustration of the importance of being able to track changes (as well as continuity), than as a theoretical departure point, as he does not argue, like Beck does, that change is effectively happening (Woodman 2013). He only uses Beck to sensitize his audience to the possibility of subtle yet all-pervasive changes and to the importance of capturing them. Moreover, Woodman argues that approaching the task from the standpoint of generations leaves more open possibilities for tracing not only change, but also continuity. It provides the conceptual framework to approach the empirical data and seek commonalities in young people's experiences, in order to identify the structural factors shaping the experience of being young at a point in time. Crucially, neither the existence of common experiences nor their origin seem to be assumed by Woodman, unlike Mannheim. Further, Woodman does not argue against using the potent analytical tools of class and other stratification, and indeed he uses them himself as an auxiliary tool to re-examine and interpret his findings. This approach also enables capturing instances of young people's agency, as their strategies in dealing with the constraints are identified.

In my opinion, Woodman basically argues for using the framework of generations as a heuristic device: a convenient way to tackle data on age cohorts, but not an ontology aiming to explain either the essence or the becoming of generations as social groups. Woodman himself, however, does not articulate his use of the framework as heuristic.

To sum up, Mannheim (1952) has usefully pointed out that generations are not monolithic groups, but are internally diverse and consist in generational units that often have conflicting views. Bourdieu (1993) has criticized the idea that generations, and other social groups (1985, 1987), are a given. Instead, he put forth the view that they are social constructs. Bayat (2010a,b) emphasized that youth are constituted as a social group by their shared youthful habitus, which is socially developed and acquired (in addition to resulting from a specific social location). Purhonen (2015) underlined that the process of representation, significant in Bourdieu's conception of formation of social groups, is an important political issue in researching generations. Finally, acknowledging the weaknesses of the classical conception of social generations, Woodman argues for using generations to capture continuity and change and to examine the experience of being young at a point in time and cultural space, and I argue that, in so doing, Woodman effectively uses the concept as a heuristic device more than as an

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explanatory tool, although Woodman himself does not thematize or articulate his use of the concept as such.

In this thesis, I will be using a theoretical framework that utilizes these different points from each of the authors, in order to better understand the diversity in the narratives among Egyptian youth, as well as continuity and change in their predicament.

4 Methodology

This thesis uses interpretivist approaches to qualitative research design. The central assumption of interpretivism is that understanding is predicated upon "grasping how people interpret and make sense of their world and act on their interpretations" (Hammersley 2012). Therefore, this thesis seeks to explain the experiences and perspectives of its participants, and make sense of their attitudes. As such, the thesis is designed as a qualitative interview study, suitable for projects "going for depth rather than breadth", aiming to gather data on emotions, experiences and feelings (Denscombe 2010). This thesis is based on interviews, conducted in English, with five young civil society workers in Cairo, between January 8th and 21st 2015. The interviews took on average 90 minutes each. All interviews were recorded with the consent of participants.

4.1 Research population, sampling and recruiting

The sampling was done following Robinson's four-point approach to sampling in qualitative interview-based studies (Robinson 2014:25). The sample universe was defined as Egyptians aged between 16 and 35 who supported the 2011 revolution, live in Cairo or Alexandria, who, after January 2011, spent at least one year being full-time engaged with a civil society organization or initiative (NGO, charity, citizen initiative, newly formed union or professional association), on either a volunteer or a professional basis. The population was narrowed down to Cairo and Alexandria for practical reasons. The age of 35 is not considered youth by most established classifications; however, it was chosen as the age limit so that the study can include people who were in their early thirties during the 2011 revolution, and to reflect how life transitions associated with adulthood are increasingly attained at a later age in urban areas in Egypt.

Moreover, regarding sample size, this study is idiographic rather than nomothetic. Idiographic studies seek to ensure "locatable voices for individual cases within the study" (Robinson 2014: 29). The size of the sample is five participants, which is within the size interval that "provides scope for developing cross-case generalities and permits individuals within sample to be given a defined identity" (*ibid*).

The sampling strategy employed was quota sampling. Relevant demographic or social categories of participants were identified, and a minimum number of cases was required for each one (Robinson 2014: 34). Thus, to ensure that key groups are represented in the sample, at least

one Christian and at least two female participants were to be included, based on the assumption that categories of gender and confession play a part in shaping the experiences of activism, political events, and societal circumstances.

Finally, snowball sampling was used to source the sample. The period immediately preceding fieldwork was marked by an increasing pressure of the state on civil society organizations. In accordance with the NGO law adopted under president Morsi, limitations on foreign funding of CSOs were imposed. Government inspectors visited organizations. A number of organizations were closed, forced to re-locate, or even had their staff arrested. In such an atmosphere, I was aware that advertising the call for participants in a study on young civil society workers, done by a foreigner, was not expected to yield results, which is why I opted for snowball sampling instead. Iasked two people, a friend who had been an activist engaged in LGBT issues and a colleague from a humanitarian international organization where I had been interning, to introduce me to their acquaintances who fit the study's population. I thus sourced three participants; one of those participants has worked in the same international organization, but had also been engaged with a political party after the revolution, while the other two were working in human rights and HIV/AIDS. The fourth participant, who founded and ran an NGO for training of journalists, was sourced by an acquaintance of my internship colleague. Finally, the fifth person, active in a citizen initiative for education in a low-income area and in an anti-violence NGO,was recommended by one of the participants. This procedure of sourcing participants took place alongside numerous unsuccessful attempts to reach a few other organizations without the help of personal connections.

4.2 The interviews

The interviews were semi-structured, which allowed the interviewee leeway on how to reply, and allowed to capture "how the interviewee frames and understands issues and events" (Bryman 2012: 471). On the other hand, the interview guide ensured that all important points would be touched upon during the interview. The form of the guide changed over the course of research. Its structure became simpler and questions more succinct, reflecting the fact that open, short questions and total flexibility in the order of questions proved to yield better results in initial interviews, allowing the interviewee to drive the conversation to a greater extent.

The respondents chose the place of the interviews, and we invariably met in cafés in different parts of Cairo. The occasion of interviewing was the first time I met all of the interviewees. All interviewees were very engaged in the conversation from the very start, and I was surprised with how easy it was to start exploring politically and socially more sensitive topics (given the oppressive situation for civil society), and how confident and ready they seemed to be to share their opinions. Following Bryman (2012), my style of interviewing was mostly receptive, whereby the researcher is relatively passive and focused on the interviewee's words

4.3 Validity

Researchers simultaneously document and construct the world through studying it. There is a number of possible sources of bias that are at play in this thesis. In what follows I will assess them, in an attempt to define the challenges that they represent to the validity of the conclusions of this thesis (Hammersley 2012: 12).

Firstly, my social characteristics, in terms of the "social, political and cultural context" (Bryman 2012: 393) of my provenance interferes with how I am seen and understood by my participants, as well as with how I gather and interpret the data. The facts that I am a woman, a westerner, a Serbian doing fieldwork for a graduate degree in Sweden, shape the way that interviewees see me. While it is always a possibility that participants tilt their answers towards what they assume to be researcher's sensibilities, based in part on the researcher's provenance (in my case "western"), I did not have an impression this played an important role in what they chose to tell, because of how thorough the interviews were, and how coherent their accounts were. The richness of the interviews provides enough data to detect possible larger inconsistencies in individual accounts. Moreover, while my Serbian nationality did not appear to be of very high significance to participants, one or two of them would spontaneously invoke events which Serbia is known for in Egypt, for example how members of student movement Otpor were training the activists in Egypt, or how the army of Bosnian Serbs committed a crime against Bosniaks, who are Muslim, in the Srebrenica massacre. If they seemed to be more invested in their Muslim identity, or if the topic of the interviews were crimes against Muslims, my nationality would have probably caused a degree of self-censorship. I was also asked about the situation in Serbia post-revolution, and some participants' awareness we had a shared

experience of a popular revolution might have rendered some points seem self-understood. At the same time, they often invoked factors that make the situation in Egypt particular. Interestingly, compared to other interactions that I had in Egypt, my affiliation with a Swedish university did not seem to provide me any "extra" credibility in the participants' eyes to me as a Serbia.

Further, my social position was similar to theirs, and this was also felt in the interviews. Like them, I come from a middle-class background, from a country arguably in the global periphery, and like them, I have spent my life so far at school and engaged with civil society. I felt that our roughly speaking similar socio-economic positions and trajectories in life greatly facilitated establishing rapport in the interview situation.

In the interview situation, in Cairo cafes, I felt like I was invited to visit their ground, their everyday environment. There was no sense of displacement or unease in the interviewees. On the contrary, there was a sense of a desire to share with me their views, opinions, and thereby give me a taste of their world; they were very engaging, and it was not hard to proceed with the interview, or ask any of the questions. The participants were driving most of the conversation. However, I felt like ultimately I was in the driver's seat, based on how readily they would concede to my occasional topic changes and how seriously they would take answering newly introduced questions.

Finally, my values are a potential source of bias. Reflecting on the interviews, I concluded that my tone and non-verbal expression must have shown, even if only subtly, that I felt enthusiastic and positive about the 2011 revolution. This might have tilted the participants' accounts towards the support of the revolution; however, they were also known to have supported the revolution as this was one of the parts of the definition of research population.

4.4 Limitations

This thesis's limitations are multifold. The fact that interviews were held in English as opposed to participants' mother tongue Arabic meant that some of the precision and ease of expression was lost, in spite of the fact that all participants speak English fluently.

Moreover, fluent English speakers in Egypt more often than not share a specific socioeconomic background, comfortable enough to afford fees for private schools or language

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lessons where these language skills are acquired. In addition, all participants are university graduates. While English and a university degree are arguably necessary prerequisites for professional engagement within the NGO sector, this is not the case for other forms of civil society engagement, like citizen initiatives or charities, for example. Consequently, this study is limited as it does not include engaged young people with a lower socioeconomic standing.

The fact that I am a young woman might have influenced the data firstly by excluding all men who would not be comfortable to be interviewed by a woman. It might also have contributed to the fact that one female interviewee touched upon some personal details, which might not have been the case was she interviewed by a man. Self-selection bias (Roulston 2010), which necessarily accompanies most sampling and recruiting procedures, means that the perspective of all participants who would not be comfortable with talking to me – those who are too engaged, too afraid or have too much to risk; those who think I could not understand their position; very conservative ones – is lacking.

Further, all participants are employed (unless they choose not to be). For some, finding employment proved to be a challenge. However, this thesis is limited as it does not capture the experience of protracted periods of undesired unemployment, one that marks youth in Egypt, especially educated youth.

Another set of limitations concerns the sample. Namely, none of the organizations in the sample is religious-based. This poses a limitation as it fails to acknowledge that a substantial portion of civil society activity in Egypt is religious-based. Similarly, due to the nature of the sample, the experiences of youth engaged in professional associations or unions were not captured.

In addition, the fact that only young people living in Cairo or Alexandria fit the definition of the research population means that this thesis is limited to the experiences of urban youth.

Finally, partaking in this study required participants to be comfortable enough regarding their civil society work to discuss it with a stranger and a foreigner. Arguably, this excludes the possibility of reaching people who find themselves and their organizations under more severe pressure and scrutiny in the challenging atmosphere for civil society workers in Egypt.

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4.5 Participants

Below is a table showing some demographic information on the participants, which also includes information on their engagement. Most of the participants have been engaged in more than one way or organization.

Participant	Gender	Age Group	Religion	Organization	Position	Active in civil society at time of interview	Length of Interview
1Leyla	F	25-30	Muslim	NGO education of journalists	Founder, director	Yes	103 min
2 Ahmed	M	25-30	Muslim	IO refugees same as 2, political party	Refugee Protection	No (seeking to form an NGO)	160 min
3 Said	M	20-25	Christian	NGO civil and human rights	Trainer	Yes	40 min
4 Shady	M	30-35	Muslim	NGO AIDS, NGO LGBT rights	Founder and manager	Yes	85 min
5 Rana	F	20-25	Muslim	NGO on alternatives to violence, NGO providinghelp in education for residents of an informal settlement	Trainer in alternatives to violence, educator in the NGO providing help in education	Yes	135 min

4.6 Transcription and analysis

The interviews were transcribed in their entirety. One 10-minute portion of an otherwise 130 minute-long interview was not usable, due to noise probably resulting from interference between the recorder and another electronic gadget, probably a cell-phone. The transcripts carefully read,

and re-read. Portions of the transcripts deemed most relevant for the analysis were double-checked for accuracy, including all the quotes provided in this thesis.

Preliminary themes were generated from the transcribed data, and their validity was subsequently checked against the rest of the data (Brinkmann 2013: 56). The process of identifying themes was in part driven by theory (as in the case of the 2011 revolution or commitment), and in part by the data itself (in the case of the conflicting views on events and actors post-revolution). Following Ryan and Bernard (2003), the themes were identified by observing differences and repetitions. The themes are: 2011 revolution, vulnerability, lack of consensus on actors and events post-revolution, commitment, and coming to commitment.

4.7 Ethical considerations

In order to ensure that participants do not suffer any kind of harm, social or otherwise, as a consequence of taking part in this study, it was essential to ensure confidentiality of their identities. To that end, pseudonyms are used for the participants, the names of their organizations are omitted, and all data has been kept in security throughout the writing process, and will subsequently be destroyed.

In the beginning of each interview, respondents would be asked to sign a consent form informing them that interview was to be recorded unless they demanded otherwise, as well as of the possibility of abstaining from answering any question or of discontinuing the interview at any point. The consent form also stated that I as the researcher have an obligation to confidentiality. In addition, I offered to give them a signed document in which I state that I am responsible to keep the data confidential, which they refused. All respondents agreed to recording the interviews.

5. Findings

5.1. Profiling the participants

The participants involved in this study are three Egyptian men and two women. Four of them live and work in Cairo, and one in Alexandria. They are between 20 and 35 years old. Three participants were born and raised in Cairo. The fourth moved to Cairo to attend university from a smaller city in the south of Egypt, and the fifth was raised in Dubai, and moved back to Egypt with the rest of the family, when he started university. In this section, I will briefly introduce the participants individually, before reflecting on their views and experiences thematically.

Leyla is a young woman in her late twenties. Well groomed, she was clutching her Starbucks coffee cup when we met. We met on a workday after her work, and although she was obviously tired, she was focused, precise and energetic. I had the impression that she approached our interview very professionally. She is very busy running her organization for the education of journalists, and her schedule demanded that we divide the interview in two takes on two separate occasions.

Leyla grew up in another, smaller city in Egypt and came to Cairo to study journalism. Her family had always supported her to be a "strong and independent woman", and still support her in living on her own as an unmarried woman, something that is often frowned upon. Her wider family, however, is not as open-minded, but her parents resisted their pressure in the way they raised Leyla. She does not see her only sibling, a younger brother who still lives in her hometown, as often as before due to her heavy work schedule. She says their relationship is good, but benevolently notes that she sometimes takes issue with his adolescent way of treating women. Leyla's father worked in the Gulf for three years in the early eighties, and Leyla is quick to point out that, in contrast to many others, he did not bring conservativism with him back home to Egypt.

Leyla started working at an outlet as a journalist while still studying, at 17. Disappointed with the training she received while studying, and aware that media houses do not invest in the training of staff, Leyla saw an opportunity to address this gap by founding her organization, which provides free trainings to journalists, and in 2010 left her job and focused on her NGO. Leyla pointed out to me in an assertive, precise and proud tone that the organization had trained over 700 journalists, and that many of them occupy high positions within their media outlets, and

also that some of the trainers have a very high profile. Leyla's tasks in the organization are managerial. However, she had not lost interest in journalism, and at the time of the interview was going through a selection process to be a TV presenter at a major media outlet. Leyla supported the revolution from the beginning, and demonstrated on January 28.

Ahmed is a man in his late twenties. I met him in a café as he was reading a book on Islamic jurisprudence that he hoped would give him an idea on possible alternatives to the Muslim Brotherhood's use of religion in politics. He was sitting next to his new wife, a French young woman in her mid-twenties who was practicing her Arabic as we talked. Ahmed speaks in a soft voice, but emphasizes his words in a piercingly energetic and even manner. When he talks, he sounds like he is giving a lecture or a dictation, although nothing in his demeanor or personality exudes the slightest trace of a patronizing attitude. When talking about the political situation in Egypt, he is personally invested and it is clear how close those issues are to him. He is breathtakingly knowledgeable on the political situation in Egypt and the Middle East, critical social theory, feminism and other issues, and the ease with which he moves through those fields and invokes details into his memory, in addition to his relentless commitment to enacting change through his engagement, made me feel very humbled.

Growing up, Ahmed was exposed to societal issues alongside his father, a professional journalist for a major newspaper. He watched his father have to comply to the red lines of censorship. He studied journalism and started his professional engagement as a journalist, but was disillusioned with the pervasive corruption and censorship he encountered and joined an international body working in the field of development. At the same time, immediately after the revolution, he founded a center-right political party, but before it won seats at the parliamentary elections in the fall of 2011 he left it, disappointed with what he perceived as a lack of focus and seriousness. He was active during the revolution from the very first day, and speaks of the revolutionaries as "us". He then joined an international humanitarian organization, which he subsequently also left, having become frustrated with what he saw as the organization's role in the "endless vicious circle" of suffering of the people he was helping. When we met, he was thinking out what his next move would be, ever in pursuit of enacting change.

Shady is a soft spoken, cheerful and calm man in his early thirties. His behavior is very pleasant; he is unassuming, engaging, yet always maintains a distance that feels authentic rather

than awkward. A little guarded at first, he became visibly invested in certain topics as were speaking.

Shady grew up in the Gulf, where his family relocated from Alexandria in the early eighties. He is gay, and he is "out" with his family, who accept his homosexuality and support him. His family came back to Alexandria before he started his medical studies. Now he is a doctor. In 2005 he joined an organization working for women's empowerment, and was providing computer courses for housewives who wanted to join the workforce. Then in 2008, he joined a project on prevention of HIV/AIDS, and realized he was particularly passionate to be working with an issue so central to the gay community. He is currently working at a hospital as a medical doctor, and is also engaged with awareness and prevention of HIV/AIDS and fighting discrimination against HIV-positive people. He was planning to establish his own NGO, but after July 2013 decided to wait and "lay low" for a bit, occupying himself with compiling an oral history of the gay rights movement in the 2000s.

Said is a young man in his early twenties. Also very soft spoken, Said is not married, and he is the only Christian among the participants. Although focused and by no means absent minded, he left me with the impression that his mind is never fully in the conversation, always processing and reflecting. He also does not seem to be preoccupied with pleasing people at the expense of straightforward honesty: when I summarized his answer to one of the questions during our interview, asking him whether I understood it right, he quite simply laughed in my face and said "No!". I noticed this because other participants paid more attention to conventions and made sure they were pleasant with a stranger who was interviewing them.

Said started his engagement immediately after the revolution, which inspired him "to try something new". He spontaneously started helping street children find shelter, after he had been talking to them as they frequented the cafes he was going to with his friends. He was then active in an initiative to engage local communities in the debate on the proposed constitution. He travelled to different places in Egypt, and was personally especially interested in the provisions of the constitution that impact women. He was also active as a trainer in an NGO educating people on sexual harassment from the human rights perspective. When I asked him what made him interested in women's rights and harassment, he recounted how he used to have longer hair, and how he got a taste of harassment himself during that time. Speaking of harassers, who were the target group of the anti-harassment workshops, Said said that he did not blame them. He

explained how he thought they do not have a conception of women being human and having their rights, a point that was obviously one of the foci of the workshops. Said also completed a program on human rights in another NGO. He says that he "became someone else" after he had encountered the idea of human rights. He said that he had never been able to come to a satisfactory framework explaining his obvious intuition that people should be treated equally, and that he found that with human rights. He liked the program so much he stayed with it as a volunteer administrative assistant, and subsequently was helping with the curriculum, and says "It was the best thing I've ever done." For him, working in the civil society sector is a priority, and he cannot imagine having a different kind of job. He is currently working in an organization working with architecture and public space, which he considers "elite", and says he would prefer his work to be linked to more basic needs of people. However, he is happy he was able to find this job after a grueling four-month search.

Rana is a young woman in her early/mid twenties. She is tall, her eyes are warm and focused, and her veil is the most nonchalantly placed veil I've seen in Cairo. When we met, she was wearing a veil with a recognizable, traditional Egyptian pattern. The café we met in was her choice, and it was a real *balady* café in Downtown Cairo. Rana is single, and she is a trained sociologist.

Rana's father has worked in the Gulf for a number of years. Aware that she cannot expect to easily find a job with a degree in sociology, she started working when she was seventeen, because "experience will get me a job". Rana was educated in a private school, which she said was "very, very elite", and she recounted how, when the military ousted president Morsi in July 2013, the outburst and the particular kind of support from her school friends and acquaintances on Facebook made her realize, surprised, that she was actually studying alongside the children of the Egyptian military elite. She was also actively playing volleyball while in high-school. Her team-mates were from a very different social class than her peers at school, and she struggled to understand where she belonged. She says the issue of identity is central for her, and that everything she does is derived from the sense of identity as an Egyptian, as a sociologist, as a woman, etc. Importantly, she believes that identity is the result of choice – one chooses their own identity. Her struggle with not knowing where she belonged (i.e. not having a clear identity) was resolved when her father's interest in ancient Egyptology and traditional Egyptian art sparked the same interest in her, and when eventually she came to see the narratives on Egypt from the

textbooks as homogenizing and untrue, and Egypt as diverse, unique and rich for its diversity. She realized that "Belonging to these many groups was how Egyptian I am: Egypt is African, it is Arab, it is Islamic, rural and urban." This prompted her to start wearing traditional Egyptian clothes every day, which she did for a period of time. She sees Egypt as used by its leaders ever since its independence, for their personal gain, and claims that she has no political ideology, equally critical of Egyptian liberals and of the Islamists. Rana's feeling of connection to what she sees as the true, multi-faceted face of Egypt is what seems to have driven her uncompromising and courageous engagement in the post-revolutionary period.

After the revolution, Rana started working with an NGO providing classes and courses to members of a low-income urban neighborhood in Cairo, where she worked as a librarian and a teacher. At the time, she also had a conventional job in a marketing company. After she was severely beaten up by the police in Mohammed Mahmoud street, she quit her job in the company, as the manager was one of many who blamed her for being beaten up. She was feeling a lot of anger towards her environment who responded in this way, and she decided to attend a training on peace and non-violence, and subsequently became a trainer in peace and non-violence with the same organization. She would train different groups, including teachers and other public servants, at camps or retreats. At the time of our conversation, she felt she needed a change. She had minimized her involvement with the organization "because with all the violence around me it felt to me like la-la-land", and was planning to go to France for six months to volunteer as a youth trainer.

5.2 Mubarak's regime: Egypt before the revolution

Describing their motivation for supporting the revolution, the participants invoke the corruption, mismanagement, and censorship of Mubarak's regime. Censorship was articulated by the two journalists, Ahmed and Leyla; however, while Leyla focuses on how censorship kept demeaning her profession and the quality of journalistic work, Ahmed sees censorship as only one out of a set of problems that made him "want to try change patterns of society":

> I joined journalism with this aim: to uncover corruption and try to change patterns
> of our society. The point is, I couldn't do that. I tried, but I saw corruption itself in
> the media, and the control of the executive through the media.

Similarly, Rana felt that the regime was preventing the people from living "the best they could in Egypt" and she wanted people to live better. She explains how she became concerned and engaged with politics after she had started blogging on "just my thoughts, small stories sometimes, things like that two years before the revolution." Although her blog was not political: "Being a blogger, if you're really into it you'll be following so many blogs, and you'll be reading all newspapers. I started to know everything. I was following the news, the ministers, what was going on, what Mubarak was doing. . . . It is rare in Egypt to have an 18 year-old girl follow politics. I joined some discussion circles on politics, that was the main reason for joining the revolution", which for her was about:

> It was political but with a social flexion, because I wanted Mubarak to go out, and I was there because I didn't want this regime, because people weren't living the best they can live in Egypt, so I wanted people to live better, and the only way for this to happen was for Mubarak to resign.

5.3 Expectations of the revolution

One of the major findings of this thesis is that the participants' views of the landmark events and actors in the post-revolutionary period differ to the extent that consensus on any issue is rare. On the other hand, taken individually, participants provide coherent arguments in favor or against events and actors. Most importantly, participants' expectations and ideas of what a successful revolution would be transpire from these arguments. These expectations include hopes for a secular state and a non-conservative society, protection in one's exercise of freedom of speech, a civilian, rather than military government, and an environment that does not sanction political violence.

Leyla supported the revolution, and hopes Egypt will become a non-conservative society and completely secular as a state. Islamism particularly transpires as a problem for Leyla. She articulates her desires for the future of Egypt thus:

> [I would like it] To go back to social life of Egyptian society, because, in my opinion, the shift from Egyptian traditional society to [the] other culture, like Gulf or Salafist, made us stop to produce, to have good economy, to think, whatever . . . What I mean is, if you are thinking in a secular way, you will be more creative

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than when you're thinking in a religious way, because . . . if we just rely on that everything is *haram*, we won't create anything . . . I want to see Egypt, [in terms of] issues of social and traditional and so on, go back to the forties as a society. People were very open-minded, very educated, and . . . respected the differences between each other. And also, I mean by 'social' that we are Egyptians, not Salafists and not extremists. And in this time, the forties, Egypt was secular, a secular state. And this is what I want to see.

Leyla was unhappy with how the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) were doing their tasks of ruling Egypt in the interim calling the period "the worst thing that happened." She says that SCAF kept prolonging its rule, allowed thousands of jihadists to enter Egypt, and was afraid of Muslim Brotherhood's threats to take over the power if it did not collaborate with them "under the table". She also says SCAF repressed demonstrations violently, using "violence instead of discussion", especially in Mohamed Mahmoud street in November 2011, which is when SCAF definitely lost her support. She was confident that SCAF would organize elections and that they would be fair, but she doubts the fairness of 2012 presidential elections in which the Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohammed Morsi won, suspecting the two parties had a secret agreement of power handover and observing that SCAF "was promoting the same story that Muslim Brotherhood were promoting", creating positive public opinion for them. Leyla says the Muslim Brotherhood were "ruling country as a group; they were class A and others class B". She "supports June 30th and everything that happened after" Morsi was deposed, and refers to June 30th as the second revolution.

Leyla says al-Sisi became president at a critical time, marked by the conflict with the Muslim Brotherhood. Finally, Leyla is optimistic that "we will be able to measure one of the results of the revolution in four years", when people will be choosing their president in normal, and not "critical" circumstances like in 2014.

Further, **Ahmed** supported the revolution, and when Mubarak stepped down he felt both celebratory and wary of SCAF taking over the interim rule. After the revolution, he saw the Muslim Brotherhood and the military (SCAF) as main forces and, as a self-identified revolutionary, felt that balance of power should be encouraged to limit the power of each of them, so he would support whoever is weaker, for example voting for Morsi in the second round

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of 2012 presidential elections. The first time he became pessimistic of the outcome of the revolution was Morsi's Constitutional Declaration in November 2012: "at that point, I thought there's no way we're getting good results". Like Leyla, he started having a strong sense of unease during Morsi's presidency. He feared that the street clashes every Friday during Morsi's presidency would "turn into clashes 24/7." Also like Leyla, he joined protests against Morsi on June 30th:

> For me those people weren't just idiots, they were trying to create an Islamic dictatorship where you won't be able to say anything, because I will be cut, I will be muted out, they will be killing me while saying *allahu akbar,* believing that they're doing a favor to god. I will never allow something like that to happen.

Ahmed describes how a detail at the demonstrations threw him aback:

> But for me when I got down it was weird. People had police officers on their shoulders. For me it was like, 'Don't do that' . . . For me it was weird but I entered a state of denial, because there were people from 6th April movement on this exact same demonstrational march, and then they left the demonstration. But for me it was like, no OK, leave them [the policemen], but at least don't take them on your shoulders, at least leave them aside . . . I think they [April 6th] were right. Now I think I should have left when I saw that.

He also joined a demonstration in support of al-Sisi, the SCAF commander who decided to depose Morsi, on July 24 2013: "I viewed it not as about al-Sisi as such, but I was watching what Muslim Brotherhood leaders were saying on the TV channels, that there were few people on June 30th, not as many as at Rabaa, so for me it was to say, No, we're many."

Unlike Leyla, however, Ahmed today regrets having taken part in either of the protests, saying:

> I was mistaken. Definitely a very stupid decision I made. For me, leaving the Muslim Brotherhood in power and fighting against them, because they didn't control the state yet… we could have beaten them in parliamentary elections, we could have done things more democratically and better. We had the freedom to demonstrate, freedom to write, we had the freedom to make fun of them on

television, like Bassem Youssef[1]. Now everything is shut and we are back to stage zero. We were all stupid. We were all deceived.

While Ahmed was wary of SCAF in the aftermath of Mubarak's fall, **Shady** was "extremely enthusiastic" after the revolution. However, he soon felt that a failure of the demands of the revolution was imminent, but refused to be discouraged and was very busy with his NGO work. In stark contrast to Ahmed, and especially to Leyla, Shady recalls the rule of Mohamed Morsi as one of the periods of optimism:

I was extremely positive when Morsi was in power. Like, he wasn't my number one, but . . . [I thought] 'At least now I have a civilian president; this itself is enough success' . . . And I knew that the media was like, fighting against him like really violently and totally against him, and I think there were saying, Either our heads are chopped off, or we get rid of Morsi. This is the way that the media was acting during the time of Morsi . . . I supported Morsi, because even if it was Islamic, since 1952 we always have in power presidents who are ex-militants. And to be honest, I was born and brought up abroad, in the Gulf, and I didn't see Islamic government as that problematic.

Different from Ahmed, who feared that Morsi and Muslim Brotherhood would seize all the power and establish an Islamic dictatorship, and to Leyla who felt uncomfortable having an Islamist president, Shady was confident the Brotherhood would not have been able to establish total control or adopt unsustainable, extremely conservative policies on the long run. He felt this way in spite of what he describes as media's apocalyptic portrayals of Morsi at the time, which echo Ahmed's and Leyla's fears.

Together with Ahmed and contrary to Leyla, today Shady thinks that the deposition of Morsi should not have happened, adding that "not allowing the Muslim Brotherhood to fail" in elections, which he thought was very important, was a mistake. He feels that after June 30th, and especially after the Rabaa massacre in August 2013, societal dialogue between politically opposed sides has stopped completely, which he finds counterproductive and worrying. Similarly

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[1] One of the most popular television personalities in Egypt, a satirist who rose to prominence after the revolution with his show "The Show", in which he satirized politicians. He was forced to discontinue his show after al-Sisi became president, out of fears for personal safety.

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to Ahmed, he says that until June 30 there was more freedom of expression and a more vibrant civil society. He says that during Morsi

> There was this big, extreme urge that we need – there was a conflict – that people were ready to sit and talk. They were clashing, but this clashing was like, there was some communication going on, rather than being polarized and,if you're not with my side, you don't have nothing with my business, which is happening now. So in 2012 still, the civil society was going forward in many sectors as well as the Egyptian society . . . So I think if we would have been moving that way, it would have been better. My own personal opinion. Many people… some people would not agree with me.

Finally, **Rana** also supported the revolution, but was not happy with the fact that power was handed over to the military, similar to Ahmed and later Leyla. What is more, she is the only interviewee who very actively participated in anti-SCAF demonstrations throughout 2011, because "I didn't want them to rule". But then Rana was severely beaten up by the police in Mohamed Mahmoud street.[2] When Rana talks about political events following the beating, she almost always refers to that traumatic experience, in one way or another. From then on, she saw SCAF as an enemy "as in 'I want them to go to jail'". She experienced severe isolation and frustration when she found that her family blamed her for what had happened to her, and that people in the wider society saw the protestors as a problem and felt no support for their goals:

> The first time I was injured, this is how it affected me: I was ready for what happened but when I saw reactions of politicians, of my family, and my boyfriend himself – we broke up, he left me, it was a big responsibility for him, he couldn't handle it. My own uncle came to our house to visit me, and it turned out he was just visiting my father and not me, and he told me when he saw me I was mistaken for being against the army, so I deserved what happened to me. And this was a

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[2] Violent dispersal of a peaceful sit-in in Cairo's Mohamed Mahmoud street, just off Tahrir Square, on November 19 2011. The sit-in, demanding that SCAF relinquish power to a civilian authority, consisted in part of the relatives of people killed in January/February 2011. The violent dispersal turned into a four-day-long street battle between the police and the protestors. It ultimately left 47 people killed, and hundreds injured. The event is also known for police's deliberate targeting of protestors' faces and eyes with rubber bullets, and many people were blinded or injured in the face.

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reflection of what was everywhere, in the street. Only my close friends supported me, no one else did.

Nonetheless, after she recovered from her injuries, Rana continued protesting and "went to ninety-nine per-cemt of the demonstrations between January 2011 and Port Said".[3] However, she found in Port Said a scene that reminded her of Mohamed Mahmoud street: "We reached a street, it started to be very violent, and I saw everything from Mohamed Mahmoud repeat itself." Drawing from the experience of alienation and misrecognition when she was beaten in Mohamed Mahmoud, she decided in Port Said that

> I'm thankful that I didn't die that day [in Mohamed Mahmoud] and I don't want to
> die the same way again, because it doesn't mean anything to anyone. I'd be called
> a spy corrupting the system and against the country.

Finally, Rana talks about her overall feeling in Egypt today, and in strong contrast to Leyla's optimism and confidence, invokes indignation and pessimism. Unlike Leyla, who feels Egypt is on a good track to achieving the goals of the revolution, Rana describes seeing around herself a culture of violence. Talking about how she felt when the court case for the victims in Mohamed Mahmoud street was dropped, she again articulates how she used to be willing to sacrifice herself, and contrasts this to how she feels now:

> It [the case] was dropped and no one cared about it anymore, and I knew I wasn't
> going to get my right, but it was ok for me because I thought, Yes I'm not going to
> have anything now, but in ten years or something I would. But now this same
> person who was responsible for me being beaten is public figure, and now
> everybody respects him, everybody loves him, even my parents who know what
> happened to me in Mohamed Mahmoud. It's not OK. So I have this kind of anger
> against everyone around me. I didn't feel safe beside Egyptians anymore, and I
> love Egypt so much, and this conflict inside me affected me in a very negative way
> . . . It's not easy to live among people who accept what happened at Rabaa and
> have a regular life. You don't feel safe among people. I am not for Muslim

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[3] A mass clash between football supporters of clubs al-Masry and al-Ahly and the police, which occurred after a football game between the two clubs at the Port Said stadium on February 1 2012. 74 people were killed and more than 500 injured. Some see the event as a retaliation, on the part of the police, to the Ultras (extreme football fans) for their prominent role in the revolution.

Brotherhood. I hate them. But still, you support the blood – I can't live this way. That's how I stopped doing many things. I stopped going to school, I stopped appearing and talking to so many people, I minimized my activities so much for the last 5 or 6 months. It reached the maximum when al-Sisi was elected to be president. I couldn't move on.

Hence, while Leyla believes that Egypt is on the right track to achieving the goals of the revolution, other participants of this study are less optimistic. What drives their skepticism, and consequently emerges as forming their expectations of a truly successful transition, are the issues of societal dialogue and polarization (Shady), the relation of the state towards civil society (Shady), respect for civic rights (Ahmed), accountability, especially of police and military forces (Ahmed and Rana), absence of political violence (Ahmed and Rana), and civilian, as opposed to military, rule of the country (Shady and Rana). Leyla sees the military rule as acceptable but also temporary, and, although she is much less adamant about it, she shares with the others the aspiration for a truly civilian government.

5.4 New capabilities of youth

In terms of practices and behaviors, the participants are found to have organized informally in order to address the specific issues that they experienced as a source of concern. They would tackle these issues together with their friends, acquaintances, or others. In addition, they are outspoken, and do not hesitate to criticize those in power. In terms of the use of new technological resources, the psarticipants describe the role the Internet plays in their engagement and their daily lives.

For example, Said and Rana were part of groups of friends and acquaintances who would observe a societal issue and tackle it directly together. For example, with a group of friends, Said was active helping street children find shelter. Him and his friends saw that there was a need when they encountered many child beggars while going to *balady*[4] cafes, and then they did something to address that need: "We tried to have fun with some of those children. We talked to them and learned of their suffering. They only wanted place where they could come and have food, so we worked as outreach for that kind of organizations offering shelter". Further, Rana

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[4] "*Balady*" or "popular" and affordable cafes on the sidewalks of busy streets in Cairo, recognizable by their emblematic plastic chairs.

was active in street demonstrations after the revolution, together with a loose group of young people who were opposing SCAF, like her. When she recounts what happened during demonstrations, she often uses the pronoun "us" to narrate the events. Also, she describes how she cared when some of them would get arrested, and how she would demonstrate against their arrest, as in the example of the protest at Majlis al-Shura.

Moreover, Rana, Leyla and Shady all mention the internet as serving them in their civil society engagement, helping them stay informed, and playing a part in how they shaped their outlook on social and political issues. As already indicated, Rana was an active blogger. Although politics was not the subject of her blogging, as part of the blogging community she developed a passion for following the news and being well informed of political actualities. She quickly joined a discussion circle on politics, and experiencing those sessions was for her "the main reason why I joined the revolution". Similarly, the experience with alternative on-line radio showed to Leyla, before the revolution, that the objective of free media in Egypt was attainable, which emboldened her to found an NGO for education of journalists: "Before deciding to register our organization, we started an online radio and were able to talk about topics that no huge media organization could talk about. After this experience with the online radio, we started our organization." Shady describes having used social media for highly successful campaigns against stigmatization of people with HIV/AIDS: "The thing that makes me happy is that I started an internet campaign, in January 2012, and I still find people talking about it. It's called 'HIV Stigma-free'". Shady also says he started relying exclusively on social media and the Internet for staying informed, feeling that there he could find more trust-worthy sources than the traditional press or TV. Importantly, in the context of LGBTQ issues, when talking about the possibilities he sees for a change in prevailing attitudes on these issues, he mentions the importance of social media:

> So even if there is like the standard media all over, more and more people are at
> least blogging freely without the fear that they will be arrested. If there is, for
> example, a platform where I can express my own views without being worried
> about getting arrested, whether online or written or whatever, and where I can be
> anonymous, surely there are people who would like to be out [as gay]- I mean,
> express and declare their own identity.But this would make more and more people

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change their point of views against this topics, and this would help to make politicians realize for example they don't have to be extremely conservative on that topic and they can change.

Further, Rana's and Said's accounts convey their readiness to criticize those in power. For example, Rana was vocal and active as a protestor, as already described. Also, Said described having toured around Egypt and discussed the proposed constitution on a local level, before the constitutional referendum in 2012. He was concerned with the necessity of changing the parts that were pertinent to women's rights and still feels like changing the current constitution, which he is not satisfied with, is one of the first priorities.

Finally, Ahmed described his desire and efforts to find a way to communicate a political message that would bridge cultural cleavages in Egypt. He was one of the founding members of a new political party in early 2011, after the revolution. Here is how he explains the reasons behind the ideological profile of the party:

> I joined a center-right party,[5] a conservative party, which people would accept, because I wanted to establish a post-ideological situation, gathering people from different backgrounds around more pragmatic goals. I was doing pragmatic stuff within the party, recruiting new members.

5.5 Experiences of social exclusion

Throughout the interviews, none of the participants ever invoked socioeconomic exclusion of young people as a problem, as playing a part in their support for the revolution, or in any other way. Said described his experience of not being able to find a job for months in late 2012, and singled out this moment as the moment of disappointment with the revolution. Otherwise, unemployment or the inability to marry did not come up during the interviews either in relation to the participants themselves, or to their social surroundings. Similarly, they did not express or recount having encountered the belief that being young means one cannot expect to be treated as a full citizen or political actor.

Experience of being excluded in the wider sense, however, was very present in participants' accounts. As already described, Rana was beaten up by the police while protesting,

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[5] Ahmed's party was a party with a moderately Islamic identity and moderately traditional values.

and had a strong feeling if isolation and misrecognition when she encountered the reaction of her nearest circle, including her family, and also the atmosphere in the wider society. Moreover, all participants but Leyla describe feeling politically sidelined after June 30th. In Said's words, although he is unhappy with the outcome of the revolution given the current situation in Egypt, he concedes that "We are few people. We don't have the opportunity to do something huge like the revolution. People agree with al-Sisi. So they are OK with him." Likewise, Ahmed says that "The revolutionaries are either frustrated and don't want to do anything, or very busy with civil society work."

Finally, Shady thus describes the experience of being gay in Egypt:

I'm a person who's in a marginalized community, and we're not accepted by society, so I'd like to see one day that here in Egypt noone's going to criticize me, and meddle in my life, and keep asking of me that I have to conform to everything that society is asking me of. And also a society that is tolerant for differences in general – for example, if I am Muslim and gay, this is my issue, so no one can come and criticize me for that; and for example, if I'm a single bachelor man and am successful in my work, you can't come and ask me: 'to be promoted you need to be married'.

5.6 The butterfly effect

Talking about what they seek to accomplish with their work, and about what their engagement means for them, all interviewees convey a sense of personal commitment. In spite of the fact that they are mostly disappointed with the outcomes of the revolution, as discussed in previous sections, the participants are still committed to working to enact positive change, perhaps in social rather than political domain (if we conceive of the political in the traditional sense). As indicated below, Rana, who was disappointed in the political process, turns to activism in which she seeks to help people improve their everyday lives through non-violence. Shady continues his engagement, although he is disappointed. Said prefers to be engaged in his NGO, which he sees as elitist to working outside of the civil society sector.

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The topics some interviewees are engaged on, the way they tackle these topics, and their personal life choices are all to an extent built around commitment, as will be shown in more detail below.

Commitment plays a central role in some of the interviewed young people's trajectories of engagement, and at times also in their personal lives. As a result, commitment sometimes guides them to make dramatic changes. For example, Ahmed started out as a professional journalist, out of commitment to "uncover corruption and change the patterns of our society". Having faced censorship, he changed direction and engaged in the development field, then politics, and then humanitarian work with refugees. Throughout these transitions, he would engage a field for as long as he felt that desired results could reasonably be expected. He left his humanitarian job, an experience he called "a sad and vicious circle of frustration", and is now actively considering his next move. Commitment and determination transpire from Ahmed's trajectory, and also from the following summary of his current considerations:

> That's why I'm telling you I'm thinking a little bit differently – in terms of my friends, who are very active in civil society now. They believe that, even if you can't make a big change now, maybe you can make [it] in some people's lives, and those people can affect other people, you know, the butterfly effect . . . I don't know. I'm still researching. I want to know that will reach a certain effect afterwards. I don't want to just assume that it will have effect afterwards.

Similarly, Rana's commitment transpires from her tone, as she describes that, even in light of her modest expectations, there is a stark tension between the change she desires to make and the environment that she perceives as severely constraining. Importantly, this prompts her to leave the country, rather than to adjust her expectations any further, or to abandon her engagement:

> For instance, I was facilitating a workshop at a camp . . . The system is corrupt, so a five-day camp isn't enough to change the system. So my power is limited . . . If the teacher [she is training] isn't paid enough money, is facing oppression from the ministry, so how can I, as a reasonable person, ask him not to oppress children, if he's a human being oppressed by the system? . . . I'm still doing it, because I can't

do anything not related to civil society or my field. I can't imagine myself sitting at a desk, and working on some paperwork for accounting. But at the same time, whenever I do any new project, I know it's going to be very limited. And I'm doing it for participants, I know my participants need the chance of being introduced to these new terms, having a safe place to express themselves during workshops. But I'm aware Egypt will not change because of the workshops . . . Because everything around me – it's not about the people, culture; it's about the system. The system is deeply corrupted, and we're not taking any moves, were taking backward moves, in education, in everything.

Said evaluates his current engagement on the basis of its potential for "changing minds". Currently working with an organization engaged in the field of public space and architecture, he says that he would rather be working in a field that caters to less "elite" needs, like food or shelter. Likewise, Shady articulates his feeling of commitment thus:

When someone starts to work in civil society, he's opposing many things . . . In my case for example, I wasn't getting the approval of my family . . . So it's an urge from inside of the person, within, for me… Guiding me. It was an urge that I had to do, and I continue to do, even if . . . I'm not completely satisfied, but I'm sure there would be a spark which would make me go completely 'on' again to do something.

Moreover, young people articulate an explicit link between their work and social change they would like to see. Leyla, for example, is committed to enhancing the professionalism of the press through her work, which, in turn, she sees as conducive to safeguarding the freedom of expression:

I have a belief that if we have professional journalists and professional media . . . we will not have a lot of people abusing freedom of expression . . . Terrorists are calling hate speech, and speech against women and children and so on, is freedom of expression. So now we have to stand up and say: No, that's not freedom of expression – you have to be a journalist first, professional journalist second, and then we can talk about freedom of expression.

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As already discussed, Shady is committed to fighting against discrimination. He thus describes why he first joined a NGO, providing an answer that shows where his commitment comes from:

I find it difficult a bit to express myself, but I wanted to help, to help anyone, but then I felt like I would like to serve people most that I belong to, to help most to the community that I belong to, because they are the most in need . . . I thought that there's an obligation to society that I have to do and… I would say like, in part I'm a little bit privileged, so I want to use my experience to do it, outside of my studies, and also maybe it was that I wanted to get in contact with a different variety of people than the ones I'm with.

In addition to fighting against discrimination and for freedom of expression, interviewees had other points of ideological commitment. For example, Ahmed articulates his ideological commitment thus:

What I am trying to achieve is that for people to be empowered. By people being empowered, I mean that they have the right to choose who is governing them, how they are governed, and they have the right to say 'Yes' and 'No' . . . So if I want to say this in one way, I want this country to be developed and to be respectable. To be developed and to be respectable, it has . . . number one, to respect its people. . . .That people cannot walk to reach their work easily is not respect. When someone has certain ideas and writes a blog about it and is put in jail – that's not respect . . . And if it respects the people, the people have the power and power can make things… you will become developed.

Finally, Said poignantly articulates how his feeling of commitment arises from the importance that the idea of human rights has for him personally, due to its power to clarify and frame his long-standing intimate observations. He had already been engaged in various initiatives and organizations when he encountered the idea of human rights, but says that this idea has been the source of his passion since:

I took a diploma in an institution for human rights, which made me someone else. It changed my mind in a lot of things . . . I afterwards collaborated and worked on

the same school for others. This is the best thing that I did . . . When you have something that changed your mind, you want to share it with people . . . I'm a Christian guy, and I only knew about church and love, but nothing about the rights and what people deserve – they have rights not because Jesus loves them, but because they are human. [Growing up,] Mom and Dad were good people. They didn't do anything bad – but why? Because they talk about Jesus and religion, and don't know that people have rights. The turning point [for me] was that people have rights because they are human.

6 Analysis

The findings of this thesis point to a continuing influence of class position on the experience of being young and engaged in civil society work in Egypt today. However, they also point to a major change in this experience, when in the summer of 2013 a new regime hostile to the civil society and political freedoms effectuated a shift in the circumstances that shape what it is like to be young and active in Egypt.

Moreover, the findings show that the participants had very different opinions on particular post-revolutionary actions and events, making for a "messy" result. However, what most of them share is a sense of disappointment with the political developments and the current results of the revolution, as well as a sense of exclusion, which is very different from the economic exclusion Mulderig (2013) and Singerman (2013) were pointing to. This exclusion should rather be understood in the Bourdieusian sense, as arising from the low value of their habitus in the newly emerging sociopolitical circumstances. Further, most participants also share the interest to work for the good they are committed to and continue their engagement. As would be expected, these are engaged citizens and they care and want to do the right thing.

All participants came to be involved in the revolution driven by concerns for everyday politics, as their statements show. Most of their efforts to directly enact a change in political structures, however, have been unsuccessful and frustrating, as shown by Rana's and Ahmed's experiences as activists and Shady's and Said's as observers. This disappointment notwithstanding, they remain engaged, active and committed in their civil society work. This shows that, arguably, the interest in everyday politics is driving their engagement once again, which might be a lesson they have learned from the revolution.

6.1 Change and continuity

Woodman (2013) suggested that the approach of social generations is well suited to track continuity and change without treating the two like binary opposites. Some aspects of continuity, social reproduction and change will be highlighted drawing from the findings. Importantly, having in mind that the sample of this study is not representative (nor does it strive to be), looking into the circumstances of the five participants can elucidate only some micro aspects of continuity and change, relative to the position of the participants.

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Firstly, the fact that youth exclusion was not found to play a significant role in the participants' experiences of post-revolutionary period, or in their understanding of the revolution, which they supported, goes against Singerman's (2013) and especially Mulderig's (2013) suggestions that socioeconomic exclusion of youth lies at the root of their participation in the revolution. In addition, this should be explained by one of the limitations of this study – its sample its simply in no way representative of the socioeconomic diversity in Egypt – rather than change. The middle-class position of the participants, transpiring through their fluency in English, and to a lesser degree their university degrees, is arguably what enabled them to acquire the skills and connections, as well as safety nets, which allow them to successfully navigate the dire labor market situation in Egypt, especially for educated youth. Moreover, this shows that youth exclusion is not the universal fate of Egyptian youth, but one shaped by class position, and also physical location, given that the participants live in two urban centers in Egypt.

Regarding youth unemployment, one of the main factors contributing to the pervasive socioeconomic exclusion of youth (Dhillon and Yousef 2009, Silver 2007, Chaaban 2009), the participants were not found to have struggled with protracted periods of unemployment. Like the apparent absence of the issue of youth exclusion, absence of the issue of unemployment is also unlikely to be indicative of a change in context, especially given the hardship that Egyptian economy has encountered in the revolution's aftermath. Rather, it should be seen as linked to the post-revolutionary boom of the civil society sector (Behr and Siitonen 2013), which opened some more opportunities for employment, which the participants clearly took advantage of. Also, similarly to the absence of articulations of youth exclusion, the lack of major struggle with unemployment can be linked to the social position of the participants: their language skills and education, at least in part enabled by their socioeconomic location, may have put them in a better position to profit from the new opportunities in civil society than their less privileged peers, making up for one aspect of social reproduction found in this study, again emphasizing continuity.

Further, the participants of this study were found to have been engaging in practices like horizontal organizing, using new technologies to create counterpublics, forging alliances across traditional social cleavages, and daring to speak back to power. These new practices over the last couple of years have substantially increased the social capital of youth in Egypt, and, according

to Herrera (2014), effectively brought about social change. Namely, according to Herrera (2014) and Cole (2014), the increased capabilities and power resulting from these practices have been re-positioning youth and putting them in a more powerful position in relation to other age groups. As already indicated, the participants occupy a relatively privileged position compared to other youth in Egypt. Their use of the above practices as a source of capital can serve as a reminder that, in addition to helping bridge intergenerational inequalities, these practices can also deepen intra-generational ones. Thus, the conjunction between the participants' engagement in these practices and their active and visible quest to change Egyptian society indicates change in the circumstances that shape the experience of being young in Egypt, both on the inter-generational level (in lessening the inter-generational gap that disfavors youth) and on the intra-generational level (in deepening the intra-generational gap between the youth who have engaged in these practices and thus increased their political capital, and those who have not).

The developments over the last two years highlight tendencies of both continuity and change. The crackdown on dissenting voices in politics and the media, and the pressure on civil society organizations exerted through increased government scrutiny and the implementation of the new, more oppressive reading of the NGO law, are contextual factors that at the same time highlight continuity (through the privileged position of the participants in spite of these challenges) and change (through the participants' feeling of exclusion, as well as their disengagement from more highly visible forms civil society activism and from earlier attempts to influence politics).

On the one hand, all participants who want to work are employed, despite the crackdown on civil society, and this highlights continuity in circumstances shaping the experience of being young. Indeed, the impact of developments since the summer of 2013 on opportunities for employment has been touched upon only by Said, who struggled to find work for four months. However it is likely that, on the longer run, the situation will influence individual participants differently. Like other civil society workers, the participants' jobs are dependent on availability of funding and on the social cost of civil society engagement (Behr and Siitonen 2013), and some participants are more likely to find this dependency to be a challenge than others. Namely, those who have proven to be able to quickly switch from one engagement to another, like Rana (possibly due to her social networks); those whose engagement involved more high-profile

organizations, like Ahmed; or who have been in the field of civil society for a while, like Shady and Leyla, may find it more easy to navigate the volatility of the job market in civil society under current conditions. In contrast, Said, who is relatively new to the civil society sector and who recounted having encountered difficulties to find his current job, may be more likely than the others to have the same problems with employment in the future. This is all the more so if Said's family does not have the financial means to cushion the possible periods of unemployment. In this regard, the contrast between Ahmed, who can afford to choose to be unemployed and Said, who recalls his feverish four-month job search, is quite telling, and again can be seen as social reproduction, in addition to the relatively comfortable situation of the participants in an otherwise very challenging environment.

On the other hand, if we examine the way participants personally experience their context post-June 2013, we come to a quite different picture: one of a profound change. For Rana, just staying in Egypt under current circumstances is traumatizing, and she feels like her values and beliefs, which she had acted upon with telling determination and principle, have no place in Egyptian society. She craves to express her substantial dissatisfaction, but knows that protest today has no popular support. Ahmed feels outnumbered, and possibly even isolated, with observations like "the revolution is now lost" and "we were all fooled". Similarly, Said says the people who disapprove of the situation, like he does, are too few to be able to change anything. Shady does not articulate the feeling of isolation, but when he says that he thinks Morsi's presidency was a good time for Egypt because Morsi was a civilian president, he is quick to add that most people would disagree with him. Therefore, a feeling of exclusion marks participants' experience of the period after June 2013. This very much echoes the argument of Nevens on how youth have been sidelined after the uprisings (2012). Here it can be argued that the "rules of the game" in the civil society, understood as Bourdieusian field, have changed after the summer of 2013 (and arguably has a number of other fields as well). The changed, "new" rules are not unclear or undetermined (Bourdieu 1984), but on the contrary follow a clear logic that favors those who support al-Sisi's regime.

As a result of this major change, most of the participants have toned down their civil society engagement. Both Rana and Ahmed feel so much at odds with the fundamental premises of the current situation that they both found it impossible to continue their engagement in a

"business as usual" manner. Shady had intended to found his own NGO in early 2013, but decided not to do so and opted for less visible engagement after June 30th. Shady is also older than Ahmed, and especially Rana, and the accomplishments of his decade-long engagement may have served to tamper the disappointment. Thus, the participants' negative experience of change that occurred in the summer of 2013 brings them away from prominent positions in civil society and from more visible accomplishments, drawing them away from the center of civil society sector towards its periphery. That said, the participants still choose to continue being engaged, in spite of the substantial challenges they must overcome.

In contrast, Leyla's support for the current regime allows her to be more fully and more visibly engaged. There are similarities between the current situation and that under Mubarak, especially for the media: freedom of the media in Egypt has been substantially compromised, the case of the popular satirist Bassem Youssef, who discontinued his show for fears for personal safety, is only one among a plethora of others. However, this does not figure in how Leyla feels about working in journalism and civil society in Egypt today. This can in part be attributed to the fact that her primary focus is the training of journalists, rather than journalism itself, which means she may simply not have first-hand experience of pressure and censorship on a daily basis. Moreover, the fact that she sees continued progress (a result of her support for the fundamental premises of the current regime) may aid her in being oriented towards seeking, finding and benefiting from more visible civil society engagement, and also from whatever changes introduced by the revolution still remain more generally. Here the advantage of the supporters of the current regime comes to the fore. On the other hand, it can also be argued that other aspects of Leyla's position – that she is a woman, that her family are not from Cairo, and that the fact that she started working at 17, which might indicate that her family cannot provide her a financial safety net – have made and will make her engagement harder on an everyday basis (gender) and on the long-run (necessity of relying on herself). This shows that factors of class, gender and ideological affiliation interact in a complex manner.

6.2 Struggling in a new field

One of the major findings of this thesis is that the participants' views of the landmark events and actors in the post-revolutionary period differ to the extent that consensus on any issue is rare. Although most participants now agree that the post-revolutionary course took an undesired turn

in the summer of 2013, some of them (e.g. Ahmed) initially saw this turn as a positive development and started seeing it negatively only later on, making for the finding that some views of some participants have been fluid over time. On the other hand, taken individually, participants provide coherent arguments in favor or against events and actors. Further, their expectations and ideas of what a successful revolution would be transpire from these arguments.

The participants were found to coherently position themselves towards post-revolutionary events and actors. These individual patterns of positioning can be seen as profiles of engagement in struggle within new or recently changed fields (Bourdieu 1984, 1993). A new field has been opened up in Egypt with mass mobilization in January 2011 and subsequent fall of Mubarak in February 2011. This new field has pertained mostly to political and civic events and engagement, but has arguably permeated Egyptian society as a whole. The rules of that field were undetermined (within some fundamental structural constraints), "unwritten" and in flux, and post-revolutionary period has been marked by a struggle for those rules. Following Bourdieu's (1984, 1993) theorization of how people engage with newly emerging fields, it can be asked what it was in the participants' general interpretive patterns – in their habitus – that predisposed them to be invested in the revolution, to have specific expectations of the revolution, and to seek to position themselves in the post-revolutionary period (both in terms of political events and of their civic engagement) in the particular way that they did. The second major change, which occurred in July 2013 with the deposal of Morsi, arguably shifted the dynamics of the struggle to determine rules of the new fields post-revolution, both in civil society and in other areas. The way participants see this change can, again, be seen in light of their habitus. Below is an analysis of both.

For the participants, a successful revolution would result in a secular state and a non-conservative society (Leyla); in feeling protected in one's exercise of freedom of speech (Ahmed); in having a civilian, rather than military government (Shady); and in living in an environment that does not sanction political violence (Rana). Leyla's reasons to support the revolution can be seen in light of the way her profession has shaped her experience: as a journalist, she could not do her job professionally in an authoritarian situation where the media are heavily censored and controlled. Also, as someone who had been working in training of journalists before the revolution, it can be argued that she could have expected the demand for

the services of her organization to increase with increased freedom of the media. The way Leyla articulates her desires for the future of Egypt (to have a secular state and less of the religiously driven social conservativism, to be productive and "Egyptian, not Salafi") can be linked to her position as a working, "productive" woman who wants to ensure she keeps her rights. Further, Ahmed recounts how, as he was growing up, he was watching how his father, also a journalist, was being forced to comply with the demands of censorship. This might have instilled in Ahmed a sense of severe constraints of the status quo, as echoed in his formulation of the reason for his support of the revolution: he sought "changing the patterns of our society." Moreover, the importance he grants to the freedom of speech (he was ferociously against Morsi because he feared being silenced) can also be seen as connected to being a journalist and coming from a journalistic family. When he speaks about what he hopes to achieve with his engagement, Ahmed says that he wants to know his activism will certainly have the wide societal effect he ambitiously seeks, instead of being satisfied with small-scale results. Thus, his actions after July 2013 convey a position against any institutionalization of engagement that would fall short of achieving to change patterns of society.

Said's experience of trying to find an explanatory framework for his intuition that people are equal, which transpires from his account of how the notion of human rights changed him, shows how he had been reflecting on issues of rights and justice very early on in his life. He also says he saw the revolution as an opportunity for "trying something new". Moreover, he would like to address "basic needs, like shelter and food" in his engagement, rather than the "elite" issues he is currently forced to be working on. Arguably, Said's particular angle on the meaning of the revolution, as well as the direction of his subsequent civil society engagement, are permeated by a need to assert, and work towards, equality of all. Moreover, throughout the post-revolutionary period, Rana positions herself in line with her pre-revolutionary understanding of Egypt and her belief that its interests have long been neglected by the politicians who had ruled it. Moreover, her actions are also determined by values of humanism and non-violence.

Regarding the second change, Leyla aligns herself with the establishment post-June 30. This is not surprising, given her habitus, her general positioning, as discussed above. Aligning herself with the regime enables her to benefit from the well developed, numerous societal

mechanisms that keep the establishment in place, both on the micro and macro levels. Islamism, which she strongly opposes, is at the same time the main enemy of the establishment.

Further, participants have arguably used their youthful habitus (Bayat 2010a,b) to further their position within fields. Elements of youthfulness found to mark some outlooks and practices of the participants include non-conformity, outspokenness, and the willingness to experiment (Bayat 2010a). Namely, Rana has resisted the pressure of her environment to change her attitudes towards political actors or the decision to engage in demonstrations. Arguably, this pressure was inherent in the experience of isolation that she had gone through while injured. Nonetheless, Rana kept her ground demonstrated strong non-conformity. Similarly, together with Said and Ahmed, she demonstrated the readiness to criticize political actors or decisions outspokenly and boldly, feeling comfortable and confident in the role of the critic of power, as opposed to being fearful, doubtful or hesitant. Likewise, throughout his many and different civil society engagements, Ahmed displayed an openness to experimentation and willingness to try different ways thinking, different sites and manners of engagement.

6.3 The issue of representation

While an examination of discursive elements and production that are at play in the discursive construction of a generation, as argued by Purhonen (2015) and Aboim and Vasconcelos (2014), would entail an analysis with a scope and an approach different to those deployed in this thesis, Purhonen's insistence on the importance of the issue of representation can still be followed, at least partially. The insight on who transpires as the 'spokesperson' of a generation in the eyes of the participants of this study can help elucidate some analytically useful and important aspects. Due to the nature of the data, however, the boundaries of the situation in which possible strategies of representation are deployed are confined to the interview situation. In other words, it is expected that strategies of representation, if found, are participants' strategic choices as regards the interview situation.

Since the participants did not touch upon this issue explicitly, what follows is an analysis of their implicit strategies. Rana and Said both use personal pronouns "I" and "us" almost interchangeably, either when recounting their engagement with the revolution, or when making estimations on the success of the revolution. This is the case, for example, when Said transitions from talking about himself not being happy with the outcome of the revolution, to "them" ("us")

no being numerous enough to do anything about it at the moment. In contrast to Said, however, Rana's transitioning shows some regularities: she uses the singular whenever she talks about her views, and singular and plural interchangeably when she recounts the events and demonstrations she participated in. The fact that she does not articulate a difference between "me" and "us" means that she might be constructing herself as the representative in her account; however, the deployment of different strategies when she talks about her point of view and when she describes actual events suggests more subtlety. Arguably, Said and Rana use these strategies to make their views on the status of the revolution appear more persuasive to their interlocutor. Arguably, they would also use these strategies in "doing" (as opposed to "talking about") the revolution, aiming to give extra leverage in the eyes of others to their view of what should be done.

Likewise, Ahmed's use of singular and plural forms of the personal pronoun is telling. Ahmed talks about the revolutionaries as "us", and when he talks about the demonstrations, he often uses "me" and "us" interchangeably. At the same time, however, he acknowledges that the "revolutionaries" have been responding differently to the current situation, that some abandoned any engagement for the moment out of frustration, while others committed themselves to civil society work. A sense that he is in the minority transpires from his account, but also a slight sense that he is the "minority in the right". Like Rana's and Said's strategy, Ahmed's too can be interpreted as one deployed to give his view more leverage in a conversation. The tendency to employ the strategies of representation may be stronger, the weaker and less influential (i.e. more "marginal") one's outlook is in the current conjecture.

Leyla, meanwhile, distinguishes between herself and the "activists" who disagree with June 30th and defied the protest law at Majlis al-Shura. At the same time, however, she does not deploy strategies to depict her views as representative of the goals of the revolution, almost always explicitly stating that a view she is arguing in favor of is but her own. The difference in how strategies of representation are deployed by Leyla and other participants are arguably connected to her advantage over the others in the current setting: Leyla is the only participant who is optimistic about achieving the goals of the revolution, and confident that Egypt is on a good path towards achieving them. Therefore, she simply does not need to add leverage to her views and claims, since she can find that leverage in the hegemonic and governmental discourses in Egypt today.

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Thus, drawing from Woodman's (2013) use and critique of Mannheim's (1952) notion of generation, some aspects of continuity and change shaping the experience of the participants have been put forth in this chapter. The heuristic view on the participants of this study as members of the same generation brought to light their privileged position with regard to one of the enduring structural factors that shape the experience of being young in Egypt – economic exclusion. It also challenged Singerman's (2013) and Mulderig's (2013) narrow definition of exclusion, and showed that, in the changing circumstances, youth can experience exclusion in ways other than economic. Moreover, Bourdieu's theorization of struggle of individuals within fields (1984) and Bayat's (2010a,b) notion of youthfulness have helped understand the messy nature of the topic of this thesis. Struggle within fields (Bourdieu 1984) shed light on participants' 'political compass' and the way they oriented themselves in a shifting, dramatic context. Bayat's notion of youthful habitus (2010a,b) helped put forth the way the participants display features of youthfulness. Further, emphasis on issues of representation in group formation (Purhonen 2015, following Bourdieu 1985) shed light on the discursive tactics employed by the participants in the interview situation.

7 Conclusion

While the experience of being young and engaged in civil society in Egypt post-revolution is influenced by the persisting constraints related first and foremost to class, it has also been substantially shaped by a change, which began with the re-instatement of the military rule in July 2013. In these circumstances, the compatibility between one's own worldview (habitus) and the current government policies strongly influences the experience of being young and engaged in Cairo and Alexandria today. There is a link between disappointment in the achievement of the revolution, widely albeit not unanimously shared by the participants of this study, and withdrawal from efforts to enact change on political structures. Instead, the young people who are the focus of this thesis increasingly turn to the social aspects of their civil society engagement, as opposed to giving up, and this is one aspect of the agency they are exerting in the current circumstances.

The factors shaping the experience of being young in post-revolutionary Egypt mentioned here are subject to the limitations of this study, which does not take into account the perspectives of economically disadvantaged youth, those whose engagement is religion-based, youth living outside the major urban centers of Cairo and Alexandria, or of political activists.

Future research might look into the experiences of youth living in smaller towns and villages, or those who do not speak English or do not have a university degree and are active in the civil society, in order to isolate some of the continuities and changes in their context. This would provide a more accurate and more complex account of youth experience in Egypt today. A similar study with an older cohort might open up possibilities to explore whether there are unexpected differences or substantial similarities in how people experience the post-revolutionary moment. Moreover, a follow-up study would bring insight into future evolution of current trends of continuity and change, and provide further valuable data on possible new dynamics in the trajectories of continuity and especially change which the participants of this study encounter. Finally, it would shed more light on their ways of exerting agency.

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Appendix – The interview guide

1. When did you first become engaged with civil society? How? In what capacity? Can you walk me through your engagement since you began until today?

2. Did you support the revolution in 2011? Why?

3. Did you demonstrate on June 30th 2013? Why?

4. What kind of society would you like to live in?

5. What kind of change do you hope to contribute to through your engagement?