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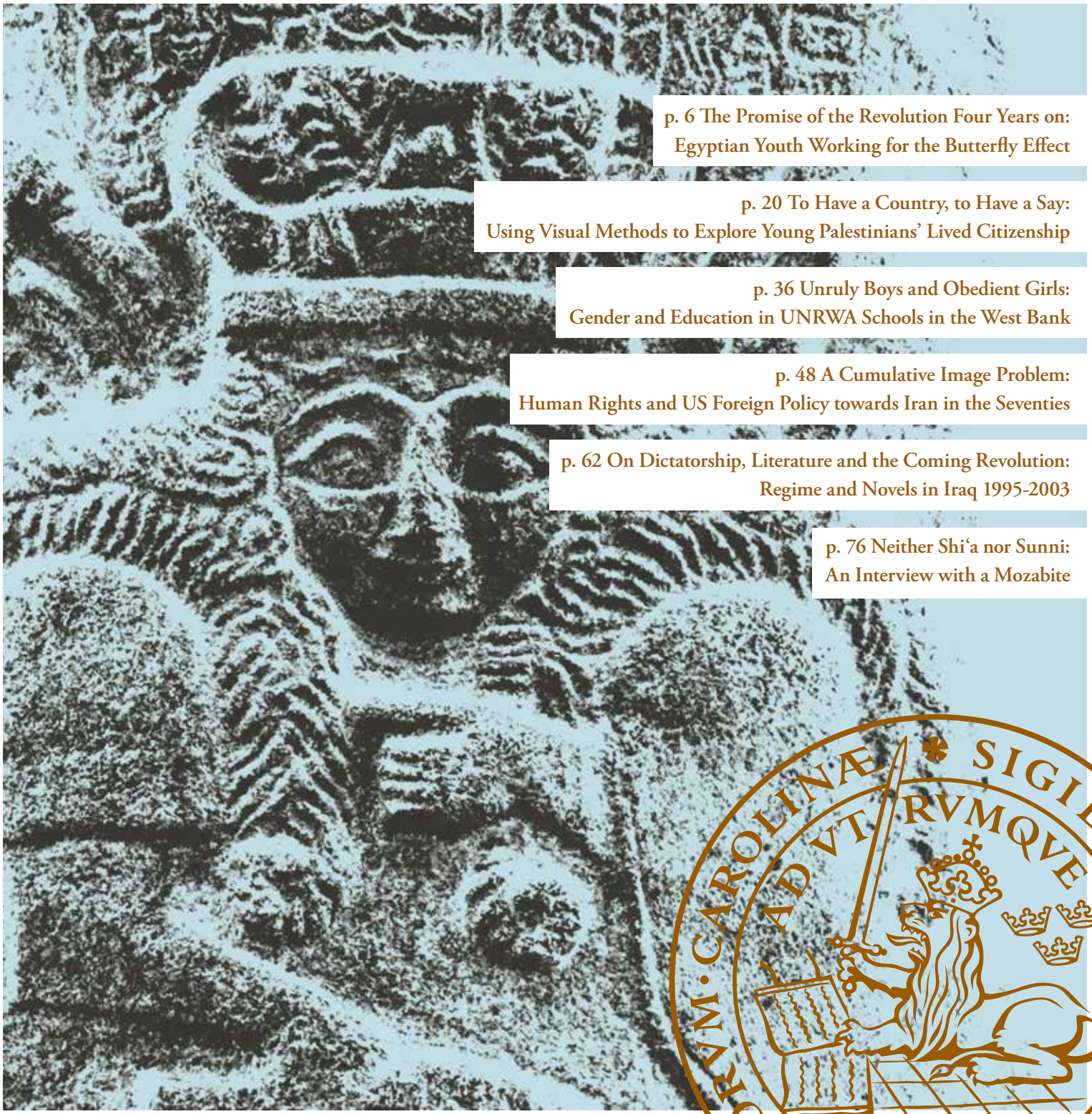

ARTICLES

REVIEWS

PUBLISHED BY

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Dear Readers,

As I leave my role as Director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies (CMES) at Lund University, I am able to reflect on how our education and research environment has developed significantly since its founding ten years ago.

We have had the privilege of hosting great scholars who have inspired and challenged us to continue in our work. Aside from the lectures that these visitors have given to the public and to our student body, for me the most important aspect of these visits is the lively discussions that take place in the informal margins of these events. These discussions are vital to the continued innovation of our educational community.

During this time, funding has been granted to interesting and innovative research projects which have allowed our scholars to push forward the state of knowledge in this field, and have allowed our center to grow.

Our extensive outreach program has become well known as a resource for those whose work intersects, in different ways, with the Middle East; people working in the spheres of business, public administration, and education have been able to tap into our expertise. This program grew further in 2016 as we began developing courses that are offered to various state authorities.

And of course our MA Program in Middle Eastern Studies, now in its seventh year, has trained new scholars and equipped them with the knowledge and expertise necessary to make valuable additions to the field. I am delighted to see the work our students and alumni presented here and elsewhere.

For all of this, I am extremely proud of my colleagues and the work they have done, be they students, administrators, or scholars.

With all these developments in mind, it is difficult to pinpoint one that has been the most significant since CMES was inaugurated in 2007. However, launching our first issue of the online, interdisciplinary, journal of Middle Eastern Studies, Nidaba, in 2016 made me especially proud. While there are many journals in the field of Middle Eastern Studies, I believe our efforts to produce one that is truly multidisciplinary contributes to the study of the Middle East and reflects the mission of CMES. Starting a new journal is no easy task, and I wish to thank all those whose efforts have culminated in this issue: Not least our Editor, Associate Professor Dalia Abdelhady, and all the scholars who have contributed to this volume. I leave CMES with high expectations that this journal will continue to reflect the creative and lively research of the center that produces it.

Building on the vital contributions made in the first issue of Nidaba, this second issue hosts insights from various scholars on the topics of youth, social change, literature and society, and human rights. I trust that it will prove to be a meaningful resource for ongoing research in the field.

Leif Stenberg

Director of Lund University's
Center for Middle Eastern Studies

NIDABA AN INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF MIDDLE EAST STUDIES

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Introduction

from the Editorial Board

As we release the second issue of Nidaba, we are delighted to present five outstanding pieces of scholarship across a range of issues, in keeping with our multidisciplinary ethos. Our contributors have written articles on diverse topics from young Palestinian's lived citizenship in the city of Nablus, to Iraqi literature in the last years of Saddam Hussein's rule, to human rights in US foreign policy towards Iran in the 1970s. We publish them with confidence that they represent high quality and valuable academic research. Included are reviews of Peter Frankopan's The Silk Roads, and the two-part edited collection Syria from Reform to Revolt, two important contributions to the field of Middle Eastern Studies.

We would also to take this opportunity to thank Lukas Herbers for his dedicated effort to help get Nidaba off the ground. As he leaves Nidaba for more challenging work, his contributions to the first two issues will always be appreciated.

We are sure that you will find this issue insightful, inspiring, and most of all a joy to read.

Photo by Noor, Balata Refugee Camp, September 2014 (disposable camera)

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The Promise of the Revolution Four Years on: Egyptian Youth Working for the Butterfly Effect

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This article 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, looking into aspects of continuity and change that shape this experience. It draws on five life histories and aims to understand the reasons behind youth's engagement in the revolution beyond the framework of youth economic exclusion. The data was approached using a mixed theoretical framework, which encompasses youthfulness (Bayat) and a heuristic, as opposed to analytic, use of social generations (Mannheim). The participants were invariably guided by a concern with everyday politics in their engagement with the revolution and the civil society. Their expectations of the revolution and visions of positive change are, however, very diverse. Socioeconomic exclusion does not appear as a driving force for their engagement in the revolution, showing it is not the universal fate of Egyptian youth but one shaped by class and physical location. In terms of continuity and change, the experience of being young and active in civil society in Egypt continues to be shaped by class, while a major change happened when the military took over the country in July 2013, spurring the critical participants to re-examine and sometimes tone down their engagement, experiencing a strong sense of exclusion. Another change that dates pre-revolution is the youth's increased socio-political capital through aptitude in horizontal organizing, use of new technologies for activism, political reasoning beyond traditional ideological or societal divides, and propensity to criticize and speak back to power. The impacts of this change were still felt at the time of the interviews.

Keywords:
youth; post-revolution; Egyptian revolution; civic engagement; generation

INTRODUCTION

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 "ordinary" youth[1] (Woodman 2013) who supported the revolution, away from the small group of prominent revolutionaries at the forefront of the protests (Herrera 2014; Rennick 2015). After Herrera's pioneering work on the experiences of ordinary 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. However, instead of focusing on the experience of civil society workers, studies of civil society in Egypt after the revolution mostly examined contextual factors contributing to youth mobilization (for example, Sika 2012) or donor funding strategies (for example, Behr and Siitonen 2013). In this article, I highlight how youth's expectations from the revolution and their views on subsequent events and circumstances in Egypt shape their experiences and influence their engagement in the post-revolutionary context. I also look for indications of continuity and change in the experience of being young and engaged in Egypt post-revolution.

Not long after I had set out to conduct this research, it became clear that class position remains pivotal in shaping post-revolutionary experiences in Egypt. In contrast to this aspect of continuity, another central factor is the major change that occurred in the summer of 2013, when a new regime increasingly hostile to the civil society and political freedoms came to power. The lived experience of the tumultuous post-revolutionary period proved to yield little consensus among the participants on most socio-political events and actors, making for a "messy" result. Further, a sense of disappointment with the current results of the revolution proved to be widely, albeit not unanimously, shared. All young people in this study became involved with the revolution, and with civil society, driven by concerns for everyday politics. However, they perceive most of their efforts to directly enact a change in political structures as unsuccessful. Disappointment notwithstanding, they remained engaged, active and committed to their civil society work, showing that the interest in everyday politics is driving their engagement once again, which might be a lesson they have learned from the revolution. Participants also voiced a sense of exclusion, very different from the economic exclusion that researchers of youth in Egypt (for example, Mulderig 2013; Singerman 2013) frequently point out.

In this article, I first present the relevant threads of research on Egyptian youth during and after the revolution and on civil society workers, providing an account of the contextual factors relevant to the experience of being young and active in civil society in Egypt today, and focusing on the socio-political changes that occurred since 2011. Then, I describe the research methodology and subsequently clarify the rationale behind the choice to use social generations and generational units (Mannheim 1952), as well as youthfulness (Bayat 2010a & b) as analytical tools, after which I highlight the factors that inform their engagement in Egyptian society post-revolution. Throughout, I show how a heuristic, as opposed to analytic, use of the concept of social generations (Mannheim 1952; Woodman 2013) is useful for shedding light on factors of continuity and change in the experience of being young. 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 some micro aspects of continuity and change that are relevant to the participants' social position.

BEYOND SOCIOECONOMIC EXCLUSION: THE UNDERSTUDIED ORDINARY YOUTH IN POST-REVOLUTION EGYPT

Youth are commonly identified as one of the main agents of the 2011 uprisings, and many scholars (for example, Mulderig 2013; Nevens 2012; Shehata 2008 and 2011; Singerman 2013) have argued that youth's political action should be attributed to their socioeconomic, political and cultural exclusion. Moreover, youth exclusion has long been the analytical lens employed by the policy/development literature on youth in the Middle East (for example, Assaad and Barsoum 2007; Biomy 2010; Chaaban 2009; Dhillon and Yousef 2009; Gebel and Heyne 2014; Handoussa 2010; Silver 2007). In this article, I go against this approach and embrace Herrera's (2010) emphasis on the importance of involving youth's perspective on social and political events, instead of an approach that "treats youth either as

1 Woodman articulates an argument critical of youth studies' traditional focus on young people who are "most excluded or most spectacular." Instead, he calls for attention towards "ordinary" young people, or those in-between the youth "successfully following the government and society approved pathway and the most socially excluded"(Woodman 2013, 1). In the context of post-revolutionary Egypt, I take *ordinary youth* to mean young people who are not content with the status quo (the government and society approved pathway) and seek to enact change while foregoing spectacular forms of activism – those forms that would be seen as directly threatening or as openly confrontational by the authoritarian government.

subjects to stimulate neo-liberal development, or as essentially religious and ideological beings with either politically radical or benign tendencies," tackling them as objects rather than subjects or agents (Herrera 2010, 127). Similarly, I argue for an empirical, in-depth examination of these issues, "going to the source and talking to youth directly" (Herrera 2010, 129), instead of deriving hypotheses on youth's views, expectations, and hopes from economic and demographic tendencies (Mulderig 2013). Others emphasized youth's new ways of engaging politics that augmented their political capital in the face of exclusion. For example, Cole (2014) and Herrera (2014) describe the *wired youth's* new practices, including horizontal relationships, disdain for discrimination and traditional social hierarchies, and tendency to use new communication technologies to communicate across lines of difference. Yet, others (e.g., Kiwan 2015) have observed how politics are inscribed into youth's everyday life, for example, using the slogan "I vote I sing" to protest the arrest of a rap artist (Salime 2015) or social activism of street art collectives (Abdelmagid 2013).

Non-hierarchical organizing, communication across lines of difference, use of the Internet, and demands for justice for all are the essential features of the youth-led social movements that first called for protests that would later result in the toppling of President Mubarak. Drawing from Blumer's (1969) and Tilly's (1978) theorization of the four-phase life cycle of social movements, these movements arguably started going through the institutionalization phase in the wake of the revolution. 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).

While some (for example, Behr and Siitonen 2013) have viewed civil society as a necessity in the process of democratization, others have been more critical. For example, Plaetzer (2014) argues that use of the analytical tool of civil society to study post-revolutionary contexts of Tunisia and Egypt re-inscribes social and economic injustices that had spurred the uprisings. NGOs have also been criticized for legitimizing the withdrawal of the state from basic service provision. Similarly, scholars have pointed out how NGOs can be agents of the professionalization of engagement, undermining civil society's transformative potential (Choudry and Shragge 2011; Hilton et al. 2013; Jad 2004). Other authors (for example, Abu-Rabia-Queder 2007; Townsend et al. 2004) have pointed out that both uncritical praise and undiscerning dismissal of civil society organizations (CSOs) are sweeping generalizations, and instead argued for studying concrete cases of CSOs to show how they can be complex sites of both co-optation and resistance. Ethnographers of aid ("aidnographers") have similarly advocated for ethnographic study of international development institutions (for example, Leve and Karim 2001; Lewis and Mosse 2006). Others, for example, Fechter (2012), Lewis (2011), White (2015), and Yarrow (2011; 2008) found that civil society workers have complex motivations for, and relationships with, their work. In his study of local NGO activists in Ghana, Yarrow (2011) found that, rather than having an opportunistic, principally pragmatic or even cynical relation to their engagement, activists see their engagement as part of a wider ideological project they are committed to. 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 for engagement predicated upon giving and egoistic reasons predicated upon expectations of receiving, are not warranted.

AN UNFINISHED REVOLUTION

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, 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 with the police. On January 16, Tunisian President Ben Ali stepped down. Then in mid-January 2011, the administrators of an Egyptian Facebook group *We are all Khaled Said*, which commemorates the 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 protesters across the ideological spectrum gathered in Cairo and other cities, demanding Mubarak's resignation. On January 28, a dramatically growing number of protesters defied the curfew introduced the previous day, and the number of casualties rose. General strike, the return from exile of Mohamed el-Baradei,[2] 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. On February 11 Mubarak stepped down, turning over the power to Egyptian

2 El-Baradei is a Nobel Peace Prize laureate and dissident, widely seen as a possible successor to Mubarak in the early aftermath of the revolution. Heading an interim body following the ousting of Morsi in the summer of 2013, El-Baradei resigned and withdrew after the Rabaa el-Adawiya and an-Nahda massacres of Islamist protesters in August 2013.

military's Supreme Council 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 over a decade. 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 the *Kifaya* movement 2004-2006, with its unofficial youth wing Youth for Change, organized bigger public gatherings than any other had in the decade that preceded them. In 2008, a youth-led Facebook campaign supporting a strike of factory workers became April 6th Movement, 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 protesters in an action widely condemned by human rights organizations (see for example, Human Rights Watch 2014).

Since the military deposed Morsi, and especially since SCAF chairman Abdel Fattah as-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 harsh sentences under vaguely defined circumstances, has been implemented to scrutinize and increase pressure to the national and local NGOs (Amnesty International 2015). Moreover, an unprecedented number of activists have been imprisoned, with an estimated 22 000 people arrested between July 2013 and 2014 alone (Stork 2015).

After briefly presenting the context, I now turn to the question of how five young people active in civil society experienced the post-revolutionary period in Egypt. In doing so, I will focus especially on the influence of their expectations from the revolution on their engagement. I will also look for aspects of change and continuity in the experience of being young and active in civil society in post-revolutionary Egypt.

RESEARCH METHOD

This article is based on five in-depth interviews, conducted in English, with five young civil society workers in Cairo in January 2015. 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, whom I contacted through my existing network of acquaintances. The period immediately preceding fieldwork was marked by an increasing state pressure on civil society organizations. A number of organizations were closed, forced to re-locate, or even had their staff arrested. In such an atmosphere, I was able to approach participants only with the help of personal social networks and asked a friend engaged in LGBT issues and a colleague from an international humanitarian organization, where I was an intern, to introduce me to acquaintances who fit the study's population. I, thus, sourced three participants; the fourth participant was sourced by an acquaintance of my internship colleague and the fifth 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.

My social position was similar to that of the participants, 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 cafés of Cairo, I felt like I was invited to visit their ground, their everyday environment. There was no sense of displacement or unease in the interviewees. They were very engaging, and it was not hard to proceed with the interview or ask any of the questions.

SOCIAL GENERATIONS – BEYOND THE CLASSICAL ANALYTICAL USE

As an approach that thematizes the interface between youth, the worldview and socio-political circumstances, sociology of generation speaks to the topic of my research. The 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. Other scholars (e.g., Bourdieu 1993; Purhonen 2015) have argued against treating social generations as a societal given and not as social constructs, and have 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.

As pointed out by Purhonen (2015), 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). In the interview *Youth is Just a Name* Bourdieu (1993) states that he sees generations as 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. Moreover, Bourdieu emphasizes that the "relationship between social age and biological age is very complex," since social age complies to field-specific norms, which vary across fields: "each field has its specific laws of aging" (Ibid., 95). 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). It is clear that he rejects the association between social and biological age, an assumption made by Mannheim (Purhonen 2015).

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 in the factors that shape the experience of being young at a certain point in space and time, without treating them as binary opposites. His 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.). He argues that fundamental changes cannot be tracked down in research solely focused on identifying the existence, and more or less subtle manifestations, of enduring inequalities. 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. Crucially, neither the existence of common experiences nor their origin seem to be a priori assumed by Woodman, unlike Mannheim. Further, Woodman does not argue against using the potent analytical tools of class and other axis of 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.

Moreover, Bayat (2010a; b) has built on Mannheim's conceptualization and argued that the particular "flavor" of youth's spatiotemporal location in modern times is youthfulness or youthful *habitus*. According to Bourdieu (1992), 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). Youthfulness is an outcome of the contemporary youth's spatiotemporal position: spatially, it is situated within the city but transcends the city due to the globalization of youth culture; temporally, it is situated in the late modernity up to contemporary times, when an intermediary stage in life, between being dependent and having dependents, first came to be a mass experience. Like Mannheim, Bayat claims that youth as a social group comes about when a common spatiotemporal location is coupled with a generational consciousness. In Bayat's theorizing, this consciousness entails awareness and affirmation of youthfulness: "'Young persons' turn into 'youth' by developing a particular consciousness about youthfulness" (Bayat 2010a, 119).

I 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. In addition to using youth as a heuristic device, I also draw on Bayat's (2010a; b) conception of youth as possession of youthful habitus in my analysis of the data collected for this research.

TAKING THE REVOLUTION IN ONE'S YOUNG HANDS – FIVE STORIES

At the time of the interview, Rana was in her mid-twenties and single. Her father, the first university graduate in a rural family, worked in the Gulf for a number of years and could thus afford the hefty fees of the very prestigious private school in Cairo that Rana attended, before studying sociology at Cairo University. While at school, Rana was actively playing handball. With peers at school coming

from the Egyptian high social classes and handball team-mates coming from very modest social backgrounds, Rana struggled to find a sense of belonging and identity. While on this journey, she intimately linked her identity to being Egyptian. While identity is fundamental for her to find purpose and agency, she believed one chooses one's identity. "Belonging to these many social groups was how Egyptian I am: Egypt is African, it is Arab, it is Islamic, rural and urban." This prompted Rana to start wearing traditional Egyptian garb in her everyday life, and when I met her, she was wearing a veil with an iconic Egyptian pattern. At the same time, her father was nurturing a keen interest in ancient Egyptology, which exposed her to alternative discourses on Egyptian history and diverse traditional Egyptian artifacts. As a consequence, Rana started seeing the official narratives and histories she was taught at school as homogenizing and untrue.

Rana started working as a sales assistant immediately after school, thinking that "experience will get me a job," and aware that a degree was not enough to find employment. As a teenager, she was an active literary blogger and, in the lead-up to the revolution, connected to other bloggers and became more politicized. She was demonstrating since day one of the revolution and continued to demonstrate against SCAF rule until she was severely beaten up by the army in Mohammed Mahmoud Street.[3] At the time, she was juggling a conventional job at a risk management company and NGO engagement as librarian and teacher working with members of a low-income urban neighborhood in Cairo. After the beating, she quit her company job, as the manager was one of the many, including members of her own family, who blamed her for being beaten. Feeling anger and resentment because of this, she decided to attend training on peace and non-violence and subsequently became a trainer with the same organization, training different groups, including teachers and other public servants. 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 a year to volunteer as an animator for children.

Ahmed was in his late twenties when we met in a café as he was reading a book on Islamic jurisprudence that he hoped would give him an idea of possible alternatives to the Muslim Brotherhood's use of religion in politics. He was newly married to a French woman. When talking about the political situation in Egypt, Ahmed was clearly invested and impassioned. He seemed breathtakingly knowledgeable and moved effortlessly between the subjects of actualities in Egypt and the Middle East, critical social theory, feminism, and others. Growing up, Ahmed was exposed to societal issues alongside his father, a professional journalist at a major newspaper. He watched his father having to comply with the red lines of censorship. Ahmed studied journalism and started his professional engagement as a journalist, but was disillusioned with the pervasive corruption and censorship he encountered and then joined an international body working in development. He was active during the revolution from the very first day, and spoke of the revolutionaries as "us." Immediately after the revolution, he founded a political party he describes as "center-right,"[4] but before it won seats in the parliamentary elections in the fall of 2011 he left it, disappointed with what he perceived as a lack of focus and seriousness. 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 its beneficiaries. When we met, he was thinking what his next move would be, ever in pursuit of enacting change.

Shady, an unassuming, soft spoken, cheerful and calm man in his early thirties, grew up in the Gulf. His parents, originally from Egypt, met in the early 1980s. He is gay, and he is out with his family, who disowned him at first, but with whom he now has contact. His family came back to Alexandria before he started his medical studies. While working as a medical 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 about working with an issue so central to the gay community. When we met, he was working at a hospital, and also engaged with awareness and prevention of HIV/AIDS and fighting discrimination against people living with HIV. He was planning to establish his own NGO, but after July 2013 decided to wait and "lay low" for a bit, occupying himself with underground LGBT activism and compiling an oral history of the gay rights movement in Egypt in the 1990s and 2000s.

Said, a young man in his early twenties, was not married when we met; and he is the only Christian among the participants. Said started his engagement

3 Violent dispersal of a peaceful sit-in in Cairo's Mohamed Mahmoud Street, just off Tahrir Square, took place 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 protesters. It ultimately left 47 people killed, and hundreds injured. The event is also known for police's deliberate targeting of protesters' faces and eyes with rubber bullets, and many people were blinded or injured in the face.

4 Ahmed's party was a party with a moderately Islamic identity and moderately traditional values.

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 cafés 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 traveled 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 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 during that time. He attributes the harassers' behavior to ignorance and refuses to judge them, choosing instead to try and work with them. Similarly, he completed a human rights program and says that, once he encountered the idea of human rights, he "became someone else," as it finally provided a framework for his lifelong intuition that people should be treated as equals. He liked the program so much he stayed with it as a volunteer administrative assistant, and was subsequently helping with the curriculum, emphasizing that "it was the best thing I've ever done." For him, working in the civil society sector was a priority over employment opportunities in other sectors. He was also working in an organization working with architecture and public space, which he considered "elite," and explaining that he would prefer his work to be linked to more basic needs of people. However, he was happy he was able to find this job after a grueling four-month search.

Leyla, a well-groomed young woman in her late twenties, was clutching her Starbucks coffee cup when we met after her work. Although she was obviously tired, she was focused, precise and energetic. I had the impression that she approached our interview very professionally. 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 supported her in living on her own as an unmarried woman, resisting the pressures and judgments of the extended family. Leyla's father worked in the Gulf for three years in the early eighties, and Leyla was quick to point out that, in contrast to many others, he did not bring conservatism 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 did not invest in the training of staff, Leyla saw an opportunity to address this gap by founding her organization, which provided free training 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 had a very high profile. Leyla's tasks in the organization were 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.

THE MANY FACES OF DESIRE FOR CHANGE

All participants came to be involved in the revolution driven by concerns for everyday politics. While their opinions on particular post-revolutionary actions and events vary dramatically, making for a "messy" result, most participants shared a sense of disappointment with 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) point to. Further, in spite of being wary of the increasing socio-political constraints on the impact of their activism, they shared a commitment to continue their efforts to bring about positive change.

The factors that spurred these young people into their first activist stints invariably included a concern with everyday politics. For example, explaining why she became involved in the revolution, Rana said:

> 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.

Likewise, Shady described why he became engaged with the civil society. He was first providing skills for employability to housewives and then he shifted his focus on HIV/AIDS awareness raising within the gay community, to which he belongs:

> I wanted to help, to help anyone, but then I felt like I would like to serve people most 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 and also maybe it was also that I wanted to get in contact with a different variety of people than the ones I'm with.

Similarly, the participants' expectations of the revolution and understanding of what would qualify as success were very diverse. They included the protection of freedom of speech, a civilian rather than a military government, and an environment that does

not condone political violence. Ahmed exclaimed:

> I want people to be empowered: to have the right to choose who is governing them, how they are governed... I want this country to be developed and to be respectable. It has... 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.

Leyla called for the complete secularization of the state and a loosening of religiously-inspired social conservatism:

> [I would like] 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... If you are thinking in a secular way, you will be more creative 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... go back to the forties as a society. People were very open-minded, very educated, and... respected the differences between each other... And in this time, the forties, Egypt was secular, a secular state. And this is what I want to see.

Further, the participants' perceptions and lived experiences of particular post-revolutionary periods were dramatically different, and at times opposing, making for a "messy" result. Ahmed felt his rights as a citizen were increasingly threatened during the rule of Mohammed Morsi, culminating in Morsi's *Constitutional Declaration* in November 2012, when he felt deeply pessimistic about the positive outcomes of the revolution for the first time. He feared that the street clashes that were happening every Friday during that period would "turn into clashes 24/7." Hence, he joined the protests against Morsi on June 30:

> For me those people [the Muslim Brotherhood in power and their supporters] 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.

In contrast, Shady recalled 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'... 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 [sic!] government as that problematic...[During that time] 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 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.

As a result, the participants made dramatically different assessments of what was the revolution has achieved as of early 2015, when the interviews were conducted, and consequently have diverging outlooks for the future. Rana, who was severely beaten up by the army in Mohamed Mahmoud Street, described a culture of violence:

> 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... I didn't feel safe beside Egyptians anymore, and I love Egypt so much... It's not easy to live among people who accept what happened at Rabaa and have a regular life... I am not for Muslim Brotherhood. I hate them. But still, you support the blood – I can't live this way... It reached the maximum when al-Sisi was elected to be president. I couldn't move on... 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.

In strong contrast to Rana, Leyla was optimistic and confident and felt Egypt was on a good track to achieving the goals of the revolution. Leyla held that al-Sisi became president at an exceptional time of conflict and polarization and thought his actions were justified by the circumstances. She was optimistic that "we will be able to measure one of the results of the revolution after another electoral cycle," when people would be choosing their president in normal, and not critical circumstances like in 2014.

THE MANY GLARING FACES OF EXCLUSION

Throughout the interviews, none of the participants ever invoked socioeconomic exclusion of young people, as playing a part in their support for the revolution, or in any other way. Rather than going against the arguments of Singerman (2013) and especially Mulderig (2013) that the systemic socioeconomic exclusion of youth lies behind their support for the revolution, this contributes to refining that

argument in two ways. First, exclusion is not the universal fate of Egyptian youth, but one shaped by class position and spatial location, bearing in mind that the participants of this study come from two big urban centers in Egypt. Second, instead of reducing youth's involvement in the revolution to socioeconomic grievances, research should further investigate the multi-faceted and complex nature of this issue, its aspects that are specific to various social positions and locales, and, most importantly, should do so by "going to the source" (Herrera 2010) and talking to the youth themselves.

Said described his experience of not being able to find a job for months in late 2012. 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 meant one cannot expect to be treated as a full citizen or political actor. At the time of the interviews, all participants who wanted to work were employed, despite the already ongoing crackdown on civil society. This is partly linked to the post-revolutionary boom of the civil society sector (Behr and Siitonen 2013), which had opened some more opportunities for employment that the participants clearly took advantage of. They were all the more able to do so due to their social position: their language skills and education are at least in part enabled by their socioeconomic location and may have put them in a better position to profit from these opportunities than their less privileged peers, making up for another aspect of social reproduction found in this study.

However, it is likely that, in 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 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; 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 was 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 can too be seen as social reproduction.

In contrast to socioeconomic exclusion, the experience of being excluded in the wider sense was very present in my participants' accounts. Most dramatically, after she was beaten, Rana had a strong feeling of isolation and misrecognition when she encountered the reaction of her nearest circle, including her family, and also the atmosphere in the wider society. For her, just staying in Egypt under current circumstances was traumatizing, and she felt like her values and beliefs, which she had acted upon with telling determination and principle, had no place in Egyptian society. In Said's words, although he was unhappy with the outcome of the revolution given the current situation in Egypt, he conceded that: "We are few people. We don't have the opportunity to do something huge like the revolution. People agree with as-Sisi." Likewise, Ahmed emphasized that "the revolutionaries are either frustrated and don't want to do anything, or very busy with civil society work." He felt out-numbered, and possibly even isolated, with observations like "the revolution is now lost" and "we were all fooled." These remarks very much echo the argument of Nevens on how youth have been side-lined after the uprisings (2012).

As a result of this major change, most of the participants had toned down their civil society engagement. Both Rana and Ahmed felt so much at odds with the fundamental premises of the situation as of January 2015 that they both found it impossible to continue their engagement in a business as usual manner. In early 2013, Shady had intended to found his own NGO, but decided not to do so and opted for less visible engagement after June 30. Shady is also older than Ahmed, and especially Rana, and the accomplishments of his decade-long engagement might have served to tamper the disappointment. Thus, the participants' negative experience of change that occurred in the summer of 2013 brought them away from prominent positions in civil society and from more visible accomplishments, drawing them away from the center of the shrinking civil society sector towards its periphery. That said, the participants still chose to continue being engaged, in spite of the substantial challenges they must overcome.

In contrast, Leyla's support for the current regime allowed her to be more fully and more visibly engaged in the civil society. The similarities between the limitations of the freedom of media under as-Sisi and Mubarak did not figure in how Leyla felt about working in journalism in post-revolutionary Egypt. This can in part be attributed to her primary focus on the training of journalists, rather than journalism itself, which means she might simply not have first-hand experience of pressure and censorship on a daily basis. As for the influence of Leyla's ideological position on her engagement and predicament, the fact that she saw 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. More generally, this may also have enabled Leyla to seize and benefit from whatever changes introduced by the revolution still remain, which where the advantage of the supporters of the current regime comes to the fore. Moving away from the question of ideological position to other factors, it can also be argued that other aspects of Leyla's position – that she is a woman, that her family is not from Cairo, and 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.

NEW CAPABILITIES OF YOUTH

Participants are found to harbor youthful habitus, which, following Bayat, includes outlooks and practices such as non-conformity, outspokenness, and the willingness to experiment (Bayat 2010a). They also engage in other practices, like horizontal, informal organizing to directly tackle specific societal issues of concern, using new technologies to create counter-publics, forging alliances across traditional social cleavages, and daring to speak back to power, which have substantially increased the social capital of youth in Egypt over the last couple of years (Herrera 2014). For example, Said and Rana were part of groups of friends and acquaintances who would observe a societal issue and tackle it directly together. With a group of friends, Said was active helping street children find shelter. He and his friends saw that there was a need when they encountered many child beggars while going to *balady*[5] cafés, 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 a place where they could come and have food, so we worked as outreach for that kind of organizations offering shelter.

Further, Rana was active in street demonstrations after the revolution, together with a loose group of young people who were opposing SCAF. The sense of community around a shared purpose is clear when she described 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 ash-Shura. Further, Ahmed described his desire and efforts to find a way to communicate a political message that would bridge the 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 explained the reasons behind the ideological profile of the party:

> I joined a center-right party, 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.

Rana had 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 and demonstrated strong non-conformity. Similarly, together with Said and Ahmed, she demonstrated the readiness to criticize political actors or decisions boldly, feeling comfortable and confident in the role of the critic of power, as opposed to being reticent or 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 of thinking, different sites and manners of engagement.

Moreover, Rana, Leyla and Shady all mentioned the Internet as serving them in their civil society engagement, helping them stay informed, and playing a part in their outlook on social and political issues. 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, experience with alternative on-line radio before the revolution showed to Leyla that the objective of free media in Egypt was attainable, which emboldened her to found the NGO for education of journalists that she was running. Shady described having used social media for highly successful campaigns against stigmatization of people with HIV/AIDS: "The thing that makes me happy is that I... still find people talking about it." Shady also said that 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 saw for a change in prevailing attitudes on these issues, he mentioned the importance of social media:

5 *Balady* or popular cafes are affordable ones on the sidewalks of busy streets in Cairo, recognizable by their emblematic plastic chairs. They stand in contrast to the commercial chains that support a different lifestyle and income group.

> 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 – I mean, express and declare their own identity [as gay]. But this would make more and more people 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.

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 have thus increased their political capital, and those who have not).

While the participants did not articulate a strong sense of generational consciousness, the youth's substantial, albeit gradual and interrupted move away from the political periphery to which they had historically been reduced (due to the ageist political culture and socioeconomic exclusion) should also be seen as shaping what it means to be young in Egypt today. Hence, research should ponder the question of the relationship between this development and youthfulness, and the extent to which this move should be factored in when considering youthfulness as the shared habitus of youth at a certain point in space and time (Bayat).

THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT

Despite mostly being disappointed with the outcomes of the revolution, the participants were still committed to enacting positive change in the 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, turned to activism in which she sought to help people improve their everyday lives through non-violence. Shady continued his engagement, although he was disappointed. Said preferred to be engaged in his NGO, which he saw as elitist, to working outside of the civil society sector.

For example, Ahmed started out as a professional journalist, out of the 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, and was actively considering his next move at the time of our meeting. Commitment and determination transpired from Ahmed's 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 was aware that her engagement as an anti-violence trainer working with public servants, teachers among them, had very limited impact. In spite of the tension between her wish to achieve wider change and the constraints, she was still committed to continue engagement:

> The system is corrupt, so a five-day camp isn't enough to change the system... If the teacher 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?... I'm still doing it, because I can't do anything not related to civil society or my field... 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.

CONCLUSION

This study uses the analytical tool of social generations to identify continuity and change in the circumstances that shape the experience of young Cairene and Alexandrian civil society workers of the post-revolutionary period (Woodman 2013). Importantly, generations are not presumed to be monolithic groups, as exhibited by the strongly diverging opinions of the participants throughout, including

on the outcome of the revolution as of the time of the interviews. In terms of continuity, class position continues to be a significant factor. Youth socioeconomic exclusion is not found to have played a role in the participants' support for the revolution or their civil society engagement. Rather than going against the arguments of Singerman (2013), Mulderig (2013) and others that the systemic socioeconomic exclusion of youth lies behind their support for the revolution, this article refines that argument in two ways. First, exclusion is not the universal fate of Egyptian youth, but one shaped by class position and spatial location, bearing in mind that the participants of this study come from two big urban centers in Egypt. Second, instead of reducing youth's involvement in the revolution to socioeconomic grievances, research should further investigate the multi-faceted and complex nature of this issue, its aspects that are specific to various social positions and locales, and, most importantly, should do so by "going to the source" (Herrera 2010) and talking to the youth themselves.

Furthermore, the aspects of change are twofold. The first one predates the revolution, and its impacts are still felt. In line with arguments of Herrera (2014) and Cole (2014), practices and capacities that these young people have developed over the recent years have significantly increased their socio-political capital: aptitude to organize horizontally, use the new information and communication technologies for activism, reason politically beyond the traditional ideological or societal divides, and have the courage and propensity to criticize and speak back to power. While the participants did not articulate a strong sense of generational consciousness, the youth's substantial, albeit gradual and interrupted move away from the political periphery to which they had historically been reduced (due to the ageist political culture and socioeconomic exclusion) should also be seen as shaping what it means to be young in Egypt today. Hence, research should ponder the question of the relationship between this development and youthfulness, and the extent to which this move should be factored in when considering youthfulness as the shared habitus of youth at a certain point in space and time (Bayat).

The second aspect of change was triggered when, in July 2013, the military took over the country and a new regime hostile to the civil society and political freedoms came to power. This change spurred the participants critical of the new government to re-examine their engagement, at the same time experiencing a strong sense of exclusion in a decidedly polarized society increasingly inimical towards critics of the government. As a consequence, those participants have discontinued their efforts to enact political change, investing their time and labor in civic activism instead. Frustration and disappointment have led some of them to seek new sites of engagement, while others have opted for toned-down, less visible forms of activism. However, they remain committed to their engagement and efforts to enact change within the constraints, which is one aspect of the agency they are exerting in the current circumstances.

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To Have a Country, to Have a Say: Using Visual Methods to Explore Young Palestinians' Lived Citizenship

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Youth in Palestine have been framed as disengaged from politics, in comparison with their spectacular activism during the two intifadas, and as unaccomplished citizens, as a result of their political circumstances. This article addresses a rethinking of the notion of citizenship, in the context of Palestinian youth, towards a more nuanced conceptualization. My investigation departs from a participatory photography exercise carried out in 2014, with a group of five young Palestinians living in the city of Nablus. Through the use of visual methods, which offer an alternative way of seeing their experiences, I discuss young people's ordinary practices and everyday encounters with the notion of citizenship and consider how a micro-sociological approach based on the concept of *lived citizenship* may allow us to move beyond passive/engaged and personal/political binaries, typical in citizenship studies.

Keywords:
citizenship; youth; lived experience; refugees; visual methods

Photo by Said, youth center in Balata Refugee Camp, September 2014 (disposable camera)

INTRODUCTION

I begin my first interview by asking Said the meaning of one of his photos, taken a week prior to our meeting in Balata, the West Bank's most populated refugee camp, situated in the outskirts of the city of Nablus. The image, showing two children touching hands, is dark and blurry, as a result of my decision to use disposable cameras in my project. Although this was perhaps not what he had in mind when he pressed the shutter, Said ponders for a while, and then explains:

> Shaking or touching hands is a sign of peace, and I would like to have peace in the world. It means a lot to me because it shows that those kids like and care about each other, despite being in a refugee camp, with all the violence and everything bad around them.

"When I say citizenship (*mwatana*) or citizen (*mwatin*), what comes to your mind?", I continue. "The Palestinian refugees who had to go out of their land and lost it… these became words with no meaning for them." Having grown up in a family of refugees originating from Jaffa, Said's unhesitant answer is a reflection of his life experience. His notion of citizenship is so colored by the ideas of absence and loss that my question triggers a negative definition.

Whether young people are aware of it or not – in the context of their experience as members of national, cultural or ethnic groups, institutions and organizations – they practice, conceptualize and reimagine citizenship. But is it possible to feel or act like a citizen when one is below voting age and does not inhabit a de jure state? What does citizenship mean to refugees and stateless people, including those with no memory of the moment of displacement or who consider themselves refugees in their own land? How do youth living in situations of protracted conflict and estrangement from political, social or economic rights look at citizenship? What new theoretical tools and empirical understandings are needed to deal with issues of youth citizenship, particularly in the Middle East?

In this article, I take on the notion of unaccomplished (Ibrahim 2013; Khalil 2007) Palestinian citizenship and proceed to offer a different view of how youth in Palestine today live as citizens, engage with society, and dream it outside of the adult gaze. Contesting the representation of today's youth in Palestine as "apathetic," "alienated" and essentially disengaged from politics (Christophersen et al. 2012; Høigilt et al. 2013; O'Sullivan 2011; Stewart 2011), I explore the possibility of understanding citizenship within the framework of everyday life. By doing so, I suggest reorienting citizenship towards a more subjective conceptualization, one wherein the context of an individual's life matters just as much as their legal or political status.

I have incorporated visual methods in my research to facilitate the discussion around the concept

of citizenship, whose meaning is both theoretically contested and culturally specific. Departing from snapshots of everyday life in the West Bank, taken by the participants in my study, I was able to engage more deeply in conversations about how they perceive themselves as citizens in terms of identity/belonging, rights/responsibilities and opportunities/obstacles to participate in society.

TRENDS IN LITERATURE ON YOUTH CITIZENSHIP

The academic fields of youth and citizenship have traditionally excluded each other. Since citizenship was a status reserved for adults, social research tended to view youth as a pathway to adulthood. The topic of youth citizenship was merely explored as a way to predict adult political behavior, and youth were, for the most part, ignored as competent agents before the legal age to engage in formal politics or become independent from their guardians (Beauvais et al. 2001; Tisdall and Punch 2012).

Most authors today (Coady 2008; Goździk-Ormel 2008; James and Prout 2005; Roche 1999), however, oppose this tendency to link youth citizenship exclusively to independence (a liberal concept associated with individualism). But still not much is known about how different groups of young people understand themselves as citizens (Jones and Gaventa 2002). One reason for this is that social research continues to uphold a limited definition of what it means to engage in society, and *the political* remains confined to very narrow acts such as participating in elections or uprisings, being involved in political parties, student movements or associations. This macro-social approach to the study of politics has led to a generalized image of contemporary youth as disaffected.[1]

Such an approach has also received criticism from authors who look at the process of doing politics from a different perspective, considering alternative ways to analyze the role of youth as citizens. Some studies conducted in Western countries (Cammaerts et al. 2014; Harris et al. 2010; Norris 2003) indicate that young people are in fact willing to engage politically, but are often disenchanted with mainstream political discourse and institutions, which they believe exclude them or ignore their needs. Thus, they are more likely to engage in cause-oriented politics, sometimes referred to as micro-politics. These studies suggest that, while the status of young citizens may be often precarious, there is a broad group of young people around the world who continue to be interested in social and political issues and to seek recognition from the political system in their daily lives. Young people's exercise of citizenship, therefore, cannot be encapsulated into a passive/engaged binary. This argument is supported by the work of authors on non-movements, micro-politics or the politics of everyday life (Bayat 2010; Gren 2009; Maira 2009; Maira 2013), to which I will return. First, I outline some of the main points raised in the literature on Arab youth. Then, I discuss the ways citizenship has been approached in academic literature in order to pave the way to the idea of *lived citizenship* that I adopt in this research. After a brief discussion of the use of photos as a methodological tool, I move to discuss the photos collected from my respondents and the insights I draw from them with regards to their lived citizenship.

YOUTH IN THE ARAB WORLD

As far as youth in the Arab World are concerned, they have traditionally been depicted as threats to regional/global stability, or as passive victims of their social and political circumstances – both external ones, such as military interventions; and those intrinsic to the functioning of Arab societies, such authoritarianism. Yet, again, very little is known about their own perceptions of citizenship.

According to Singerman (2011), youth in the region have been excluded from formal politics by authoritarianism, socially excluded by the stretching of adolescence, and economically excluded by high unemployment and insecure jobs. This combination of conditions provided a fertile environment for the mass protests that began in 2011 (Menezes et al. 2013). Undoubtedly, a striking aspect of the Arab uprisings was the role played by youth in organizing and sustaining the struggle – the same youth who had been described as uninterested and passive by the political and academic discourse of the previous decades.

So why did the literature prior to the uprisings fail to predict this leading role? The explanation lies, in part, with the aforementioned standard measures of political and civic engagement, also used in studies on young Middle Easterners. Indeed, activities such as voting or following current political trends on the news seem quite useless for estimating participation in societies with oppressive regimes, manipulated elections and state controlled media, such as Egypt under Mubarak (Youniss et al. 2013).

Some researchers, on the contrary, have argued that Arab youth prefer to participate without a long-term binding commitment and that their analysis of the public sphere does not necessarily use the same language or channels as adults, but that they are willing to do something for the common good (Mourad 2009). Much like in other parts of the world, youth in the Middle East seem to have their own under-

1 Many studies on marginalized groups – such as rural youth or Black, Latino and Asian youth in the United States (Godsay 2014; Sullivan 2014; Sullivan and Godsay 2014) – have applied such standard measurements in the attempt to address their disengagement, rarely eliciting personal experiences.

standing of power relations and ways in which they negotiate them in the different aspects of their lives (AUB-IF 2011; Maira 2013) – their engagement in the Arab uprisings is testimony to that.

In the case of Palestine, there are very few empirical studies touching upon citizenship as an everyday reality for young people. One exception is Brian Barber's research with young Gazans after the first intifada, which illuminates how the present and future of youth in Palestine are deeply affected by political dynamics (2002; 1999). An interesting finding of this study is the tension between the "ability to express intense defiance against one authority [Israel] while simultaneously maintaining allegiance, respect, and deference for other authorities," such as parents or organizational hierarchies (1999, 203). This and other tensions have been overlooked by academic and media coverage of youth in Palestine, which has mostly exposed the defiant and spectacular (but brief) moments of the intifadas.

CLASSIC CITIZENSHIP AND ITS CONTESTANTS

For much of human history, citizenship has provided the main criteria to distinguish between citizens and foreigners but it is, of course, a concept controlled by social norms that define certain persons as less than fully capable of bearing that status (Beauvais et al. 2001). In Ancient Greece, for instance, rights of citizenship applied exclusively to non-slave adult men, and only much later did the concept start to imply equality. The modern idea of citizenship is generally understood as encompassing three dimensions: legal, political and social. In *Citizenship and the Social Class*, Marshall (1950) conceives of citizenship essentially as a legal status, resulting from a series of rights established in succession – civil rights, necessary for the development of individual liberty; political rights, such as the right to elect and vote; and social rights, those that guarantee a decent life. Marshall's definition of the citizen as the bearer of rights and obligations, remains central to the modern discussion on citizenship.

The classic notion of citizenship as a clearly defined and recognized relationship between a state and a citizen, regulated by rights and enacted through formal political participation has encountered numerous critiques.[2] Within the field of transnationalism, for one, many authors (Khalil 2007; Mavroudi 2008; Sassen 2002; Soyal 2000) believe that new ways of being a citizen are being produced by the processes associated to globalization. Others, like Giorgio Agamben (1994), claim that the proliferation of different social experiences – such as migration, statelessness, *refugeehood* or multiple-citizenship – require abandoning citizenship as an analytical concept altogether, as it is no longer useful to describe the contemporary sociopolitical reality.

Feminist authors not only emphasized how private inequality affects access to resources and power in the public domain, they also challenged the view of the domestic and intimate spheres as inherently non-political – "the personal is political" (Cherubini 2011; Lister 2007a). Feminism and postcolonialism have often pointed out the exclusions that the concept of citizenship has produced, uncovering its seemingly equalitarian nature and explaining how different forms of exclusion intersect.[3] Linda Kerber (1997), for instance, introduces the metaphor of *braided citizenship* to discuss historical experiences of American citizenship, identifying strands which woven into three ropes (race, class and gender). In that way, she argues, it is possible to account for the narratives of individuals (e.g. women, African and Native-Americans, immigrants, etc.) whose lived experience and memory of accomplishing citizenship are inconsistent with those of other Americans.

Influenced by these different critiques, there has been a growing consideration of ordinary practices and routines through which subjects become claimants of rights and holders of responsibilities that has resulted in the inclusion of *habitus* – alongside *status*, the focus of classic theories – in studies of citizenship (Isin and Nielsen 2008).

TOWARDS THE IDEA OF LIVED CITIZENSHIP

To create my analytical toolkit, I drew on a stream of critical investigations focused on the everyday performance of citizenship by those who lack official standing to participate in the polity or claim citizenship rights, yet whose daily activities and interactive networks in the community allow them to negotiate or contest the mechanisms of their exclusion and claim recognition by the political system (Bayat 2010; Bosniak 2006; Harris et al. 2010; Lister 2007a; Lister 2007b). According to Isin and Nielsen, who first theorized citizenship in terms of acts, to investigate citizenship critically implies focusing on "those moments when, regardless of status and substance, subjects constitute themselves as citizens or […] as those to whom the right to have rights is due" (2008, 18). This idea of acts as constitutive of actors, is very important for the point I make in this

2 According to Holston and Appadurai (1996, 193), among the most vocal critics "are groups organized around specific identities – the kind of prior differences liberalism relegates to the private sphere – which affirm the importance of these identities in the public calculus of citizenship."

3 In addition, Roche (1999) notes, in unmasking traditional notions of citizenship, feminists/intersectionalists opened a space to transform it into a "child-friendly" concept. As with women, or people of color, the exclusion of children or youth from citizenship operates to the detriment of all.

article: that it is in fact by acting and performing on the stage of existence – by living – that one becomes a citizen.

The notion of lived citizenship, developed by Ruth Lister, is therefore a central reference here. According to Lister, a feminist theorist, lived citizenship refers to "the meanings that citizenship actually has in people's lives and the ways in which people's social and cultural backgrounds and material circumstances affect their lives as citizens" (Hall and Williamson quoted in Lister et al. 2007c, 167). Because it "is about how individuals understand and negotiate the three key elements of citizenship: rights and responsibilities; belonging; and participation" in everyday life (Lister et al. 2007c, 168), lived citizenship is explored through "a core of empirical works that analyze the experiences of citizenship of different categories of social actors in different contexts" (Cherubini 2011, 115). This framework has predominantly been used in studies on immigrants (Kim 2012; Nyhagen 2015; Vera-Larrucea 2013), although it seems to hold potential for analyzing experiences of other groups (Rubin et al. 2014). For Cherubini, who uses this approach to look into the experiences of migrant women in Andalusia, lived citizenship is useful because it pays attention to "citizens' understandings of the meanings of citizenship and subjective representations of their position" within the community, while also broadening the analysis to aspects of everyday life that are usually absent from mainstream conceptions of citizenship, as they are considered to be part of the private and not the public sphere (Cherubini 2011, 116–117).

Asef Bayat's *Life as Politics* (2010) also prompts us to consider the "politics of practice" as a powerful engine of social change in the Middle East, often overlooked due to a tendency to focus on the "politics of protest." Although Bayat engages specifically with social movement theory, his general argument that common daily practices matter is useful to investigate the concept of citizenship because it opens up new possibilities to explore unnoticed social activities and bypass rigid dichotomies of "active/passive" and "personal/political." For Bayat, youth is a group often engaged in acts of defiance towards established norms by sticking to ordinary practices of everyday life. In his analysis of young people in post-revolutionary Iran, he explains how a "non-movement" to reclaim youth habitus was forged – "in being treated as full citizens, in what to wear, what to listen to, and how to appear in public" (Ibid., 18). For Bayat, (re-) claiming youthfulness (the social habitus associated with being young) is the core characteristic of youth mobilization. The fact that youth engagement is often mistakenly conflated with student movements or youth branches of political parties, attests to the need to look more attentively at the ordinary practices of young people as imbued with social and political value – or better, as constitutive of young citizens.

It is also useful to reorient the study of citizenship towards Judith Butler's (2014) concept of vulnerability as constitutive of (rather than opposed to) political agency and push for its understanding as everyday practice. Departing from a reflection on gender performativity, she argues that humans are inevitably exposed to vulnerability and affected by discourses they never chose. Yet, those discourses and vulnerabilities are precisely what informs daily practices of resistance. This perspective – a different approach to Agamben's that human life is sometimes entirely negated by power[4] – allows us to rethink the position of refugees and other aliens in relation to citizenship. If what "remains unrealized by the universal constitutes it essentially" (Butler quoted in Bosniak 2006), then one cannot study citizenship without considering the exclusions and multiple actors it produces (citizens, denizens and all those in between).

EMPLOYING PHOTOGRAPHY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Increasingly accepted as a subjective and reflexive form of qualitative data production, visual methods are considered adequate in studies aimed at enhancing the understanding of events, identities and selves (Konoblauch et al. 2008; McIntosh 2010) with groups that have little opportunity to articulate, justify or assert their interests (Bergold and Thomas 2012). Images record spatial and social relationships, capturing unidentified needs and greater levels of detail about emotional meanings than verbal data (Loeffler in Genoa and Dupuis 2013). They also encourage and facilitate communication between researcher and participant – namely storytelling around research topics – contributing to challenge dominant views or stereotypes, sparking critical-thinking, and providing insight into the perspectives of those who are suffering or have been silenced (Genoa and Dupuis 2013).

I chose to incorporate visual methods in my research design as I believed the study group would benefit from this more collaborative form of exploring personal experiences. I was, to some extent, inspired by *photovoice*, a method which incorporates different theoretical and methodological approaches, such as feminism, critical pedagogy[5] and social doc-

4 Agamben (1994) claims that the concept of citizen is no longer adequate to describe the contemporary sociopolitical reality and even objects to conceptualizing "the refugee" in terms of citizenship. Rather, it should be considered for what it is, as a border concept that challenges the very principles of the nation-state.

5 The work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, considered one of the main founders of critical pedagogy, provided an important inspiration to this method, namely through his development of the notion of *critical consciousness* (Freire

umentary photography. Photovoice has been defined and applied in different ways since it was first used by Wang and Burris (1994).[6] My study draws on a number of applications of the method (Carlson et al. 2006; Wang et al. 1996), albeit with substantial adaptations.

My study relied on fieldwork conducted between August and November 2014, with five adolescents living either in Balata refugee camp or in its vicinity. According to UNRWA (2016), the West Bank is home to around 775 000 registered refugees, a quarter of whom live in 19 camps. Some camps, as is the case of Balata, are located next to major towns, and the lines between camp and city are sometimes porous. Initially built to host approximately 5 000 refugees, Balata is today's largest West Bank camp, serving 27 000 people. With nearly 60 percent of its population under 25 years of age, youth are especially affected by the challenges facing camp residents, such as overcrowding, poor infrastructure, insecurity and high unemployment. Nevertheless, Balata is known for its strong civil society, visible in the number of active community organizations, including youth clubs.

The chance to volunteer with one of the civil society organizations present in the camp (a local branch of an international non-governmental organization (NGO)) provided me with a good opportunity to meet young people and develop a participatory photography project. The project involved two male and three female participants, aged between 15 and 16 years old. This was considered an optimal size for the group given that the intention was to explore the research questions rather than offer any conclusive or generalizing evidence on the topic. Mohamed, Said, Farrah, Yasmin and Noor (pseudonyms) had been active members of the organization for approximately three years. They had attended a photography workshop organized by an international intern before my arrival and were familiar with photographic techniques. All participants identified as refugees, except for Mohamed. Three of them resided in Balata. Said regularly joined the group from Askar camp, where he lives with his family, and Mohamed from the city of Nablus proper.

The process of data collection consisted of two main instruments, a photography exercise and a set of individual interviews. After a briefing meeting, participants were asked to photograph their surroundings while taking notes in a notebook. They were given basic guidelines, such as: "Photograph a place that is meaningful to you and explain why," and "photograph something you would like to change where you live." While maintaining the space for creativity, it was also important to ensure that the photos would trigger discussion around the research topic. The photos and respective notes taken inspired the design of the individual semi-structured interviews. Asking the youth to take pictures gave me access to sensitive topics (e.g. death, forced displacement, discrimination) that would otherwise have been more difficult to approach.

During the course of my research I struggled to be perceived as a non-authoritative figure. Therefore, obtaining open-ended responses or informal interactions (as opposed to traditional classroom instruction) was sometimes challenging. The implications of my European background on research with Palestinian youth were difficult to avoid, including the potential of me holding preconceived ideas about how Palestinians/refugees live their lives, but I tried nonetheless to reflect on the possible impact they had on my research. One example of bias that emerged throughout the research process relates to the use of disposable cameras. Besides practical and methodological justifications,[7] I considered that providing a group of young people in a refugee camp with digital cameras could generate feelings of exceptionality. However, disposable cameras turned out to be a foreign reality for youth growing up in a digital age (Mohamed decided not to use the camera at all and took pictures with his cellular phone instead). As a result of my choice, participants may have felt limited in their possibilities to take *good pictures* or embarrassed to use an old-fashioned system when most of them and their peers have phones with incorporated cameras. These shortcomings notwithstanding, the research yielded significant insights on the ways Palestinian youth enact and live citizenship, which I now turn to.

DAILY REMINDERS OF OCCUPATION AND STATELESSNESS

The photography exercise elicited several references to mundane elements of everyday life and socialization in and out of the refugee camps. These elements showed that the youth have a number of concerns about their community and that they place themselves both as subjects entitled to rights and as holders of responsibilities.

1972). It may be understood as the process by which those who are under oppressive circumstances can learn to analyze the forces causing those circumstances and eventually resist/change them, becoming more fully human.

6 Which was labeled *photonovella* in a participatory health promotion project with women in rural China.

7 The logic behind the use of disposable cameras was twofold. First, my limited financial resources made it impossible to provide participants with digital cameras. Second, unlike digital photography, the analog process requires more concentration and attention to detail on the part of the photographer. The limit of 27 shots per camera also implied that careful choices had to be made regarding what to photograph. These characteristics seemed suitable to the reflexive aims of this research.

Concerns over the environment and the multiple physical barriers they face, are pervasive in the photos. All participants took pictures of garbage and open dumpsters, criticized poor urban planning and social infrastructure, and complained about overcrowding, house degradation and lack of public services. One photo taken from Noor's window portrays a child playing with trash: "I think that playing in such conditions is not fair and it kills their [children's] dreams."

When asked about who they thought was responsible for the problems identified in the photos,

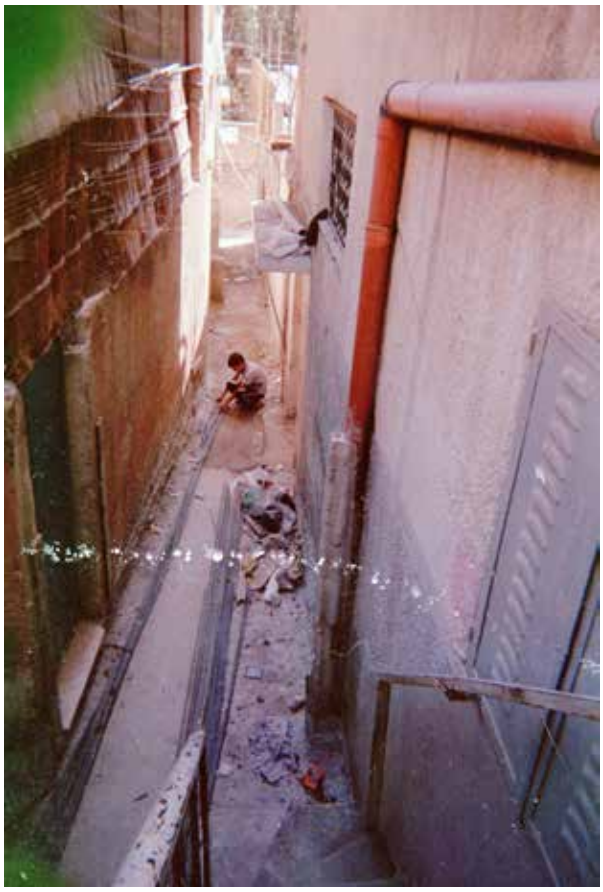

Photo by Noor, Balata Refugee Camp, September 2014 (disposable camera)

they recognized the importance of individual initiative and suggested volunteering to clean the camp, but their most immediate reaction was to point to some source of authority, such as the municipality or the Palestinian/Israeli governments. Said, in particular, named Israel's occupation as a factor causing the deterioration of living conditions in Palestine, especially in the camps:

> The responsible for these problems is the one who made us go out of our land and sent us here [to the camp]. […] because of the occupation the land is divided into A, B and C areas, so we can't expand for example to B area and we can't go to C area without a permit, so A is a very crowded area. Everyone is building over each other. How could I solve this problem? To have a country… not to have an occupation… so I can build anywhere I want, with a permit from my own government.

The physical environment appears as a totalizing

Photos by Said, open dumpsters near Askar Refugee Camp, September 2014 (disposable camera).

reality, and the concept of dignity emerges from the accounts of participants, with frequent references to their living conditions as less than fully human: "This is not a life... this place is not good even for animals" (Said). The degradation portrayed is, above all, symbolic of the degradation of life for Palestinians – a constant reminder of the circumstance of being under occupation and of the lack of administrative power to solve one's problems as a community. Unsurprisingly, the youth agreed that ending the occupation was the most important action to be taken to fix the social problems elicited in the photos.

Barriers to movement and the inability to travel abroad or go to other places within Israel/Palestine (especially Jerusalem), were also seen by participants as severe limitations, with an impact on citizenship. Yasmin explained the feeling of humiliation whenever she applied for a travel permit to enter or exit the West Bank: "I hate to ask for a permit to enter my homeland because every time I carry it in my hand I feel despair." Mohamed, who photographed the wall, described it as "separating us from our country, our civilization and our relatives." During the course of my fieldwork, he had the chance to visit Jerusalem for the first time in his life, although for unfortunate reasons: "If my father wasn't ill, I

Left: Photo by Yasmin, garbage and bad smell on the way to school, September 2014 (disposable camera)

Right: Photo by Farrah, poor infrastructure in the refugee camp, September 2014 (disposable camera)

couldn't go... it's very hard to visit Jerusalem unless somebody is ill and needs to go to the hospital there." When he returned to Nablus I asked him about his experience:

> Jerusalem is the most beautiful thing I have ever seen. My dad had told me: "you will be amazed," and I really was. However, they [the Israelis] stopped me and told me I had a fake permit. But I did not! But they insisted that my permit was fake... Then they made a phone call and said that there was a problem with the computers, and finally allowed me to go in.

As Kerber wrote, "the basic international distinction [between citizens] remains the experience of ease or anxiety at a checkpoint" (1997, 853) and for young people in the occupied West Bank, this is a fundamental experience in their everyday encounters with the notion of citizenship.

Even if the youth were not old enough to remember the more chaotic periods of Palestine's history, their lingering consequences could not be more vivid. Noor, as the rest of the group, connected the photos of graves to the national resistance movement: "Living in a cemetery must be hard... but the worst is to be a soul without a body," alluding to the sense of destitution that often characterizes the Palestinian experience. Yasmin shared the sense of loss echoed by Noor: "The main thing for me is the right to live safely." Thus, the experience of death, the awareness of vulnerability, and the idea that, for a large part of the world, Palestinians are considered unworthy of all things human, appear as profound marks in these teenagers' lives and are at the core of their claims for rights.

Moreover, the fear experienced by the youth due to the frequent army incursions in the refugee camps and sometimes in Nablus, was presented as an inhibitor of free expression, action towards social change and political participation: "If I want to express my feelings about the political situation they [the Israelis] could shoot me or kill me or arrest me, so I can't express my opinion" (Mohamed). Said's words went in the same direction:

> It's hard to take decisions because of the psychological aspects that affect us. [...] For example, when someone doesn't have war, killings, occupation and the army, you can say anything you want and take decisions freely without any pressure from anyone else. But when you have all of these bad things happening around you because of the occupation, for sure you will speak in fear.

Left: Photo by Farrah, cemetery in Nablus, September 2014 (disposable camera)

Right: Photo by Said, cemetery in Nablus, September 2014 (disposable camera)

SYMBOLS OF GROUP IDENTITY AND ATTACHMENT TO THE HOMELAND

The reference to national symbols, to coping mechanisms and to the importance of maintaining hope for a better future, was common in all my interviews. "[The flag of Palestine] is raised in the center of the camp, proving our identity as Arab and Palestinian, as we wish it to rise in victory and freedom," Mohamed explains when commenting on one of his photos. The flag is viewed as an important symbol of belonging to the Palestinian, Arab and Muslim community. It seems to bring strength to the group, much like olive trees, the iconic reference to Palestinian rootedness in the homeland. Olive trees function as a reminder for youth of their people's past, as a source of optimism to live the present, but most of all as a legacy they are meant to carry on. Said's written notes provided an emotive explanation of the reasons behind having photographed olive trees:

> One day I went with my father to visit his friend and I took some pictures of his beautiful land. He said that he waters it and takes care of it because we are Palestinian and we cannot forget our lands. [This] gave me motivation not to be pessimistic about the future, no matter what happens in Palestine, because we will get our rights back one day. I believe that my land is the most beautiful I have ever seen.

Photo by Said, olive tree fields in Nablus, September 2014 (disposable camera)

Similarly, Noor's words reflect the Palestinian ideological theme of *sumud* (steadfast perseverance):

> Every time I look from my roof I feel hope for tomorrow. Despite being out of our country, despite the uprooting of trees, and despite our emigration, we will not lose hope. Everywhere we will plant our symbol – the olive tree.

Social cohesion and a collective identity marked by resistance were present in the youth's descriptions of their lives and the ways in which they cope with the political circumstances. Religion contributes to this cohesion in important ways. All participants admitted to find in Islam a source of inner strength and thanked God for helping them overcome the hardships. Yasmin's notes, for example, provided the necessary data where the camera failed to deliver: "A photo of a rosary and a bracelet – I love to connect religion with Palestine. They are my life."

This strong cohesion seems to facilitate community problem-solving and participation in social networks of support to other Palestinians. For example, when Yasmin referred to the room in her house where guests stay "when something bad happens," or when the youth took part in a campaign to raise funds for the victims of the war in Gaza, collecting money from neighbors inside the camp, we are in the presence of practices that cannot be decoupled from citizenship because they constitute a defiance of the very circumstances by which these people find themselves excluded from formal citizenship.

Photo by Noor, view of her house in Balata, which gives her "hope for a better future", September 2014 (disposable camera)

DIFFERENCES AND INTERSECTIONS IN ACCESS TO CITIZENSHIP

The youth were aware not only of the existing inequalities in terms of rights and opportunities to access citizenship vis-à-vis the occupying power, but also between different groups within Palestinian society, as explained by the braided citizenship metaphor. Refugees and women, particularly, were referred to as groups with substantial challenges in access to rights and participation in collective decision-making.

There was a sense of *otherness* to the accounts of participants regarding the experience of historical displacement and relocation in West Bank refugee camps (only Mohamed's family is originally from Nablus). For Said, the Palestinian refugee population is equated with exclusion, invisibility and non-citizenship (for him, the refugee is the ultimate non-citizen). Yasmin talked about refugeehood as the circumstance of having incomplete or limited rights and being oppressed: "I feel sorry that I am a

refugee and can't exercise all of my rights or be free like I am supposed to be."

Marginalization of refugees was said to begin at the camp, where the shortage of public services, the inadequate social infrastructure and the lack of job opportunities stand in contrast with the reality of city life. Discrimination was also strongly felt at school, and reflected in differentiated treatment of students: "I hate school because of the racism that distinguishes between the students of the camp and the students of the city," Yasmin complained, clarifying that this discrimination exists because most teachers in her school are from the city while the students come from the refugee camps.

Photo by Yasmin, school for girls in Nablus, September 2014 (disposable camera)

My interviews also revealed a certain awareness of gender inequality within the community. The girls' interventions tended to be focused on particular episodes of harassment in daily life: "Young males keep following us while we are coming back home from school and keep bothering us" (Yasmin). One of the boys, Said, elaborated further on gender relations in Palestine, pointing to the slimmer opportunities of young women to participate in society when compared to those of young men:

> In our society most decisions are made by men. Why? Because most girls do not go out of their houses and the parents don't let them go out freely anytime they want. For example, if a girl is one hour late they will ask her a hundred questions. On the other hand, the boys, if they stay outside of the house until late, their father will say nothing. It's like the father encourages his son to do whatever he wants. […] Women, if they had better chances, they could do more and change more in society. The parents play a big role in this. […] But now things are slowly changing, I think, because of technology.

All youth believed that customs and traditions worked against some of the things they wanted to do as young people (namely traveling abroad or inside Palestine), adding to the restrictions imposed by the occupation. However, they also seemed to think that a young person's opportunity to influence decisions in society depends more on personal ability: "Yes, everyone has power, it depends on how each person uses his power and attitude." Thus, with the exception of Said, instead of gender relations and patriarchal norms, participants referred to the occupation as the greatest hindrance to the full participation of young people in society, which reflects the complex and interwoven effects of patriarchy and occupation, two important power systems shaping the Palestinian context.

BETWEEN CONTESTATION AND CONTRADICTION

During the interviews some participants suggested that adult-youth relations in Palestine do not provide the necessary room for young people's real engagement in community affairs and decision-making. Said, for instance, complained that his society thinks about young people "in a wrong way." Mohamed agreed: "It's hard because I can't express my feelings freely... they always say you are too young. […] Adults keep telling us: 'you are young, you don't know what you are doing.'" For him, this comes with an important contradiction: "Most of the society are youth so we should have a say in decisions."

All participants admitted that customs and traditions are often used to limit their autonomy. "I want to decide by myself what I want to be in the future and what will be my field of studies... to have that decision" (Said). As mentioned before, Said finds gender relations especially hard to approach: "Something we cannot talk about in our society is dealing with the other gender. For example, if you talk to a girl who is older than you, everybody will believe you are in love with her."

However, participants' accounts were also imbued with the idea that participation should somehow depend on maturity or even academic merit, reflecting both the adult-centered political paradigm they inhabit and the importance played by education in the Palestinian imaginary. When asked about whether she thought young people could contribute to improve society, Yasmin asked: "Unfortunately most [youth] are losers who don't care much about education. If they don't care about their studies how could they care about society's problems?" Farrah talked about participation as a personal choice: "Maybe more at an older age and if we have self-confidence and have it as goal in our life."

The context of external occupation and constant insecurity is perceived as contributing indirectly to strengthen certain authoritative traits within an already conservative society. Looking at a photo of children leaving school, Noor commented: "They are glad and they run to their homes as if they were being freed from a prison where they have been imprisoned for a long time." On more than one occasion,

participants talked about school as a less than ideal space for youth participation and the verticality of teacher-student relations in the Palestinian education system surfaced as an aspect that reduces young people's influence in matters of concern to them.

> The [school] principle deals with us as a dictator. He says that the teachers are always right but not the students. They think it's always the students' fault. They shout at us, so it's hard to do something, but maybe we can collect the students, the good ones, and make a sheet, sign it and send it to the Ministry of Education (Mohamed).

Photo by Noor, children leaving school, September 2014 (disposable camera)

When asked about their opinion on Palestinian politicians, the youth complained about the lack of participatory mechanisms, except occasionally, during elections: "Most of them just care about their own benefits... just want to keep their chair and do not care about the people" (Said); "They are not interested once they have everything they want" (Mohamed). The youth perceived themselves as especially estranged from decisions concerning the peace process. "A lot of the things they do I don't agree with, like the negotiations," Mohamed declared. But while some clearly exposed the democratic deficit within Palestinian institutions and shared the wish to live in a society free from corruption, others seemed more accommodated with an internal political environment that they largely associate with the effects of the occupation.

Nearly all participants seemed to struggle with finding a balance between their own perceptions of youth and the ones imposed on them by society. The contradictions within their accounts reveal both a desire to break away from a patronizing view of young people and an acceptance of that view. Said, for example, who argued that most youth are not in a suitable age to make a decision (referring to the electoral age) and that they "do not have rational thinking," at a different moment during the interview also noted how "society itself does not build a generation that can make decisions."

The youth in my study find themselves in a paradox. While they are confronted with an external authority that is considered illegitimate (and which in a way reinforces a conservative mentality in Palestinian society), their national/local institutions and leaders also fail to represent their interests and question their ability to contribute in the public arena. Thus, criticizing the *powers within* seems necessary to realize some personal aspirations but often counterproductive to their struggle against the *powers without*.

The circumstance of being below voting age seems to weigh on participants' accounts of their experience as young citizens, revealing a tendency to regard participation in society as more effective when it occurs through formal political channels. Accordingly, the youth never spontaneously referred to their activity as members of a non-governmental organization or to other forms of civic engagement (for example, having mobilized to collect donations for the victims of the war in Gaza) when asked about ways in which a young person can contribute to changing or improving society.

When directly asked about what it meant to them to be active in a youth organization, though, they proceeded to explain the motivations and outcomes of their engagement in youth work. For all of them, being part of a group and having the space to discuss ideas, improve skills and seek support for personal problems, is seen as providing unique chances to impact their community. They admitted that belonging to the organization increases their interest in society and forces them to question situations or behaviors that they would otherwise not consider. Participants also emphasized the importance of setting an example, taking initiative or raising awareness for social issues.

Moreover, they see new media (including social media) as facilitating the processes of informal participation in public affairs. The Internet is seen as a channel for expressing one's ideas anonymously and exchanging points of view without much social control, as well as a way to circumvent spatial limitations: "I can say that the Internet creates a different personality for me, which is stronger than reality. For example, I could say anything on Facebook without being scared that others will beat me," Mohamed explained. He also considered the Internet a more reliable source of information on topics of concern: "What I saw on TV about Gaza didn't have much effect on me, unlike what I was seeing on the Internet, which changed most of my opinions."

Thus, aside from the multitude of counterproductive conditions to the exercise of citizenship, the youth are able to envision ways of influencing decision-making and community change outside of the realm of electoral politics. Their narratives include accounts of their participation in social networks of support to other Palestinians and of attempts to

address authorities, even if these are not articulated in the language of citizenship – like when the youth mobilized to collect money inside the refugee camp to help the victims of the war in Gaza. It seems, therefore, that their actual staging of citizenship is a lot more nuanced and complex than what their vocabulary suggests.

EXPERIENCING AND NEGOTIATING CITIZENSHIP IN EVERYDAY LIFE

The youth's photographs and narratives indicated that their lives are touched by *the political* in deeply personal ways. Much like what Barber found in his study on youth from Gaza, for youth in my study all ordinary aspects of life carry political connotations (going to school, traveling, praying, receiving guests, etc.). Indeed, the collective realization of the imagined political community seems nearly inseparable from the realization of individual/personal dreams or ambitions. *The local*, *the national* and *the international* are all interwoven in the youth's accounts, shaping their worldviews and understandings of citizenship.

Young people in Palestine are forced to negotiate their expectations for society and for their own lives within the limited possibilities of a citizenship status that is, in classic terms, unaccomplished. Because the lack of a sovereign state, the circumstance of being refugees, their youthfulness, the local, national and international power dynamics, and a number of additional challenges exclude them from classical frameworks of citizenship, an alternative understanding was suggested.

The notion of lived citizenship was proposed in order to account for both the substantive aspects and the subjective meanings that citizenship has in these young people's lives. Influenced by several critiques, this notion highlights that private issues and everyday experiences may be relevant to understand how people evaluate their citizenship and make a meaning for themselves, regardless of their legal status. Intersectionality is also relevant for my analysis of the lived citizenship of these young people as it sheds light on how they position themselves within the gendered, racialized and classed structure of citizenship in the occupied West Bank.

In order to provide an interpretative characterization of the lived citizenship of youth in Nablus, I have organized this section around a pattern of tensions that illustrate their rich and often paradoxical experiences. In doing this, my point is not only to represent their voices but also to dwell on the ambiguities within these voices.

The first tension is the one between de-territorialized citizenship and the need for a sovereign state. With the exception of Mohamed, the identity of participants is profoundly shaped by the experience of displacement and refuge. The findings show that, for participants, the status of citizen is ideally connected to territorial sovereignty and that chances to exercise citizenship depend largely on having their own country. This is noticeable in several references to independence, freedom and the administrative powers of a sovereign state: "until we get it [our flag] back to its origin, our country," or "to be able to build with a permit from my own government." Paradoxically, it is precisely in the circumstance of being stateless that their claims to rights are grounded and it is in the refugee camp that they find their main locus of political agency and resistance. If, according to the nation-state model of citizenship, the refugee is the antithesis of the citizen, from a lived citizenship perspective, the vulnerability implied in the experiences of statelessness and refugeehood is crucial to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of how these individuals live as citizens.

It may be useful here to reflect upon Butler's point on vulnerability as a constitutive element of agency. For Butler, if one is to conceive of agency/resistance beyond the terms of state sovereignty, it is important to consider the ways in which vulnerability enters into agency and contributes to the embodiment of resistance – in fact becoming part of the very practice of resistance. I am inclined to agree with Butler when she criticizes Agamben's idea that all the vulnerable have left is to reclaim *bare life* as a way of doing politics. Such a drastic idea underestimates the role of vulnerability in the formation of agency and fails to recognize certain moments of resistance as enactments of citizenship (even if incipient). For the youth in my study, their claims to rights (namely the right to live safely) and their acts of resistance against the military occupation appear precisely "as a social and political form that is informed by vulnerability" (2014, 17). In other words, as Isin and Nielsen (2008) argue, by constituting themselves as subjects to whom the right to have rights is due, the youth in my study act as citizens.

The second is the tension between their disenchantment with the Palestinian political system and the inescapability of formal politics. On the one hand, the youth recognize the Palestinian Authority's institutions and the government as sources of authority, and indeed expect them to act as such, managing certain basic aspects of their lives. On the other hand, they are overwhelmingly conscious of being under occupation, deprived of a sovereign state and with limited chances of actually influencing collective decisions. Even if the youth claim that their government does not cater to their interests, they primarily see themselves as citizens under siege, and thus questioning *oppression within* could be detrimental to the national struggle. Moreover, despite their criticism of Palestinian leaders and institutions, they seem to consider electoral politics as the most relevant form of staging citizenship, not necessarily articulating their active membership in a youth organization or other kinds of engagement (such as

individual/collective initiatives for community problem-solving or Internet use for political purposes) in the language of citizenship.

Finally, there is a tension between an adult-centered perspective of citizenship and youth claims for inclusion and participation. On the one hand, the group believes that youth are the basis of Palestinian society and a category of people who should have a stronger say in public decisions, which is in a way contrary to social norms in Palestine. But on the other hand, they also point out young people's immaturity, dysfunctionality or natural tendency to bring trouble rather than input as valid explanations for their exclusion from the political arena. Thus, participation is mentioned ambiguously, either as a right that should be claimed here and now, even if it challenges social and cultural conventions, or as something that can be done later in the future or which implies certain competences. For instance, participants often equate participation with merit in other areas of life and the idea that a bad student probably does not make a good citizen, surfaces from some interviews.

None of the participants seemed to have fully resolved the dilemma between social constructions of youth and their own aspirations. It is perhaps relevant to think about Bayat's discussion on youthfulness in the context of this tension. In Bayat's perspective, unless youth claim their right to be and act as young people, placing that right "at the heart of their conflict with moral and political authority" (2010, 120) in order to assert themselves as citizens, they may remain as conservative as other social groups. In Palestine, where moral and political authority but also the context of external occupation creates several barriers to young people's exercise of citizenship, (re-) claiming youthfulness and demanding the acknowledgment of that condition in the public arena could be a way to fight calcified structures of power, both within and without. On the contrary, if their youth claims remain accommodated under the prevailing norms, young people will not be able to act as democratizing agents in their society.

My analysis shows that, although the experiences of young people in Nablus do not fit classic frameworks of citizenship, the repertoires of citizenship of my participants are in many senses dominated by those frameworks. The last two tensions, in particular, are in line with what Barber found out about youth in Gaza: "their attitudes simultaneously reflect defiance (to 'illegitimate' authority) and deference (to 'legitimate' authority)" (1999, 189).

Illegitimate authority is represented primarily by Israel (or sometimes the international community at large) and legitimate authority is represented by organizational or social hierarchies within Palestinian society (e.g. parents, the government, teachers or older people in general).

CONCLUSION

In this article I have showed that it is possible, and indeed necessary, to problematize the perceptions and experiences of citizenship of individuals who are not (or not yet) citizens in classic terms, such as the young Palestinians who participated in my study. The use of photography and other visual techniques in qualitative research has opened opportunities for conducting investigations about young people (and together with them) that resemble youth ways of knowing and looking at social reality. Less exploitative research environments can contribute positively to research on youth, particularly in the Middle East, and visual methods can definitely be part of this effort to further involve research subjects in knowledge production about their lives and experiences.

In my analysis, I identified and discussed a number of tensions that surfaced from participants' accounts and which they struggled to accommodate: the tension between the need for a sovereign state and de-territorialized citizenship; the tension between their distrust in the political leadership and the inescapability of formal politics; and the tension between an adult-centered perspective on citizenship and their claims for youth inclusion. I believe these tensions reveal something important about how young people in Palestine relate to the notion of citizenship: that although their lived experiences certainly do not fit classic models of citizenship, they often articulate them according to such models.

Although my findings tended to emphasize aspects that influence the youth's exercise of citizenship negatively, participants mentioned various examples of their substantive enactment of citizenship in everyday life and referred to certain spaces where they could more openly voice/reflect upon their opinions or mobilize to address social concerns. The Internet and social media, importantly, are viewed as channels that facilitate engagement and provide opportunities to challenge the status quo – by allowing the youth to communicate across distance, by giving them a sense of agency, or by encouraging them to question mainstream political/media discourse. And even if most of my participants' daily experiences did not amount to the institutional practices we have come to identify with formal citizenship, these experiences still constitute powerful ways to circumvent the current political situation and to secure membership within the imagined community.

Finally, the achievement of a sovereign state is of course considered the ultimate solution for the problems identified by the participants in my study, and also a crucial condition for young people to gain more influence in collective decisions. The fear, insecurity and multiple restrictions resulting from the occupation prevent youth from expressing their opinions or taking a more active role in the making

of social change. Importantly, the condition of being under occupation places young people (and the whole society) at an allegiance crossroads wherein criticizing one's own government, community, social and cultural norms, looks very much like a path of betrayal.

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Unruly Boys and Obedient Girls: Gender and Education in UNRWA Schools in the West Bank

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Almost 70 years after the Palestinian displacement, many Palestinian refugee youth in the Middle East are still in schools run by a UN agency, the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). As other educational systems, UNRWA schools are not gender neutral. In the West Bank refugee camps where this study was conducted, girls were often more engaged in their schooling and achieved better than boys. Building on qualitative interviews and observations in schools and in families, this article investigates such gendered engagements in school. The main argument is that different cultural expectations on boys and girls and different imaginations of their futures (which are related to the present economic and political context) make boys and girls engage differently in their schooling. Because of a dire economic situation, women's wage labor is increasingly valued and therefor also higher education for women. At the same time, the crisis adds to ambivalences to male youth who traditionally has been actively engaged in resistance activities. With policy changes in UNRWA that aims to keep politics out of school, boys find school increasingly pointless. Their local social networks are, on the other hand, very valuable as to get employed. Despite the stalemate in the occupied territories, Palestinian gender relations are changing.

Keywords:
Palestinian refugees; gender; education; West Bank; resistance; social mobility; wage labor

INTRODUCTION

This article discusses how understandings of gender, in combination with a particular local political and economic context, influence the engagement of Palestinian refugee girls and boys in their schooling. It builds primarily on an ethnographic fieldwork carried out in 2012 among ninth graders in schools run by UNRWA (The United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) in Palestinian refugee camps in the West Bank. In UNRWA schools, gender is significant in several ways. First of all, schools are gender-segregated; both students and teachers work almost exclusively with people of their own sex. In addition, although literacy rates for both men and women are high, boys' academic achievements are in general lower than those of girls of the same age.[1] The dropout rates among males are higher than among females in general in Palestinian schools.[2] Young women attend higher education in increasing numbers and now outnumber male students (PCBS 2015, 31).[3] Female Palestinian refugees, thus, seem more engaged in and committed to their education than their male counterparts. Such gendered trends within education are not unique to the Palestinian case (see for example Fuller 2016; Mjaaland 2016). However, in the occupied Palestinian territories such development is perhaps more surprising than in other contexts since so much societal emphasis is put on education. Getting educated, as I show in this article, is often seen as a patriotic duty, especially among Palestinian camp refugees.

In this article, I discuss how different gendered engagements in school are related to dynamic notions and ideals of boyhood and girlhood, as well as of masculinity and femininity more generally, and also to the present economic and political stalemate in the Palestinian territories. My main argument is that different cultural expectations on boys and girls and different imaginations of their futures (which are related to the present economic and political context) make boys and girls engage differently in their schooling. These expectations and imaginations are also connected to the youth's engagement in places other than school, namely in their homes and in the local neighborhood. Moreover, I show that social change is produced both by a dire economic situation with high unemployment and a change of policy within UNRWA schools that aims to keep politics out of refugee schooling. This tends to create ambivalence towards the role of male youth in their communities but also new opportunities for females. Palestinian boyhood has long held connotations of male bravery and political resistance to Israeli occupation. As I will explain further, as UNRWA education becomes de-politicized, many boys also find school less interesting. Girls, on the other hand, are eager to do well in school and to continue to higher education as it is a means for social mobility for them more than for boys. Women's wage labor is increasingly needed and valued in Palestinian society, but females have rather few options since especially many manual jobs are not considered appropriate for women. I will first contextualize my findings by describing UNRWA schooling and its relation to Palestinian refugees. Then, I go on to explain the methodological considerations I followed during my fieldwork and give a brief overview of what has been written on gender and Palestinian refugee youth. Thereafter I present my findings in four different sections: naturalization of gender behavior; youth's engagement in different places; imagining a future as professional women, and taming Palestinian refugee boys through UN schooling. Finally, I provide a short conclusion to summarize and clarify my arguments.

PALESTINIAN CAMP REFUGEES AND UN SCHOOLING

> Education is very important for all Palestinians, and especially for refugees. Economically we are poor, we don't have [other] resources. We don't have any land to work on and no businesses. Without work, we can't feed our families. Both in a psychological and social way people have lost a lot, but education gives back self-confidence. Before, refugees had very low status […]. Today, there are refugees both in the Palestinian parliament and in the government. The mufti [a Muslim religious leader] in Bethlehem is a refugee. The [Palestinian] minister of education is a refugee. (Abu Layth, male teacher in a boys' school)

1 For instance, the test scores in all subjects in the high-school final exam (*tawjihi*) show that 78 percent of the girls pass while only 68 percent of the boys who take the exam pass (Brück et al. 2014, 9). In the same exam, girls' average test score is 672, while boys' average is 602 (Ibid.). The authors' calculations are based on the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education's (MoEHE) data. Average test score is the average total test score at the final exam. Pass is the share of students that passes the exam. A student passes the exam if he or she gets at least 50 percent of the subject's maximum grade in all the subjects (i.e., 500) (Ibid.).

2 During the basic stage, the dropout rate is 0.6 for females and 1.3 for males. During the second stage it is 3.3 for females and 4.2 for males (PCBS 2015, 26) and so also in UNRWA schools (UNRWA Education department 2015, 13). According to UNRWA's own report the drop-out rates have declined during the period 2011–2015 after the implementation of educational reform. Overall, the rates still remain lower for girls (UNRWA Education department 2015).

3 According to PCBS (2015), the gender parity index is in favor of Palestinian females: 1.56 in the 2014/2015 academic year compared to 0.88 in the 2000/2001 academic year.

Almost seventy years after UNRWA's founding, the agency continues to embody a unique international commitment dedicated to the welfare of Palestinian refugees who fled or are the descendants of those about 750 000 Palestinians displaced during the first Israeli-Arab war in 1948 (Pappe 2004, 139). Most Palestinian refugees stayed in the Middle East; the greater part of them fled to Gaza and the West Bank, to Lebanon, Syria and Jordan but some also to Egypt. Impoverished peasants eventually gathered in refugee camps. The poverty that marked those places was related to the loss of livelihood and land; people could no longer farm or sell some land to get cash, neither did they have professions or education (Ibid, 47).

UNRWA has continued to provide education, health care, relief and social services, micro-credit loans and emergency aid to some five million Palestinian refugees in the Middle East. In the case of schooling, UNRWA has come to transmit much more than relief; new educational institutions, curriculum and practices challenged traditional forms of knowledge and an aged and gendered authority structure (Peteet 2005, 92). UN schooling differed markedly from the religious village-schools where previous generations of men had learnt how to read and write. In the camps, everyone, including girls, gained access to secular education.

The attraction of education should not be underestimated. Refugees saw education as a mobile and symbolic form of capital (Ibid, 109) and accomplishing higher education has for many refugees been a family project and an avenue to upward social mobility (Rosenfeld 2004). Palestinians in general emphasize the importance of education and are proud of academic success. Regionally, they have also been well-known for their high levels of literacy and education; UNRWA education has been the envy of, for instance, the Lebanese since their government schools were of lower quality than those of the UN. Education also facilitated the employment of Palestinians in the Gulf economies in the 1960s and 1970s (Peteet 2005, 64).

For generations of Palestinians born in camps, schooling also expanded the range of social interactions well beyond social networks based on village origins and kin relations. Nutritional and hygienic interventions such as supplemental feeding and mass immunizations have been and still are an integral part of daily routines in UNRWA schools (Ibid. 84f; own observations). Peteet (2005) writes about UNRWA intervention as a project of modernization connected to a refashioning of identities: through education, vocational training and resettlement, "the refugee" would enter the modern world and acquire a new sense of self, while coming to terms with displacement.[4] UNRWA education has also played a significant role in national identity formation and political mobilization against Israeli dominance – an issue that I will come back to later. UNRWA schools were, for instance, deeply involved in the first Palestinian intifada starting in 1987, which eventually led to Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and peace accords.

In the past decades, the quality of UNRWA schools has reportedly declined (Peteet 2005). Budget restrictions resulting in overcrowding and a lack of supplies in addition to prolonged conflict with destroyed school buildings, interrupted academic calendar and social problems have led to educational failures. Multiple reports indicate a rather alarming situation in UNRWA schools in the occupied territories, which led UNRWA to implement an education reform (UNRWA 2012; UNRWA Education Department 2015). UNRWA schools in the West Bank struggle with double shifts, early dropouts, low performance[5] and a challenging socio-political environment. Especially in boys' schools, problems with discipline seem so large that some teachers resort to physical punishment, although it is forbidden. UNRWA schools are also subject to a great degree of bureaucracy. For instance, schools lack independent budgets, which means that the principals need to apply for funding for more or less all expenses except for salaries and school books (personal communication with principals in UNRWA schools). My experience from fieldwork in the occupied territories, which was confirmed in interviews with teachers and principals, is that many parents in refugee camps are very concerned about their children's schooling. In practice, however, they do little to help their children learn or are not very willing to cooperate with schools on educational issues. These challenges faced by UNRWA schools are not gender-neutral, as they seem related to gendered understandings of girls' and boys' roles within families, schools and the society at large.

At the same time, as the education offered by UNRWA is increasingly criticized locally for being underfunded and of low quality, the importance West Bankers put on higher education is mounting. A mother of seven in her mid-thirties, who herself had studied mathematics but now is a full-time housewife, emphasized the status many Palestinians attached to education: "The whole society is educated. If you haven't finished a bachelor, you're [considered] ignorant. That it's not a lot. A Bachelor? Oh, there are Masters! There are PhDs! People start judging each other based on the level of education."

4 In reality, many Palestinian refugees feel rather ambivalent about UNRWA. The agency has come to stand for both survival and political stalemate since there has not been any solution to their predicament.

5 However, UNRWA students achieve better in different international tests (for instance PISA) in comparison to students enrolled in Palestinian governmental schools (World Bank Group 2014,18).

Education continues to be a favored means to bounce back from the losses of land and other economic resources. Today in the Palestinian occupied territories, there is a virtual boom in higher education. New educational institutes are constantly opening. Studying for a college diploma or a university degree has become a normal part of life and becoming an adult. In Bethlehem, many young people also meet their future spouses during their time in college or university. One might even claim that to be educated is a patriotic endeavor among many Palestinians – higher education is understood as crucial for the Palestinian nation to survive. By becoming modern and well-educated many Palestinians hope that they will eventually be able to make their voices heard internationally and free themselves from Israeli dominance (Kanaaneh 2002).

The necessity to educate oneself cannot, however, be reduced to a cultural or national imperative. It is rather an existential issue. In a political situation where Israeli soldiers are increasingly "quick on the trigger" and individual Palestinian lives are being devalued, the sense of belonging to a threatened people increases. When life is constantly threatened, one response can be to insist on doing the most out of it by, for instance, getting educated. Most outside observers agree with local Palestinians in the occupied territories that their political and humanitarian situation is indeed deteriorating (see for example, UN OCHA 2016). Killings, injuries, forced displacements and restrictions on movement are great concerns for most people in the West Bank and Gaza as they continuously affect their daily lives. A non-existing peace process, Israeli hostilities and the effects of the last years' wars in Gaza have further deteriorated the Palestinian economy and labor market (ILO 2015). Palestinian unemployment has reached more than 25 percent (Ibid, 10). At the time of fieldwork in 2012 there were also numerous strikes by Palestinian employees against the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah; teachers in government schools were protesting that they had not been paid for months. Taxi drivers and other employees joined the strike as acts of solidarity. A principal in one of the boys' schools tried to explain to me the ways restricted mobility has affected his students and challenged their academic progress in the following words:

> Our children have a limited horizon. They can't imagine 200 km – how great that distance is – because they haven't seen it. They can't imagine the sea - they only see it on TV. This is our life. We [i.e., school staff] try to help as much as we can to deal with it and to understand them.

FIELDWORK

Two months of fieldwork was carried out in September and October 2012 in the Bethlehem area[6] in the West Bank. The fieldwork included visits to six schools in 'Aida, Dheisheh and Aroub camps (i.e., in or close to Bethlehem) along with informal interviews with the principals of these schools and general observation of everyday practices at the schools. Two of the visited schools were chosen for classroom observations and interviews with teachers, parents and students. Since UNRWA's schools are sex-segregated and the focus of the study was connected to gender and educational performances, I chose one girls' school and one boys' school. After a discussion with UNRWA's West Bank gender officer, I decided to primarily interview and observe ninth graders. The ninth grade is the last grade in UNRWA's educational program in the West Bank; for secondary school, students are transferred to government schools. We reasoned that it would be valuable to know more about how ninth graders experience their schooling and their future options, since they were about to be transferred to the next educational level and within some years would need to make decisions about higher education. A total of 30 interviews were conducted with principals, teachers, school counselors, parents and students. Before starting each interview, I explained its purpose, how the data would be used and that only my field-assistants and I would read the full interview transcripts or interview notes. The parents also gave consent to the interviews with their children. In this article, all personal names have been changed as well as some biographical details to assure the anonymity of the interviewees. Interviews with students and their parents were carried out in their homes and they were recorded and transcribed. On the contrary, I only took notes during encounters with teachers and principals; these interviews took place either at the interviewees' worksites or in the privacy of their homes. This was due to frequent conflicts between the educational department of UNRWA in the West Bank and its employees, which made those particular interviews more sensitive. Both my parents are teachers and therefore, in this particular study, I sometimes drew on the similarities and differences there are between the work of teachers in the West Bank and in Sweden when interviewing school staff. The interviews and observations were carried out with the help of two local field assistants, one female and one male.

Classroom observations went on for some weeks and were equally divided between the two selected

6 The Bethlehem governorate has an estimated population of about 200 000 inhabitants and includes the town of Bethlehem, the towns of Bayt Sahour and Bayt Jalla, three refugee camps and a number of villages. http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_Rainbow/Documents/betlhm.htm.

schools. The observations did not focus on specific students but more general classroom interactions and, therefore, I did not ask for the consent of all parents of all children. A bigger concern to me was the discomfort that several of the teachers felt with our presence in the classroom. The observations probably did not produce as valuable data as I had hoped. It would possibly have taken me several more months of fieldwork to gain the teachers' trust. However, being in school and attending class made it easier to establish contact with the youth. The youth often claimed that their teachers were nicer to them and gave more fun lessons when my field assistant and I were around.

This was not the first time I did research among camp refugees in the Bethlehem governorate. In addition to the ethnographic fieldworks for my MA in 2000 and PhD in 2003–2004, I have carried out intermittent ethnographic fieldwork there for about 20 months and most of the time I have stayed with host families in the local refugee community. I have also carried out fieldwork in schools in Gaza in 2009. In this article, I also draw on knowledge and data that extends far beyond the fieldwork in 2012.

As a non-Palestinian, non-Muslim, non-camp refugee, I unavoidably remain an outsider in refugee camps in the occupied territories. I speak colloquial Arabic but not being fluent adds to my otherness. Despite such undeniable facts, most Palestinian interlocutors welcome me and show interest in participating in my research. Many see me as a messenger to influential non-Palestinian audiences and as an eyewitness to their miseries. At times, I have been met by suspicion by refugees. Being Swedish has probably been a benefit, compared to being British or American for instance, since most Palestinians judge Sweden to be a comparatively pro-Palestinian country. The fact that I have extensive experience of doing fieldwork among Palestinian refugees and knowledge about the Palestinian condition also worked to my advantage. Most importantly, I have been lucky to work with Palestinian field assistants, who are well known and respected locally. Thanks to them, many doors have opened to me.

GENDER AND PALESTINIAN REFUGEE YOUTH

Few academic studies have focused specifically on Palestinian youth (exceptions include Chatty 2010; Fincham 2010; Hart 2008; Marshall 2013).[7] Hart's article (2008) is one of the most relevant to this work; he writes about the construction of adolescent masculinity within a Palestinian refugee camp in Amman, Jordan. Hart's argument is that a rather tough masculinity is vital to uphold the Palestinian nation-in-exile but also creates obstacles for male camp refugees when trying to make a living outside the camp. Fincham (2010) writes on the construction of Palestinian girlhood through the intersection of gender and nation in a refugee camp in South Lebanon. In her article, Fincham discusses Palestinian women's practical role and symbolic value within the national struggle in Lebanon and how those have changed over time. Today, an Islamic discourse influences many young women and girls. Some however adopt hybrid bodily practices for instance by wearing a Muslim headscarf with "Western clothes" such as tight jeans. Marshall's PhD thesis in geography (2013) is also of relevance. Marshall examines how youth between 10–13 years of age move and use space in the Balata refugee camp in the northern West Bank. He argues that so-called geographies of shame influence and constrain youth's mobility. Young women were affected more than young men, but they also employed different tactics to resist gender and age domination. Chatty (2010) has a regional and comparative perspective on Palestinian refugee youth. She outlines how not only prolonged refugeeness and collective memory of Palestine influence identity formation but also highlights the role of the different social and political contexts refugee youth grow up in depending on the host society. Empirically, this article adds to the rather limited research that exists on the construction of adolescent masculinity and femininity among Palestinian refugees. Rather than discussing either boyhood or girlhood, I try to show how the two genders reflect on each other and are formed in tandem.

Gender is, first of all, a concept that helps us understand and destabilize the social and cultural processes that create more essentialized distinctions and power relations between the sexes. I take inspiration from Judith Butler's (1990; 1993) work on gender as embodied and performed. In this perspective, gender is not the reason for specific behaviors but rather the outcome of a number of performative acts. Gender is not so much what one is as what one does. In this research, I focus on observable gendered practices in everyday life of teenage boys and girls and how they themselves as well as adults around them talked about their comportment and what it meant to be a Palestinian refugee girl or boy. While most of my interlocutors held the view that differences between teenage boys and girls were, to an extent, innate, many also reasoned that religious, political, social and cultural concerns about, for instance, modesty had an impact on adolescent behavior. They also recognized that gendered differences changed over time. To some extent, my interlocutors and I agreed that gendered identities were not fixed, but could at least be partially molded and recreated. As I will discuss further, such

7 There seems to be a trend of psychological studies that scan Palestinian children and youth for trauma (e.g., Qouta et al. 2008). NGO reports about Palestinian children are also frequent. Such reports have for instance dealt with human rights issues such as the Israeli imprisonment of Palestinian children (UNICEF 2013; Defence for Children International/Palestine Section 2015).

molding and recreation of gendered identities and practices in relation to education were necessary both due to economic crisis in the occupied territories and a policy change within UNRWA that influenced the daily work in schools.

A note on patriarchy is also needed. Some studies on Palestinian gender relations employ the overarching concept of patriarchy to describe them (e.g., Fincham 2010; Sa'ar 2001). I agree with those studies that families and other social relations in Palestinian society are generally organized according to gender and that males are structurally favored. For instance, what support a divorced woman can expect from her immediate family is often much less than that of a divorced man. Other factors such as age and class are also significant for a person's or group's everyday lives and possibilities. A person's moral responsibilities reflect both gender and age distinctions in society. Male domination continues to pervade, but also intersects with other mechanisms of stratification (Crenshaw 1998); especially, the mechanisms employed by Israeli occupation towards Palestinians (e.g., Richter-Devroe 2011; Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2008). My own experiences of long-term field research among Palestinian refugees show that a concept such as patriarchy tends to simplify or even hide a much more complex reality where daily life and community depend on reciprocal obligations (Gren 2015). My point of departure is close to that of Baxter (2007) and Muhanna (2013). They both discuss the intricate dynamics of power and responsibilities of men and women towards each other within Palestinian families. They thus succeed to complicate current postulations about male dominance and female subordination in the Middle East both within and outside academia (cf. Abu-Lughod 2002). This is not to say that there are no patriarchal relations among Palestinians, but to acknowledge the discrepancies between my interlocutors' ideological statements and everyday practices in addition to people's flexible and creative use of cultural notions and their struggles over power and status. Theoretically, this article points out that in some particular historical and political settings, patriarchal structures might, at least to some extent, be creatively used to women's advantage (see for example Kandiyoti 1983). Even in male-dominated societies where men tend to be the norm can masculinity, and in this case boyhood, be denoted by much ambivalence and even be a disadvantage. Now, I turn to the discussion of four thematically organized findings that shape the youth understandings of their gendered practices and performances.

NATURALIZATION OF GENDERED BEHAVIOR

An overwhelming majority of my informants (independent of being school staff, parent or student) tended to explain boys' and girls' different comportment in school as something natural. This naturalization of gendered behavior was also used to legitimize sex-segregated schools. Male youth were in general considered lazy, wild and difficult to discipline. After having heard from informant after informant that schoolboys were more violent than schoolgirls I questioned the silence of Umm Kareem, a female teacher in her early thirties, on this issue:

> *Are there more [fights] or is the fight in the schoolyard more violent here [in the boys' school] than in the girls' school?*
>
> Umm Kareem: Because they are boys. The nature of the boys! They are a little bit violent because… You know what is the problem? If UNRWA schools would give more facilities for kids, especially to play during the break or in the sports classes, it would be very good for them [the students], for their health and for their behaviors. They don't have anything. Maybe karate, maybe football and that's it. In the girls' school, maybe they can do yoga, they can play football and basketball. Whatever, whatever! And girls in their nature they are quieter and meaner. I think boys are more innocent than girls.

Umm Kareem was at the time one of few female teachers who had experienced teaching in both boys' and girls' schools. Even if she enjoyed teaching boys, she also agreed that they were often violent. People, especially parents, frequently feared that boys would beat girls up if girls and boys would share the same classes and schools. A local UNRWA school, which had integrated the teaching of boys and girls in the early classes and had disciplinary problems, was given as a case in point. Many adult interlocutors also held the view that teachers needed to use physical punishment to control boys, since this was frequently seen as the only way to make them obedient. Especially some grown up men claimed that physical punishment had had positive effects on them when they were in school. As they remembered it, violent teachers were those they had learned most from. Today's ninth graders did not agree. To the contrary, several of the male youth underlined that they thought teachers used far too much physical punishment, often unfairly. Personally, I noticed that different forms of violence, ranging from violent play and fights between students, a school guard physically stopping students from leaving school before the last lesson, and teachers beating up disobedient students, were more present in boys' schools than in girls' schools.

Parents and school youth also frequently raised concerns that mixed schools would lead to inappropriate sexual conduct among older students. A boy in ninth grade, Eyad, whom I had known for nine years at the time of the interview, explained this in the following words:

> It is better to separate [boys and girls]. Boys

> are bad and dirty. We had that experience when they were building the girls' school. At that time [because of the construction work], they [boys and girls] were together. There were sexual relations between them. It's in all ages.
>
> *But do you think all boys in your class are bad like that?*
>
> Not all. Maybe 10 out of 40.

In this cultural context, such inappropriate sexual conduct does not necessarily imply sexual intimacy, but possibly that male and female youth held hands or spent time alone.

Further, the general tendency was to perceive female youth as more obedient and polite than their male counterparts. They basically listened in class and studied harder. Many of my interviewees also stressed that girls spent far more time at home than boys did, and while staying home girls also spent time on their schoolwork. One of the girls I interviewed, Abeer who went to dance classes in her leisure time, made the following reflection:

> Boys are not interested in studying; they just go [to school] to spend time. But girls have no choice but to study. They have no distractions. Boys have lots of them. […] It also depends on the student's ability. [Parents] know if their child is smart or not. For example, my mum knows it is normal that I'm smart. I will get much better grades than my brother. So she tries to concentrate more on my brother because she knows he is weaker. Most girls get higher grades than boys… Everyone expects girls to get higher grades.

Although, both female and male teachers often naturalized the behaviors of male and female youth, most of them explained that they would not mind mixed schools, while parents and students in general did. A majority of the teachers did not think it would be any problem to teach mixed classes. The teachers in both boys' and girls' schools also attempted to provide alternative ways of being male and female to their students. Female teachers were giving examples of themselves being educated workingwomen and also showed a wider range of dress styles than other women of the same age in the refugee camps. While the vast majority of grown up women in camps close to Bethlehem wear some kind of headscarf and modest dress, the female teachers dressed in more diverse ways. Male teachers claimed to talk about women's rights in class with their male students and gave concrete examples of situations when women's rights should not be restricted. They also gave examples of this while I was present in their classes, for instance by talking about domestic violence with the male youth, although I had the feeling this was because of me and my study rather than a part of their normal teaching. It might thus be argued that the teachers tried to slightly widen the gendered imaginative horizons of their students, although they did so within a cultural frame, which was understood by and acceptable to the local refugee community.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN DIFFERENT PLACES

Nadia had three brothers – two of whom were older than her and one younger. This evening after dinner the boys went out. Their father, who was tired after work and long commuting hours, had asked them to get out of his way. The boys were probably out somewhere in the neighborhood with their friends. Nadia was helping her mum with the dishes as she usually did. Her mum covered her hair with a headscarf and walked out on the veranda. She tried to spot her youngest son. Where is he? 'Eyad,' she repeatedly screamed out to the dark alleys of the camp. 'Yes,' the boy suddenly shouted back from the shadows of the nearby houses. 'Can you buy me some coffee?' Eyad came up to get some money and then disappeared again. Nadia finished washing up and sat down with her schoolbooks in front of the TV. She had some English exercises to revise until tomorrow.

These mundane routines are rather typical for a family evening in the refugee camps. Daughters help with household chores and do their homework. Sons go out to be with their friends and sometimes run errands for their parents. It is strikingly noticeable that even female youth who have different after-school activities (such as basketball training or theatre classes) are at home many more hours than their male peers. Few of the females met up with friends after school. Classes and breaks were the only opportunities available to spend time with their friends. Umm Ahmed, a mother of a female ninth grader, and basically all interlocutors (except from some of the boys themselves) explained this in very similar terms:

> Girls are much better [in school]. It's shown in statistics and it's because they spend time at home. Boys spend time in the street; they play football and games on the Internet. The majority of girls always have higher grades. It's the same at *tawjihi* [senior high-school exam]. The first ten are always girls. Maybe boys are smarter, but they don't use much time on their studies.

According to local understandings, engagement in school among Palestinian refugee youth depends on their gendered engagement in several other places.

According to my field experiences in Palestinian refugee camps, female youth are often thought to be vulnerable and in need of protection by their family. Public places are seen as dangerous for them (see also Marshall 2013). Young girls play outside but

normally stop well before they reach puberty. Both grown up women and female youth are not supposed to walk around aimlessly but to have a clear destination when moving outside their homes (Baxter 2007). Those concerns about females and their mobility are related to cultural understandings of family honor in Palestinian society.[8] Families in refugee camps tend to keep their female children at home to avoid rumors and a questioning of the their chastity. Noreen, a social worker in one of the UNRWA girls' schools who herself grew up in one of the refugee camps, explained this as follows:

> Some girls play in the street until a certain age. Maybe until they are ten. With organizations like Ibdaa [a local NGO] things have changed since they started mixed activities [i.e., for both girls and boys]. But it is still until a certain age [also in Ibdaa]. Girls then stop to go there and the boys continue. Parents are more concerned about their daughters than about their sons. They hear stories about rape, kidnappings and beatings.
>
> *But should they not also worry about their boys?*
>
> Yes, they should! They think boys are less affected emotionally and physically [by difficult experiences]. If a girl is raped she will be more affected [than if a boy is raped].

Locally, many would also argue that if a girl is raped, the effect would not be only emotional but also social; the girl's reputation would be tarnished.

Many male youth, on the other hand, spend much of their time after school with their friends outside their homes. They often have different arranged activities (mostly sports) and run errands for their family, but most of the time, they hang out with their peers in the street, at Internet cafés or at youth clubs. As both Hart (2008) and Marshall (2013, 150) write, male youth often feel pressed to defend their neighborhood from others living in other parts of the camp and I would also add from the occasional invasions of the Israeli army. Moreover, the camp was a place for networking. By being engaged in the street and the neighborhood, they were forming social relations with male youth, which were considered important for their future. Establishing themselves within such networks of teenage boys gave them access to a male sphere of youth. It was by being successful in those networks that male youth could gain local status and count on future support in different difficult situations (see also Hart 2008). Such support could be economic, social and political. Their social contacts could for instance help them get a job in the future. Political support could both be related to internal Palestinian politics (for instance in a local election to an association in the camp) or to the Israeli occupation (for instance by being helped economically if a family member is arrested). Female youth, on the other hand, are not seen as needing to establish such social networks.

Restlessness is moreover understood as a male personality trait. In refugee camps in the West Bank, one can frequently notice boys from the age of about eleven roaming around the streets and alleys of the camps. They wait for something to happen and are often out late. It is not unusual that male youth are out until 12 o'clock on a weekday or later as Abu Layth, a male teacher, gave an example of: "The [male] children are not controlled by their families either. When I go for the morning prayers in the mosque [i.e., by dawn] I meet some of my students out on the street. It is four o'clock in the morning!" Although many local parents do think that it is a problem that boys are out late, there seems to be a general agreement that boys cannot be kept at home or are at least very difficult to keep at home. They are also sometimes asked to leave the house (Marshall 2013). Being at home seems to be against boys' (as well as grown up men's) gendered nature.

In Palestinian society and maybe especially in its refugee camps, some places are considered immoral for one gender, but not for the other (Gren 2015; Marshall 2013; Rothenberg 2004). It is not an exaggeration to conclude that Palestinian refugee female youth perform femininity by staying at home and by not playing in the street after a certain age (cf. Butler 1990). Palestinian male refugee youth, on the other hand, perform masculinity by roaming around the camp, being out late and not being at home all the time. The street is a moral place for male youth and to some extent for men, but not for female youth and only partly for grown up women. Vice versa, home is a moral place for female youth and women, but only partly for male youth and men. Males who spend much time at home are often considered weird and unmanly (see also Hart 2008).

IMAGINING A FUTURE AS PROFESSIONAL WOMEN

As mentioned earlier, Palestinian females in general perform better in school than males. In recent years, more women than men joined universities and obtained a university degree (PCBS 2015, 31). During fieldwork in 2012, it was often outlined to me that women with a higher education were increasingly popular in the marriage market: a fact that is probably related to a severe economic situation in which more and more bachelors and their families think of educated workingwomen as means to sus-

8 This is not the place to dwell on the complexities of the norms, practices and social negotiations related to a Palestinian honor code (Baxter 2007). Here it suffices to say that there are many different ways to interpret honor and to lead an honorable life among Palestinian individuals as well as groups.

tain healthy family finances. This emerging approach is slowly replacing one that saw educated workingwomen as obstacles to male dominance and ill-suited to raise children. Several interlocutors also pointed out that higher education gave women the possibility to be economically independent for instance in case their spouses die or become incarcerated. Umm Tareq, female teacher in a girls' school, explained:

> Those [men] who get married have no money. If a woman continues [her education] and starts to work, she will get married quickly. Her husband will like that she has an income. I try to tell the [female] students about the importance of education. 'You don't all need university degrees, a diploma is ok.' The cleaning lady we had here [at school] was smarter than some of the teachers. Her son and her husband died in an accident in the camp so she had to start working here. I take this as an example. It means that in the end you depend on yourself [economically]. Another example is a relative of mine. She married early and her husband did not like her to get educated. Still she studied for a diploma for kindergarten teachers. Now the husband is in prison and she is trying to find a job in a kindergarten. But a diploma is not enough these days and the salary is only 500 Israeli shekels per month.

This is a rather exceptional development, since many elderly refugee women were prevented from attending schooling and thus remain illiterate. Working mothers have also been a disputed issue in many conservative refugee families.

School is a place that promises social mobility for female youth more than for their male counterparts. For female youth, the possibility for a higher social status and for gaining an income is to a large extent connected to education. This is still governed by local views on where women should work. Palestinian refugee women have fewer options in the labor market than men.[9] Workingwomen without education have rather limited possibilities to find employment opportunities that are considered appropriate for females. Appropriate manual work for a woman could mean working as cleaner, a hairdresser or a seamstress. Higher education is also said to ensure them a better marriage deal and a stronger position within their future marriages (cf. Sa'ar 2006). It is generally believed among my interviewees that children need educated mothers. Most would claim that an educated mother, whether employed or not, can help her children with their homework and will raise them in a better, more conscious way than an uneducated mother. Kanaaneh (2002) writes about such family ambitions as a project of modernity among Palestinians.

In the interview material, it became clear that Palestinian refugee families hold very little hope for an ameliorated political situation in the Palestinian territories due to the stalemate in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and the disempowerment of the Palestinian authorities.[10] However, most held great expectations in their children's future lives. People wanted their children to get educated and believed that, through higher education, their children would lead better lives than their parents. However, as I will discuss below, especially when it comes to male youth, there is some uncertainty about those bright futures.

TAMING PALESTINIAN MALE REFUGEE YOUTH THROUGH UN SCHOOLING

In the summer of 2011, the West Bank was struck by a heatwave that seemed to go on forever. One evening, I went to visit an old friend of mine – Umm Ramzy – a single-mum and pharmacist who came from the Dheisheh refugee camp but at the time of our meeting lived just outside of it. It turned out that Umm Ramzy was still on her way back from work. Her son Nidal, 14 years old, welcomed me and told me to wait for his mum. Then, he wanted to show me something. 'Come,' said Nidal. I followed Nidal to the room he shared with his older brother. Nidal walked up to his chest of drawers and opened one of the drawers. He picked up a black balaclava and held it up for me, while saying: 'I use this one when I throw stones at the soldiers.' 'Is it yours?' I asked skeptically. 'Do you throw stones?' 'Yeah, when the soldiers come to the camp during the night, my friends and I usually throw stones at them.' The air stood still despite the open windows. I kept silent, while thinking that I had to tell Umm Ramzy about this. But then it struck me that she probably already knew.

In Palestinian rural areas before the flight in 1948, male youth (*shabab*) were traditionally supposed to defend fellow villagers (Kanaana 1998). As I wrote earlier, many young males feel obliged to

9 A man without education has a number of options within construction, agriculture, restaurants, hotel sector, and the transport sector. He is also more likely to open and run his own business than a woman. Palestinian refugee men from the Bethlehem area can also work in Israel (with or without a work permit) or try to migrate to find employment abroad. Refugee women also work in Israel, but it is often considered morally problematic in local communities (Gren 2015; Moors 1995). Women are thought to be easily influenced by Israeli society and should therefore avoid it. Palestinian economic migration is typically a male phenomenon.

10 At present there are two Palestinian authorities, one Hamas-led ruling Gaza and one Fatah-led ruling the West Bank. Both of them have authoritarian tendencies.

defend their neighborhood or camp from outside intruders – either fellow camp inhabitants, other Palestinians or Israeli soldiers. The fearless fighter remains an ideal for young men. Masculinity is also related to stoic suffering, through the endurance of for instance Israeli incarceration and aggression (Peteet 1994; Malmström 2015). The refugee and the refugee camp have long been emblematic to Palestinian patriotism. Khalili (2007) writes that the camps and its inhabitants symbolize resistance and suffering – important foundations within national identity-formation – both for the national leadership as well as the public. The understanding of Palestinian male refugee youth as politicized is thus nothing new. Like Nidal above, many refugee male youth feel responsible to carry out small acts of violent resistance towards often heavily armed Israeli soldiers by, for instance, throwing stones and Molotov cocktails. A mother I interviewed, Umm Ali, commented on how teachers need to handle the wish of male youth to be involved in such confrontations: "In the boys' school [in the camp], I don't know [if they are good teachers] ... [laughing]. Some [teachers] are devoted. They try to control [the boys] so they don't go to throw stones. Because they [i.e., the school] are near the wall and the military post." This statement highlights the pressure visible signs of oppression, such as the Israeli-built wall or the separation barrier, puts on Palestinian individuals, in this case school boys, but also hints at the ambivalent feelings among many parents concerning stone-throwing. It also tells us about an extra- curricular role of UNRWA schools; namely, trying to prevent the engagement of male youth with violence against Israel.

In the Palestinian context, UNRWA education has been used earlier for political mobilization and national identity-formation in a condition of statelessness and exile (Alzaroo 2005; Shabaneh 2012). UNRWA schools along with local universities in the occupied territories took active part in the first Palestinian intifada. Schools participated in demonstrations or went on strike to object Israeli occupation. For individual students, those frequent disruptions of their education, in addition to Israeli detentions of young Palestinians, were destructive to their accomplishments in school, although many felt that the uprising empowered them politically. During my fieldwork in 2003–2004, several men, who had been imprisoned as teens during the first uprising, exclaimed that they belonged to a lost generation. Although they were often proud of their activism and their patriotic sacrifices as ex-prisoners, they were well aware they had lost out academically. Many of them had not gone back to school or had never been able to start a university education (Gren 2015).

Being the only UN agency created specifically to serve one particular refugee population along with its long-term engagement, UNRWA has an extensive involvement with the population it intends to help. Many local UNRWA employees are Palestinian refugees themselves, even if the high level positions tend to be held by foreigners and policy is frequently made far from the Middle East (Bocco 2010; Peteet 2005). This often enables the agency to work efficiently and to adapt to the refugees' needs. The proximity has also led to charges that the organization is too close to the refugees and even hostage to their political claims (Al Husseini 2010). Since UNRWA leaders speak out compassionately about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the occupied territories and the agency publishes numerous reports on human rights violations against Palestinian refugees, UNRWA is often under attack by Israel and the US, accused of being too pro-Palestinian or too biased. UNRWA's response has been to try to distinguish itself as politically neutral (Ibid). One recent strategy in this direction has been "to keep politics out of schools" as some of the UNRWA staff and parents I interviewed put it. They also said that teachers and principals had been instructed to remain politically neutral, both in relation to internal Palestinian party politics and to external political conflicts, particularly with Israel. For example, Abu Akram, a father of a boy in the 9th grade complained that:

> Earlier the most important [in school] were the teachers. They were part of the people and the country. Teachers 30 years ago were not stuck to schoolbooks. Before they were more loyal [to our cause] and they were fighters. Now there is corruption even among the teachers. They are not allowed to raise the Palestinian flag or to make a ceremony for a martyr in class. In other parts of the Middle East, it's allowed. In Jordan, Lebanon and Syria [but not here].

Funerals for martyrs (a word used for any Palestinian, either militia or a newborn child, who is killed by Israel) frequently turn into political manifestations against Israeli occupation (Gren 2015). Earlier UNRWA schools and especially boys' schools often took part in such politicized ceremonial rituals.[11] Similar to funerals, open discussions of party politics are also to be avoided according to the UNRWA leadership. This is strikingly different from the times when schools used to have political and patriotic debates.

Such de-politicization or de-nationalization of UNRWA schools, in addition to a context distinguished by prolonged crisis and despair, seems to render school increasingly pointless for many Pal-

11 Other than being political manifestations, these funerals are also ways to deal with losses and grief in the local community (Gren 2015). Trying to prevent school children from participating in these manifestations can thus inhibit them from taking part in local resilience tactics.

estinian male refugee youth. As long as UNRWA education was seen as a vehicle for politicization and such political activity carried a certain status in society, it was meaningful for male youth to engage with educational institutions in multiple ways. Today, local social networks, which are developed outside of home and school, in the street, seem to become increasingly important, especially since people depend on such networks to get employed.

CONCLUSION

How male and female youth perform (in Butler's sense) in different places, for instance in school, tells us a great deal about gender and social change among Palestinian camp refugees. Male Palestinian refugee youth perform masculinity by being mobile outside of their home throughout the day and sometimes also at night. Females, on the other hand, perform femininity by being mostly immobile and thus staying at home after school and, by extension, having time to do their homework. The current de-politicization of UNRWA schools turns schools into an extension of home. This is a safe moral place for females, which also implies possibilities for future social mobility. For many male youth, however, it has partly become less meaningful since it has lost some of its political force due to new policies within UNRWA. Further, education does not necessarily give the male youth a job. Jobs are rather provided through social contacts that are created and maintained locally.

In addition, I explained that changing gendered practices in relation to education were influenced by a context of severe unemployment and economic stagnation. Within Palestinian households, women's wage labor is increasingly valued in attempts to strengthen household economics. However, uneducated workingwomen have rather limited possibilities to find employment that are considered culturally appropriate for Palestinian females. Future social mobility for female youth is thus, to a large extent, connected to education. Male youth have, on the other hand, options to find employment in different sectors and in different places, including in other countries. It is noteworthy that although the occupied territories are stuck in a political and economic deadlock, Palestinian society undergoing a transformation in gender relations and ideals of femininity and masculinity.

This article shows that patriarchal constraints might be innovatively used for females' benefit. First, the policing or protection of female youth, by keeping them at home, indirectly lead to unexpected (and sometimes unwanted changes) in gender relations among Palestinian refugee families. Since female youth are more likely to study and get high grades, they are also increasingly completing higher education. As most of my interlocutors would agree, having higher education gives a woman a much stronger position within her future marriage. An educated woman, and even more so if she has her own income, will have good chances to be resourceful and powerful within her family (cf. Sa'ar 2006). Ironically though, in the current state of affairs, it is the policing of girls and young women that may emancipate them, at least when it comes to labor market participation.

Second, for female youth, whose gender identities have never really been bound by political activism to the same extent as male youth's (even though there clearly are politically engaged and active Palestinian women), a depoliticized UN education is not really a problem. For male youth, however, it threatens an important part of what it means to be a Palestinian refugee male, for example, being ready to protect the local community and resist Israeli occupation hands-on. Moreover, the freedom (or lack of policing) of male refugee youth within families seems to clash with increased policing in UNRWA schools. Such collision creates ambivalences and uncertainties about manhood itself.

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A Cumulative Image Problem: Human Rights and US Foreign Policy towards Iran in the Seventies

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This article focuses on the impact of human rights on American-Iranian relations in the Seventies. By devoting specific attention to the role of the Iranian Students Association in the United States, Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists in shaping up a negative image of the Shah and influencing receptive congressmen, the primary goal of this study is to assess the US State Department's dual approach to improve the Shah's image in the United States and, therefore, preserve the alliance between Washington and Tehran. On the one hand, the State Department implemented obstructionist tactics to neutralize Congress' opposition to American security assistance to Iran; on the other, it engaged in confidential exchanges with Iranian officials to dampen public and congressional criticism against the alliance. If we want to understand how, notwithstanding US public and congressional opposition, American-Iranian relations remained mostly unchanged until the 1979 Iranian revolution, the State Department tactics to improve the Shah's image in the United States seem a good place to start.

Keywords:
Cold War; American-Iranian relations; human rights; Congress; shah; Kissinger

INTRODUCTION

When on January 16, 1968, the Prime Minister Harold Wilson announced the British withdrawal from the Persian Gulf by the end of 1971, American policymakers realized that this would create a political vacuum in a vital area for the security of the whole Western world. The British decision posed a serious strategic dilemma for Washington as it required immediate plans for both containing Soviet expansionism and maintaining access to the Gulf vast oil resources (Palmer 1992; Fain 2008; Macris 2010). During his last year as President, Lyndon B. Johnson embraced the British suggestion that the status quo should be maintained through a joint role of responsibility of the two principal players in the Persian Gulf, Iran and Saudi Arabia (Alvandi 2012; Castiglioni 2015). However, it was the newly-elected President Richard Nixon who laid the foundations for the new American Third World strategy in 1969. The Nixon Doctrine renounced American direct interventionism and promoted military assistance to local players that would guarantee regional security and safeguard Western interests (Gaddis 1982; Garthoff 1985; Westad 2005; Dallek 2007). Even though the President's *twin pillars policy* in the Gulf was theoretically directed towards Iran and Saudi Arabia, from the outset Nixon tilted towards the Iranian Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, thus making Iran the stronger pillar of the new US security structure in the Gulf (Rubin 1981; Sick 1985; Bill 1988; Cottam 1988; Alvandi 2014).

This turning point in American-Iranian relations came during a period of profound change in the United States, a period that would lead in the years to come to the political affirmation of human rights. This new phase positioned human rights as a valid alternative to how American foreign policy had been conducted, or, in the words of Samuel Moyn (2010), a "last utopia" designed to replace the failed Cold War ideals. Hence human rights activists began to challenge the boundaries between "communist enemies" and "anti-communist friends" as they drew public attention to repressive regimes and questioned American alliances with those countries that enjoyed privileged relations with Washington.[1] The Iranian ally, because of the brutal repression of internal opposition through mass arrests, use of physical and psychological torture, unfair trials, as well as the pervasive surveillance of Iranian citizen and the lack of freedom of expression, would therefore soon become a primary targets of human rights pressure groups (Shannon 2015, 681).

Scholars agree that the political battle for human rights in the United States began in the seventies, when widespread malaise against American interventionism in Vietnam and Kissinger's realpolitik generated the need for a foreign policy based on moral principles. Part of the existing literature on the topic (Forsythe 1988; Apodaca 2006; Schmidli 2011; Tulli 2012; Keys 2012; Snyder 2013) emphasizes the US Congress' centrality in the political affirmation of human rights. Barbara Keys, for example, focuses on the role of the US Congress in incorporating human formation rights into the State Department's bureaucratic machine, and therefore into US foreign policy, despite Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's firm opposition. William Michael Schmidli and Sarah Snyder offer further insights into the institutionalization of human rights into US foreign policy. Specifically, Snyder devotes particular attention to the importance of the congressional hearings on human rights, and argues that a careful examination of the hearings, which were initiated in 1973, is crucial if we want to "understand the influence of congressional activism in the formulation and implementation of US foreign policy." Schmidli, on the other hand, focuses on an effective case of US human rights policy towards a specific country, Argentina, by exploring how human rights legislation affected US-Argentine relations and eventually led to a congressional cutoff of US arms transfers to Argentina in 1978.[2]

Besides the general consensus over the role of Congress, other scholars investigate the emergence of transnational advocacy networks composed by the new players of the international system, primarily non-governmental organizations (NGO) and civil society organizations. Conceptually rooted in previous research by Frank Baumgartner and Bryan Jones (1991), this scholarship (Keck and Sikkink 1998, 1999; Cmiel 1999, 2004; Sikkink 2004) looks at the "dual strategy of venue shopping" and "third party influence," namely the ability of pressure groups to manufacture negative images and transmit them to receptive politicians with the purpose of influencing governmental decisions. Amongst these scholars, Cmiel (1999) emphasizes the pioneering role of Amnesty International (AI) in prioritizing image building and management for human rights promotion. In fact, Cmiel explains that AI was the first human rights non-governmental organization to

1 According to Moyn, the main targets of human rights activists and supporters' activities in the seventies became freedom of speech and movement, physical and psychological torture, and the pervasive nature of states' security organizations surveillance of civil society.

2 Interestingly, what also emerges from this scholarship on human rights is that congressional activism challenged the traditional boundaries of party political affiliation: in fact, while key Democrats, such as Donald Fraser (D-MN), played a leading role in the battle for the political affirmation of human rights, in mid-seventies there emerged a politically eclectic group including also Republicans. Just to give two examples, John Ashbrook (R-OH) and Clifford Case (R-NJ).

understand the great opportunities provided by the public broader access to information that emerged in the seventies: "We live with television, the sound bite, photo-ops, video culture, infotainement. Politics, we are told, is turning into a battle of images, increasingly remote from the 'real world'" (Cmiel 1999, 1245). According to Cmiel, data collection on human rights' abuses and its use to build a negative image of specific countries became the pillars of any effective human rights' campaign strategy, the primary tools to draw politicians' attention and the most effective ways to influence governmental policies.[3]

While human rights historians devote sizeable attention to the human rights' revolution and how it affected American foreign policy towards certain countries (Shoultz 1981; Sikkink 2004; Schmidli 2011), little consideration is given to the impact of human rights on American-Iranian relations, most likely because the alliance between Washington and Tehran did not incur any substantial change until the 1979 Iranian revolution (Sick 1985, 27; Emery 2013, 11).[4] However, two experts of US foreign policy, James Bill and Matthew Shannon, investigate the impact of human rights on American-Iranian relations in the Pahlavi era. Using different approaches, both authors oppose the conventional argument that the human rights' revolution affected Iran because of President Jimmy Carter's commitment in this regard, and show how the impact of human rights on American-Iranian relations should be primarily found in the period prior to Carter's inauguration in January 1977.[5] Despite their noteworthy contribution to the field, both authors offer limited sets of analysis. Bill (1988) looks primarily into the impact of human rights on the shah's domestic politics, but does not investigate *how* the human rights' revolution affected American-Iranian relations (219–223). Specifically, he does not examine in depth the State Department's steps to preserve the alliance from public and congressional criticism and the complexity of the anti-shah opposition in the United States. Shannon's more recent studies (Shannon 2011; 2015) on the Iranian Student Association in the United States (ISAUS) focus on its attempts to construct a negative image of the Iranian regime with the purpose of "delegitimizing the shah in the eyes of the global public and persuade American policymakers to withdraw their support from and consider alternatives to the Pahlavi regime" (Shannon 2011, 2). Shannon's valuable contributions notwithstanding, his studies present three major limitations. First, he devotes little attention to the seventies and focuses primarily on the fifties and sixties. Second, his main focus is on ISAUS, thus only touching upon the various actors of the anti-shah network in the United States. Third, his analysis generally overlooks the State Department's initiatives to preserve the alliance against the growing tide of criticism.

Situating the concept of public image as the unifying narrative thread, this article draws on a wide range of archival primary sources and an extensive literature to explore the impact of human rights on American-Iranian relations in the seventies.[6] Specifically, I examine the alliance between the United States and Iran in a period of Cold War imperatives, giving specific attention to the degree of strategic and economic interdependency between the two allies (Alvandi 2014). It is this context that I understand the rise of anti-shah pressure groups in the United States, whose aim was to construct a negative image of the monarchy, stimulate Congress' opposition to the American-Iranian alliance and withdraw US government support for the shah. By the mid-seventies, when human rights took center stage in the American public debate and information began to circulate widely about the repressive nature of the Iranian regime, the State Department attempted to mitigate congressional opposition to the American-Iranian alliance and improve Iran's image in the United States. These efforts culminated in 1976, when Iran became a primary target of pressure groups for human rights and the new human rights legislation began to threaten the alliance. On the one hand, the State Department implemented obstructionist tactics to neutralize Congress' opposition to American security assistance to Iran; on the other, it engaged in confidential exchanges with Iranian officials to dampen public and congressional criticism

3 Cmiel notes also that the importance of image management was grasped by the perpetrators of human rights violations: the creation of public relations agencies by certain governments showed how their image abroad became priority to preserve foreign policy objectives.

4 A valuable exception to the mainstream scholarship on human rights history is Bradley R. Simpson (2009).

5 The Thirty-Ninth American President Jimmy Carter campaigned for his presidency promising to make human rights a cornerstone of his foreign policy agenda. However, US strategic goals forced the new president to use a double standard with regard to human rights promotion in third countries. Thus US policy towards countries with strategic value, like Iran, remained mostly unchanged.

6 The article draws primarily on diplomatic records from US and UK archives, US congressional records, Amnesty International records and oral history sources. Archival research was conducted in the following archives: National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Washington DC; Library of Congress, Washington DC; National Security Archive, Washington DC; Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta; Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor; Columbia University's Center for Human Rights Documentation and Research, New York; National Archives of the United Kingdom, London. This research draws also on the transcripts of the Foundation for Iranian Studies Oral History Archive.

against the alliance.

This research is significant for three main reasons. First, it refines the existing literature on the anti-shah network in the United States, giving specific attention to the role of congressmen, ISAUS and NGOs, as well as influential media, in building a negative image of the Iranian monarchy in the United States. Second, while most of the scholarship on the impact of human rights on US bilateral relations looks into "successful" cases of reduction or termination of US economic and military assistance (Shoultz 1981; Sikkink 2004; Schmidli 2011), this article examines what is behind the failure of US human rights policy towards a strategic ally, Iran. In particular, it offers an in-depth investigation of the State Department's efforts, both inter-institutional and diplomatic, to preserve the strategic alliance by neutralizing congressional legislation on human rights. Lastly, this article explores how the image of an enlightened monarch, consolidated by the State Department between 1975 and 1976, was adopted by the new President James Carter in the early months of his presidency and provided a solid motivation for his strategic decision to maintain the United States' previous policy towards Iran.

ANTI-SHAH OPPOSITION IN THE EARLY SEVENTIES

The repressive traits of the Iranian regime were not new to the Iranian-born American citizens and students living in the United States in the early seventies, as well as human rights activists of the era. The authoritarian turn of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's regime had indeed taken place long time before, in the fifties, when the shah had realized that his dynasty's survival would depend on his capacity to curb internal opposition (Gasiorowski and Byrne 2004).[7] To this end, besides building a loyal and powerful army, in 1957 Pahlavi created a secret intelligence organization, SAVAK,[8] with the technical assistance of experts from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Mossad.[9] Since then SAVAK had become notorious for its suppression of the anti-shah opposition in Iran through its pervasive surveillance of Iranian citizens, its mass arrests and its use of torture against political prisoners (Keddie 1981, 134; Rubin 1981, 177–182; Bill 1988, 186–192; Gasiorowski 1991, 118–124; Abrahamian 1999, 106; Afkhami 2009, 386).

In this regard, the globally publicized lavish celebrations for the 2500th anniversary of the Persian Empire in October 1971 provided a great opportunity for the shah's critics in the United States to spread alarming information about the repressive methods of the Iranian regime. Whereas AI (1972) reported that "the celebrations of the 2 500 anniversary of the Persian Empire not only successfully avoided mention of Iran's political prisoners and inadequate judicial system, but also resulted in many more people being imprisoned for their opposition, or suspected opposition, to the present government," ISAUS took advantage of its liaisons with congressmen to influence US policy towards Iran. In early 1972, members of the Iranian Students Association informed senator George McGovern (D-SD) and House Representatives Shirley Chisholm (D-NY), Parren Mitchell (D-MD) and Ronald Dellums (D-CA) about the arrests and death sentences of Iranian students and intellectuals both during and after the celebrations (ISAUS 1972, 17–24).

Official records show how the State Department tried to discourage initiatives of a number of congressmen that aimed to promote human rights in Iran. David Abshire, assistant state secretary for congressional relations, responded to McGovern, Chisholm, Mitchell and Dellums that Iran enjoyed full sovereignty on internal affairs and that the shah's controversial practices were essential to fight domestic terrorist groups.[10] While congressional initiatives had no positive impact on those arrested, Joseph Farland, American ambassador in Iran from 1972–1973, stated that the activities of the Iranian students were very effective in spreading a negative image of the monarchy.[11]

With the events of 1972–1973 Iran was destined to become one of the prime targets for human rights pressure groups in the United States. While the shah's degree of repression increased, the May 1972 secret agreement between the shah, Nixon and the National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger enabled the monarch to purchase whatever conventional arms available on the American market.[12] This exclusive "blank check" in arms sales became evident in 1973 when, after the increase in oil revenues following the 1973 Yom Kippur war, the shah began to spend huge sums of petroleum dollars on American military

7 The author refers to the power struggle between the shah and Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadeq, which took place from 1951 to 1953. Only thanks to a coup orchestrated by the US Central Intelligence Agency, the shah could save his throne in 1953.

8 The acronym SAVAK stands for *Sazeman-e ettelaat va amniyat-e keshvar*, or Organization of Intelligence and National Security.

9 The CIA and Mossad are, in turn, the intelligence agencies of the United States of America and Israel.

10 NARA, RG 59, Subject Numeric Files (SNF), 1970–1973, Political & Defense, Box 2380, Pol 23–8 Iran, 2–26–70, Memo, Abshire to Chisholm, March 9, 1972.

11 Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), Vol. XXVII, Doc. 1, Airgram, Farland to Rogers, January 9, 1973.

12 Henry Kissinger was national security advisor from January 20, 1969, to November 3, 1975, and served as state secretary from September 22, 1973, to January 20, 1977.

technology.[13]

Because of the uncontrolled flow of arms, and Kissinger's protracted resistance against making the agreement public, AI and ISAUS capitalized the growing congressional discontent on American security assistance to Iran for further influencing Capitol Hill.[14] On November 14, 1973, Representatives Parren Mitchell, Richard Dellums, Shirley Chisholm and Pete Stark (D-CA) expressed their firm opposition to the American-Iranian alliance after receiving information on the shah's widespread use of torture from AI. The four congressmen noted that terminating military assistance to Iran would not lead to democracy, but it would guarantee a foreign policy in line with American moral values.[15] The initiative was taken up by the President of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations William Fulbright (D-AR) on November 29, when, on the basis of ISAUS information, he recommended that Kissinger investigate human rights violations in Iran "like those in Greece and the Soviet Union."[16]

The State Department's response to critics was that the preservation of American-Iranian relations was a matter of national interest. Marshall Wright, assistant state secretary for legislative affairs, pointed out how reduced the American influence on Iran was, not only because Washington had no right to interfere in the juridical procedures of a sovereign country, but also because any attempt to affect Iran's internal affairs would be perceived as an act of hostility by the shah.[17] Yet Richard Helms, US ambassador in Tehran from 1973 to 1977, argued that the shah's sensitivity precluded any sort of American pressure on the monarchy (Helms 1985): "(Iran) is far less amenable to pressure from foreign governments indeed: as a cash purchaser of both equipment and advisory services, Iran is not vulnerable to threats of denial, but shows readiness to deal with other suppliers if necessary."[18]

The shah's sensitivity to Western criticism had been of particular concern to the State Department since the sixties. In the words of Iran's Court Minister Asadollah Alam, "the Shah expected nothing but praise" from Western countries as "he knew himself to be an exceptional man'" with a strong desire "to pursue the good for his people (Alam 1991, 18–19). The monarch's intolerance to criticism helps explain the cooperation between the State Department and Iranian officials to contain anti-shah criticism in the United States.[19] The case of Nasser Afshar, an Iranian-born American citizen and director of *Iran Free Press*, is an outstanding example in this regard. Escaped to the United States in 1946 after being condemned in Iran, Afshar had been granted citizenship in 1962 and obtained his passport in 1970. The Iranian government had failed to extradite him due to the lack of a bilateral agreement between the two countries, and the shah had harshly complained with the US government for granting him a passport with no previous consultation.[20] Between the late sixties and the early seventies Afshar became known for his radical anti-shah stance. While he sent numerous letters raise awareness of the members of congress to the shah's brutal regime, the US government tried to delegitimize him before Congress. For example, in 1971, US Ambassador in Iran Douglas MacArthur II, invited Representative Graham Purcell (D-TX) to ignore Afshar's "scurrilous and defamatory" declarations by "denouncing the character and activities of the organization and its chairman, on the basis of FBI information."[21] Yet, Purcell was advised to "reminisce about a number of other congressmen who had taken up the anti-shah banner in the 1960s, much to their subsequent embarrassment."[22]

13 Gerald Rudolph Ford Library (GRFL), National Security Adviser's Files, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia, Box 12, Iran (2), Memorandum, Kissinger to Rogers and Laird, June 15, 1972; GRFL, National Security Adviser's Files, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia, Box 12, Iran (2), Memorandum, Kissinger to Rogers and Laird, July 25, 1972. The greatest increase in the Iranian defense budget was in fact registered in 1974 and between 1972 and 1976 American sales to Iran amounted to 10.4 billion dollars: US Congress. 1976. *US Arms Sales to Iran. A Staff Report to the Subcommittee on Foreign Assistance of the Committee on Foreign Relations*. 94th Congress, 2nd Session, Senate (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office): 1–13.

14 Jonathan Bingham, *Amendment Offered by Mr. Bingham*, Congressional Record, 93rd Congress, 1st Session, House of Representatives, July 26, 1973, 26208; William Proxmire, *Foreign sales for F-14's?*, Congressional Record, 93rd Congress, 1st Session, Senate, July 26, 1973, 26072.

15 NARA, RG 59, SNF, 1970–1973, Political & Defense, Box 2380, Pol 23-8 Iran, 2-26-70, Letter, Mitchell, Stark, Dellums and Chishlom to House of Representatives, November 14, 1973.

16 NARA, RG 59, SNF, 1970–1973, Political & Defense, Box 2380, Pol 23-8 Iran, 2-26-70, Letter, Fullbright to Kissinger, November 29, 1973.

17 NARA, RG 59, SNF, 1970–1973, Political & Defense, Box 2380, Pol 23-8 Iran, 2-26-70, Memo, Wright to Fullbright, December, 27 1973.

18 NARA, AAD, RG 59, Telegram 1976TEHRAN02770, Helms to Department of State, March 17, 1976.

19 GRFL, WHCF, Subject File, Box No. 4, FO 2/, CO 68, *Article in Iran Free Press*, Telegram No. 1974TEHERAN09159, Helms to Kissinger, October 30, 1974.

20 Ibid.

21 FBI is the acronym for Federal Bureau of Investigation.

22 NARA, RG 59, GRDS, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs (NEA)/Iran (IRN), Office of Iran Affairs, Lot File 75D351, Box 6, PS 7, Iran 1969–71, *Assistance to Americans: Nasser Afshar*, 1971.

It is interesting to note that Iranian officials were regularly informed about such initiatives. In November 1971, for example, MacArthur notified Alam of Afshar's letters and Purcell's initiative.[23] Two years later, in response to the shah's requests, the idea of suppressing *Iran Free Press* began to materialize amongst US embassy and State Department officials, and Harold Sunders from the National Security Council (NSC) recommended that the White House officials ignore Afshar's letters to President Nixon.[24] The stated reason to ignore Afshar's letters was well explained by Douglas Heck, chief of mission at the US Embassy in Iran: the shah considered Afshar as the key organizer of anti-monarchic activities in the United States and had complained several times about US government inability to curb them.[25] Any reply to the letters would therefore irritate the monarch as it would be perceived as an explicit recognition of Afshar's activities.[26]

KISSINGER, CONGRESS, AND THE HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION

When Congress began actions to reduce American aid to authoritarian regimes, the State Department realized that the American-Iranian alliance would be challenged by growing congressional opposition. In 1973, Representative Donald Fraser (D-MN), chair of house foreign affairs subcommittee on international organizations and social movements, began to hold congressional hearings on human rights in US foreign policy, thus preparing the ground for human rights incorporation into the State Department's bureaucratic machine.[27] On December 13, 1973, for the first time in US history, Congress enacted legislation tying military assistance to human rights.[28] Although not binding, section 32 of the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) reflected Congress' growing desire to reconsider military assistance to human rights perpetrators.[29]

Unsurprisingly, the new legislation received scarce consideration from the State Department and, in particular, from the Secretary of State Henry Kissinger (Keys 2012). A strenuous opponent to the integration of human rights into foreign policy, he argued that meddling in third countries' internal affairs was to be perceived as a violation of national sovereignty.[30] Kissinger's views were elaborated in a State Department assessment of October 1974. Human rights had turned public attention from Communist countries to repressive regimes, and public criticism varied according to the degree of US identification with the country under examination. The range of options for human rights promotion was wide, but any action had to be taken in full consideration of the following aspects:

a. US interests in the country;
b. US leverage in the country;
c. the political context in which violations occur;
d. the evolution of human rights in the country;
e. the short-term and long-term consequences of US action or inaction;
f. regional stakes.

The study, which regarded "quiet diplomacy" as the best option to bridge the gap between foreign policy and American public opinion's views, described the degree of American influence in Iran as nil.[31] The alliance was an integral part of American

23 Ibid.

24 NARA, Electronic Documents, 1/1/1973–12/31/1973, RG 59, GRDS, Central Foreign Policy Files, *Nasser Afshar Ghotli*, Telegram No. 1973TEHERAN02363, Helms to Rogers, May 11, 1973. After consultation with the State Department legal advisors, Helms reported that suppression of *Iran Free Press* was not feasible as it would violate freedom of expression.

25 Afshar's "offensive" letters criticized the President's participation in the 1971 Persepolis celebrations, described the Iranian regime as corrupted and barbarian and blamed the shah for human rights abuses. See FRUS, 1969–1976, Vol. E–4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969–1972, Doc. 179, Memorandum from Harold Saunders of the National Security Council Staff for the Files, Washington, April 26, 1972; FRUS, 1969–1976, Vol. E–4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969–1972, Doc. 225, Memorandum From Harold Saunders of the National Security Council Staff for the Files, Washington, October 20, 1972.

26 NARA, RG 59, GRDS, NEA/IRN, Office of Iran Affairs, Lot File 75D365, Box 7, POL 23, Internal Security, Counter-Insurgency, Heck to Miklos, 1972.

27 US Congress, 1973. *International Protection of Human Rights, the Work of International Organizations and the Role of US Foreign Policy*. Hearing before the Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movements of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. 93rd Congress, 1st Session, House of Representatives (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office)

28 Foreign Assistance Act of 1973. PL 93-189. http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/STATUTE-87/pdf/STATUTE-87-Pg714.pdf

29 Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division, *Human Rights and US Foreign Assistance: Experiences and Issues in Policy Implementation (1977–1978)*. Report prepared for the Committee on Foreign Relations, 96th Congress, 1st Session, Senate (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1979), 84–85.

30 FRUS, Vol. E–3, Doc. 244, Minutes of the Secretary's Staff Meeting, October 22, 1974.

31 FRUS, Vol. E–3, Doc. 243, Summary of Paper on Policies on Human Rights and Authoritarian Regimes, October 1974. Quiet diplomacy refers to representations of concern communicated within the confines of private discussions between government and/or diplomatic offi-

national security, and Iran's financial, military and energy resources made the shah "immune" from Washington's influence (Helms 1985, 79).

The Watergate scandal and Nixon's resignation on August 8, 1974, modified the balance between Congress and the State Department; assistance to authoritarian regimes became a battleground for congressional affirmation in foreign policy (Fraser 1979, 174–185; Schmitz 2006, 143). On December 20, 1974, Congress ratified section 502B of the 1961 FAA: "It is the sense of Congress that, except in extraordinary circumstances, the President shall substantially reduce or terminate security assistance to any government which engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights."[32] Section 502B was not binding, but it was stricter than section 32. Firstly, while it recognized executive flexibility by providing "extraordinary circumstances" exceptions, it required the president to report Congress when those exceptions were made. Secondly, NGOs took central stage in the new legislation as their reports, as well as the recipient countries' willingness to welcome their investigations, should be assessed when deciding security assistance.

Most importantly, the new legislation prepared the ground for important changes, amongst which that all US embassies should produce and send to the State Department detailed human rights reports.[33] However, Kissinger did his best to oppose the effective implementation of section 502B, as shown by the report's preparation and transmission to Congress. In January 1975, the US embassies sent the 502B reports to the State Department for review.[34] The final report, containing various country studies, confirmed violations of human rights in some countries, amongst which Iran. According to the new legislation, the report was to be transmitted to Congress alongside the presentation of the 1976 foreign assistance program.[35] However, Kissinger opposed it firmly, exclaiming with great irritation that transmission of reports would not occur "while I am here."[36] Only after Deputy Secretary of State Robert Ingersoll and State Undersecretary Carlyle Maw's insistence, along with Senator Jacob K. Javits' (D-NY) and Senator Alan Cranston's (D-NY) pushy demands, Kissinger decided to send a new version of the report in November 1975. Ten months later the original one was produced. In the end, the new report had the only effect to irritate Congress as it was not only briefer than the original, but it lacked any country study and focused primarily on the State Department's "difficulties" in assessing human rights abuses.[37]

THE STATE DEPARTMENT AND THE SHAH'S IMAGE IN THE UNITED STATES

According to AI, by 1975, Iran became the country with the worst record of human rights worldwide, with a number of political prisoners comprised between 25 000 and 200 000.[38] Although it is presumable to think that AI data were exaggerated, they attracted media and public attention to the shah's repressive tactics and increased the number of congressmen opposing the alliance.[39] On March 4, 1975, Stark brought to the House's attention articles from the *San Francisco Examiner*, *Harper's Magazine* and the *London Sunday Times* about the Iranian repressive regime. He forwarded to the House AI data on torture in Iran, as well as transcripts of testimonies from four Iranian intellectuals – Reza Baraheni, Ali Shariatti, Gholam

cials, for the purpose of bringing about a change in human rights practices. Its use is primarily aimed at avoiding public humiliation of specific governments in order to maintain good relations.

32 Foreign assistance Act of 1974. PL 93-559. http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/STATUTE-88/pdf/STATUTE-88-Pg1795.pdf. Considered as a congressional attempt to legislate on human rights and military relationships, section 502B of the International Security Assistance and Arms Export Control Act, like section 32 of the 1973 International Security Assistance and Arms Export Control Act, was merely advisory rather than binding. It became a binding directive with the International Security Assistance and Arms Export Control Act of June 1976.

33 FRUS, Vol. E–3, Doc. 246, Memorandum, Ingersoll to Kissinger, January, 16, 1975.

34 FRUS, Vol. E–3, Doc. 252252, Action Memorandum, Wilson to Maw, July 7, 1975.

35 FRUS, Vol. E–3, Doc. 254254, Briefing Memorandum, Maw to Kissinger, September 8, 1975.

36 DNSA, Kissinger Transcripts Item KT01825, Minutes, The Secretary's 8:00 a.m. Staff Meeting, Thursday, November 13, 1975.

37 FRUS, Vol. E–3, Doc. 254254, Briefing Memorandum, Maw to Kissinger, September 8, 1975.

38 GRFL, William E. Simon Microfiche of Papers, Folder 15: Amnesty International – Printed Material: 1976, *Political prisoners in Iran*, July 3, 1975, 1. The year 1975 was also crucial for the affirmation of human rights at a global level. As a result of the institutionalization of human rights in the Helsinki process of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the third basket of the Helsinki Final Act triggered political actions highlighting the contradiction between the Helsinki document and repressive regimes worldwide.

39 National Archives of the United Kingdom (NA), Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) 8/2727: Iran. Internal political affairs, *Ministry of Justice*, Memo, Westmacott to Jones, November 15, 1976, 2. According to data transmitted by Iranian authorities to the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, in 1976 the number of political prisoners in Iran amounted to nearly 3 000.

Hosayn Sae'di and Hadjebi Tabrizi – previously tortured by SAVAK.[40] Together with Representatives Richard Dellums (D-CA), William Donlon "Don" Edwards (D-CA) and Michael Harrington (D-MA), Stark harshly criticized Georgetown University for granting a *laurea ad honorem* to Empress Farah, and opposed the sale of three diesel powered submarines to Iran.[41]

The growing role of AI in shaping up a negative image of the shah and influencing congressmen did not go unnoticed in Washington. Hence the State Department came up with the idea of establishing some form of cooperation between the shah and NGOs to improve the monarchy's image before Congress.[42] In the fall of 1975 the State Department encouraged William Butler, president of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), and Georges Levasseur, professor of international and comparative law from University of Paris II, to carry out a study mission in Iran.[43] This initiative, backed by two champions of the human rights battle, senators Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Hubert Humphrey (D-MN), was seen by the State Department as a unique opportunity to show Congress the shah's improvements in the field of human rights.[44]

Aware of the shah's dislike for NGOs and of the reduced American leverage, Undersecretary Joseph Sisco invited Helms to contact Iranian officials informally with the purpose of reaching out to the shah and inform him of the beneficial effects of Iran's cooperation with the ICJ.[45] The shah eventually approved the mission, that was conducted between September and October 1975. The ICJ final report, Human Rights and the legal System in Iran, was finally published in March 1976. While Levasseur's study focused on the need to reform the judicial system, Butler pointed out some positive changes occurred between 1963 and 1975. However, Butler reported also the widespread use of physical and psychological torture, the government's control over domestic media and the unfair trials before military tribunals (Butler and Levasseur 1976).

The shah's decision to cooperate with the ICJ was the first of three initiatives expressing his growing concern over Iran's image abroad. The second was taken in January 1976, when the shah received a delegation of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss Iran's public relations and media campaign in the United States. This meeting resulted in the shah hiring American-Jewish public opinion analyst and President of *Yankelovich, Skelly and White* Daniel Yanckelovich. Yankelovich's study was carried out at the Aspen Institute conference in Persepolis and drawn on interviews with American businessmen, politicians, government officials, congressmen, foreign relations experts and journalists who had professional contacts with Iran. The study, submitted to the shah on November 1976, revealed that only businessmen had a positive image of the country, which irritated the monarch, who blamed the US government, public and press of ignoring the positive effects of monarchic reforms (Alam 1991, 463–524; Parsi 1997, 297).

The last of the shah's initiative was undertaken in mid-seventies when the monarch, most likely both for his concern over Iran's image abroad and his need for a broader domestic consensus, launched a liberalization program.[46] Although these well-publicized reforms hardly contributed to gaining of popular support, they were highly appreciated by the US State Department as they were perceived as signs of good faith towards the Iranian people. In fact, the shah conceded several amnesties, reduced the use of torture and political arrests, limited the authority of military tribunals, and began cooperation with ICJ President William Butler to reform the Iranian judicial system.[47]

40 Fortney Pete Stark, *Other Voices*, Congressional Record, 94th Congress, 1st Session, House of Representatives, March 4, 1975, 5183–5184.

41 Amnesty International in the United States (AIUSA), Folder 17, Box 73, Congressmen Don Edwards, Ron Dellums, Michael Harrington, and Pete Stark, Press release, May 16, 1975; Fortney Pete Stark, *House Joint Resolution 512*, Congressional Record, 94th Congress, 1st Session, House of Representatives, June 18, 1975, 19618.

42 NARA, AAD, RG 59, Telegram 1976TEHRAN02770, Helms to Department of State, March 17, 1976.

43 NARA, AAD, RG 59, Telegram 1976TEHRAN10618, Helms to Department of State, October 21, 1976. The International Commission of Jurists is a non-governmental organization created in 1952. It promotes the application of international law to violations of a civil, political, social or economic nature. The decision to establish cooperation between the shah and William Butler came as a result of ICJ reputation as it was considered more credible and objective than AI.

44 NARA, AAD, RG 59, Telegram 1975STATE220650, Sisco to Helms, September 16, 1975. The White Revolution was a far-reaching series of reforms in Iran launched in 1963 by Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and lasted until 1978. Although the White Revolution saw some improvements of human rights in Iran, its main goal was to legitimize the Pahlavi dynasty. It brought new social tensions that triggered, more or less directly, the 1979 Iranian Revolution.

45 NARA, AAD, RG 59, Telegram 1975STATE220650, Sisco to Helms, September 16, 1975

46 For an assessment of the shah's domestic reasons to liberalize, see amongst others: Keddie, *Modern Iran*, 215.

47 The shah's liberalization program was reinforced in early 1977. See: National Security Archive (NSA), *Spies' nest: documents from the US espionage*, Vol. 12A:114–124, Airgram A80, Sullivan to Vance, June 1, 1978; NARA, US Central Intelligence Agency Freedom of Information

The shah's initiatives did not achieve the desired effect of improving Iran's image abroad. On the contrary, the second half of 1976 marked the apex of anti-shah activities in the United States.[48] Whereas Butler's report and, later on, *AI Briefing on Iran* produced fresh information on human rights abuses in Iran, American media played a leading role in circulating them amongst the American public and Congress.[49] Influential newspapers and magazines such as the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times* and *Time* began investigating the controversial aspects of ICJ and AI reports, in particular the violent practices of the shah's secret police (Baraheni 1976; Anderson and Whitten 1976c). In August 1976, for example, Senator McGovern announced to oppose security assistance to Iran after bringing to Senate's attention *Torture as Policy: The Network of Evil*, an article published on *Time* (1976) investigating repression of Iranian intellectuals and SAVAK institutionalization of torture.[50] Yet, two investigative journalists and columnists for the *Washington Post*, Jack Anderson and Les Whitten, began inquiring SAVAK's espionage activities in the United States and its cooperation with the CIA (Anderson and Whitten 1976a).[51]

The issue of SAVAK activities in the United States and its suspected cooperation with the CIA in a period of public and Congressional attention hit the headlines during the months following the publication of the *Time* article and contributed to forge a bad image of the shah before and after the 48th US presidential election, held on November 2, 1976. In September, the shah, irritated by what he considered gratuitous allegations and worried by the growing anti-shah opposition in the United States, instructed SAVAK Deputy Director Parviz Sabeti to release an interview to the *Washington Post* and deny illegal SAVAK activities (Greenway 1976). This point was reiterated by the monarch in an interview with CBS journalist Mike Wallace on October 22. However, while his objective was to dampen the ongoing tide of criticism, his phrasing had the opposite effect of exacerbating it. Asked whether SAVAK was engaged in illegal activities, the shah replied that "SAVAK agents' job in the United States was to check up on anybody who becomes affiliated with circles, organizations hostile to my country, which is the role of any intelligence organization." He eventually added that the US government was aware of SAVAK intelligence activities on American soil.[52]

The shah's words dealt a severe blow to the Ford Administration prior to the presidential election. Immediately after the interview, several American universities complained to President Gerald Ford about SAVAK monitoring of Iranian students in their campuses.[53] Yet, between October and December 1976, Anderson and Whitten found evidence of SAVAK espionage in the United States and CIA's past cooperation with the Iranian secret police. At the end of October, for example, they publicized State Department's records proving the presence of SAVAK "death squads" in Europe and United States, CIA's past role in training SAVAK agents and the similarities between CIA and SAVAK's "dirty tricks" (Anderson and Whitten 1976b). In early November, they published information of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) reporting that Mansur Rafizadeh, Iranian representative at the United Nations (UN) in New York, was the head of SAVAK in the United States, and that SAVAK agents were known both for recruiting informants and infiltrating in the Confederation of Iranian Students-National Union (CISNU) (Anderson and Whitten 1976e). In December, they received and published State Department records revealing American-Iranian cooperation to suppress *Iran Free Press* (Anderson and Whitten 1976d).[54]

Pressed by electoral needs, Kissinger was urged to speak publicly on the matter. On November 1, he stated that "it is not correct that the US is aware that Iranian intelligence personnel are checking on individuals living in the US. We are making inquiries and if it is correct we are asking that it be stopped."[55] The Iranian response came immediately after from the foreign ministry spokesperson: "We are very friendly with the US. Our relations are good and we have beneficial common interests. But any action that they might take towards representatives we would reciprocate toward their representatives."[56] Whereas public

Act Electronic Reading Room (CIA-FOIA), *Iran, roots of discontent. Main features of the shah's Liberalization Program 1976–1978*, NFA Notes, October 25, 1978.

48 NA, FCO 8/2761, Memo, Lucas to Lipsey, October 5, 1976.

49 Amnesty International Briefing-Iran, November 1976. https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/001/1976/en/.

50 Larry P. McDonald, *Human Rights and the Policy of Torture*, Congressional Record, 94th Congress, 2nd Session, House of Representatives, August 23, 1976, 27071–27073.

51 Civil society's attention to the suspected CIA cooperation with SAVAK reflected widespread public interest in the suspected CIA's role in the Watergate scandal.

52 The shah's interview was carried out by Mike Wallace on October 22 and broadcast on October 24 by *60 Minutes*, a CBS television program.

53 See for example Professor Daniel Partan from Boston University: GRFL, WHCF, Subject File, Box No. 25, CO 68, Iran, Letter, Partan to Ford, October 22, 1976.

54 Nasser Afshar obtained these documents thanks to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), that allows declassification of official records under specific request.

55 AAD, *Foreign Ministry Statement on Secretary Kissinger's Remarks about Iranian Intelligence Personnel in the US*, Telegram No. 1976TEHERAN10874, Helms to Kissinger, November 1, 1976.

56 Ibid.

tensions between Washington and Tehran seemed to escalate, archival records show the ambiguity of the State Department's reaction: on the one hand, it responded to public and congressional pressures by ordering an FBI investigation into SAVAK activities in the United States; on the other, it engaged in a behind-the-scene confidential dialogue with Iranian officials to dampen criticism and safeguard Iran's image. In effect, while the FBI began to look into the matter, Secretary of State Assistant for the Near East Alfred Atherton called Iranian Ambassador in the United States Ardeshir Zahedi on November 5 and agreed on the official responses to give if queried on SAVAK activities. Where the State Department would highlight the lack of evidence confirming the allegations and reiterate its commitment to halt any foreign agents' activities on American soil, Zahedi would deny any illegal activity and point out the Iranian right to legally monitor any individual posing a threat to the Iranian regime. The call ended with Atherton promising to share with the ambassador a "legal study of what would constitute illegal activities under US law".[57]

This confidential dialogue proved to be useful in December, when the State Department received an FBI report revealing that Mansur Rafizadeh might have carried out illegal activities against Iranian students. The FBI reported Rafizadeh's ownership of a shop, "Persian Bazaar and Bookstore" in New York, and suspected that it had been used to collect information on Iranian students. It should not come as a surprise that the State Department did not follow up on FBI investigations. On the contrary, it regarded such report as "inconclusive" and "ambiguous," and noted that "in view of the particularly close and mutually beneficial relationship" between the two countries, a close cooperation on this matter would help dampen criticism. To this end, Atherton and Helms invited Zahedi and Alam to avoid any operation of foreign security organizations in the United States in "a period where media and Congressional interest was high," and guaranteed that Rafizadeh's expulsion as persona non grata would never be considered by the US government.[58] When Helms met Alam personally on December 31, the Court Minister was glad to learn that Rafizadeh would not be expelled and appreciated the spirit of cooperation between American and Iranian officials.[59]

THE 1976 HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION AND BEYOND

Besides informal cooperation with Iranian officials to mitigate American criticism, the State Department's efforts to improve the shah's image in the United States emerged with vigor in the application of the new human rights legislation. On June 30, 1976, Kissinger's protracted resistance to an effective incorporation of human rights into foreign policy led Congress to produce a more stringent legislation. The International Security Assistance and Arms Export Control Act strengthened section 502B and it gave Congress a major role in foreign assistance decisions. Firstly, reduction or termination of military assistance to countries "which engage in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights" was no longer "the sense of Congress" but "the policy of the United States," thus reinforcing American commitment to human rights worldwide. Secondly, 502B (c)(1) required the State Department to transmit, upon congressional request, reports on specific countries containing:

a. detailed information about human rights;
b. US government efforts for human rights promotion;
c. if any, those "extraordinary circumstances" that justified security assistance despite evidence of human rights abuses.

Lastly, Congress was empowered to reduce or terminate military assistance on the basis of the 502B reports through a joint resolution.[60] In the end, the new legislation did not deprive the US government from its role as ultimate decision maker with regard to security assistance programs as production of 502B reports was still up to the State Department. However, it strengthened Congress' role in assessing human rights as transmission to Congress of detailed reports was now mandatory.

In view of the 1977 foreign assistance program presentation, the Subcommittee on International Organizations of the House Committee on International Relations, also known as Fraser Committee, began hearings on human rights in Iran. Between August 4 and September 8, 1976, William Butler, Reza Baraheni, State Department Director for Iranian Affairs Charles Naas and Assistant Secretary of State Atherton were requested to testify before the Fraser Committee.[61] Atherton's testimony represents

57 NARA, AAD, *Savak Officials Assigned to US*, Telegram No. 1976STATE273410, Kissinger to Helms, November 5, 1976.

58 FRUS, 1969–1976, Vol. XXVII, IRAN; IRAQ, 1973–1976, Doc. 199, Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Iran,, December 30, 1976. Both Atherton and Helms were instructed to contact Zahedi and Alam by Secretary of State Kissinger.

59 FRUS, 1969–1976, Vol. XXVII, IRAN; IRAQ, 1973–1976, Doc. 201, Telegram From the Embassy in Iran to the Department of State, June 3, 1977.

60 International Security Assistance and Arms Export Control Act. PL 94-329. Accessed from: http://uscode.house.gov/statutes/1976/1976-094-0329.pdf

61 US Congress. 1976. *Human Rights in Iran*. Hearings before the Subcommittee on International Organizations of the Committee on International Relations. 94th Congress, 2nd Session, House of Representatives (Washington

an outstanding example of the State Department's obstructive practices of data manipulation and distortion. Ambassador Helms, instructed by Kissinger to prepare Atherton's speech, reported no evidence of violations, praised the Iranian constitution for guaranteeing individual rights and the monarchy for progress in the field of human rights.[62] The ambassador's blatantly too "optimistic" analysis was in contradiction with State Department's classified data on torture, executions and lack of freedom of expression, so that State Department's analyst Frank Huddle, in charge of revising Helms' draft, recommended a high degree of caution as declassification of controversial information would embarrass the State Department before the Fraser Committee. Contrary to Helms' draft, Huddle suggested switching Atherton's speech on the shah's real accomplishments rather than overemphasizing Iran's good records on human rights. In Huddle's words, Atherton had to point out "that the regime provides stable rule, has reduced many of the land-tenure inequities, and is popular with the common man whose economic lot has measurably improved under the current Shah."[63]

Atherton's testimony followed Huddle's recommendations: it portrayed Iran as a model country in the Middle East while minimizing the repressive aspects of the regime and exaggerating the positive ones. He praised American "quiet diplomacy" for human rights promotion and remarked Iran's central role for US national interest.[64] Iran, he said, posed no "extraordinary circumstance[s]" as two aspects legitimized the US government decision to maintain past security assistance levels. Firstly, the shah had promoted individual rights thanks to the White Revolution and was now promoting human rights thanks to more recent initiatives, such as amnesties and reduction of torture (Bill 1988, 221). Secondly, even if controversial practices to fight the "cancer" of terrorism had occurred, NGOs data on human rights violations were clearly exaggerated.[65]

When few weeks later Assistant Secretary of State Philip Habib was called to testify before the Subcommittee on Foreign Assistance of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the sale of F-16 fighter aircrafts to Iran, human rights were only briefly mentioned and the Senate seemed to accept the State Department's arguments.[66] As for the House, while Iran's strategic value was generally recognized, the Fraser Committee was not happy with the limited number of information reported by Atherton and took it as a further example of State Department's obstructionism and data manipulation. Moreover, the House was further irritated by Kissinger's "inability" to transmit, apparently for procedural delays, the 502B report drafts, as requested by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee President Hubert Humphrey (D-MN) in view of the 1977 foreign assistance program presentation (Keys 2012, 849).

Frustrated by the State Department's attitude, in October the Fraser Committee requested specific reports for six countries, including Iran, under section 502B (c)(1). Helms, again in charge of producing the report, was invited by Kissinger to strictly follow Atherton's arguments.[67] The final report, delivered to Morgan on December 29, lacked specific data on human rights violations and promoted a positive image of the monarchy by focusing on the ongoing collaboration between the shah and the ICJ, as well as the effectiveness of American "quiet diplomacy."[68]

While the new legislation had no impact on the flow of arms to Iran, in the weeks prior to Carter's inauguration, the shah began to fear the future effects of section 502B on American-Iranian relations.[69] The imminent departure of Henry Kissinger, who had been able to establish a close friendship with the shah, along with Carter's commitment to human rights (Brinkley 1996; Strong 2000; Trenta 2013) and his campaign statement to reconsider arms sales to Iran, were perceived as serious threats for the future of the alliance (US Government 1979, 100). This would explain why Iran's State Undersecretary Nassir Assar instructed Mohammed Hatef, a high ranking official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to discuss section 502B with US Embassy officials John Lambrakis and Paul Stempel.

The meeting, held in an informal and cooperative manner on December 23, served the purpose

DC: US Government Printing Office).

62 FRUS, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 184, Telegram, Embassy in Iran to the Department of State, August 18, 1976.

63 FRUS, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 185, Memorandum, Huddle to Naas, August 20, 1976.

64 DNSA, Kissinger Transcripts KT02053, Minutes, Secretary's Staff Meeting, September 8, 1976.

65 US Congress. 1976. *Human Rights in Iran*. Hearings before the Subcommittee on International Organizations of the Committee on International Relations. 94th Congress, 2nd Session, House of Representatives (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office).

66 NA, FCO 8/2730, Memo, Muir to James, December 10, 1976.

67 NARA, AAD, RG 59, Telegram 1976STATE257996, Kissinger to Helms, October 18, 1976. The six countries were: Argentina, Peru, Haiti, Philippines, Indonesia and Iran.

68 US Department of State, *Human Rights and US Policy: Argentina, Haiti, Indonesia, Iran, Peru and the Philippines*. Report submitted to the Committee on International Relations, US House of Representatives, by the Department of State, pursuant to section 502B (c) of the International Security Assistance and Arms Export Control Act of 1976, 94rd Congress, 2nd Session, House of Representatives (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1977).

69 Carter's inauguration at the White House took place on January 21, 1977.

of reassuring the shah for the time being but raised serious concerns for the future. According to Lambrakis and Stempel, American-Iranian relations would not change until the State Department was in charge of producing the 502B reports, but added that Carter's unpredictable use of section 502B made it imperative to improve Iran's image in the United States. What concerned both American and Iranian officials was the idea that Congress would play a major role in foreign assistance decisions. This explains why Lambrakis and Stempel found it necessary to think of ways to influence Congress' perception of Iran. In their views, two steps were crucial in this regard. Firstly, the Iranian government should meet Congress' desire for more detailed and unbiased information. To this end, Iranian non-governmental figures should produce a greater amount of data on the shah's accomplishments. Secondly, Iran's bad image in the United States had been shaped up by organizations like AI on the basis of exaggerated data. Thus the Iranian government should handle this "cumulative image problem" on a case-by-case basis, rather than harshly denying any allegation of human rights abuses. Moreover, while the occasional use of controversial practices should be justified by the danger of terrorism in the country, Iran should break the secrecy over trials, prison conditions and treatment, and even consider opening Iran's prison doors for inspections.[70]

This informal cooperation was highly appreciated by Iranian officials and, presumably, by the shah, who ordered his men to call for a second meeting. Held on January 10, 1977, the second meeting prioritized again the shah's image in the United States. It opened with American officials stressing how dramatic changes occurred in American-Iranian relations had contributed to shape up a negative image of the shah. According to Lambrakis and Stempel, security assistance, trade and other exchanges in the seventies had created "a multiplicity of American-Iranian contacts going well beyond government-to-government relations." Because of the limited US government ability to influence this "multiplicity of contacts," it was essential for the Iranian government to "think harder about the ways to present its own image in the many contacts Iran has begun to have with Americans directly." To this end, Lambrakis and Stempel recommended Iran's embassy in Washington to expand its network of "friends" and "affect the perceptions of Iran" amongst junior members of Congress, US government middle-level staff and the American press. To reach out a larger audience, distinguished Iranian academics living in the United States should lecture on Iran's progresses under the shah. Lastly, following a model adopted by other authoritarian regimes, they proposed the creation of an independent public relations agency "to coordinate human rights and related questions."[71]

CONCLUSION

This article provides new insights into the ineffectiveness of US human rights policy towards one strategic ally, Iran, and it shows the State Department's initiatives to neutralize US human rights legislation and preserve the American-Iranian alliance. In the seventies, pressure groups realized that human rights politics would become a battle over images. Amongst them, AI and ISAUS were particularly effective in building and circulating amongst receptive congressmen a negative image of the Iranian regime, thus posing a serious challenge to the alliance. The State Department fought this war on the same battlefield, image management. On the one hand, it put into practice obstructionist tactics aimed at enhancing the shah's image before Congress. On the other, it proposed high-ranking officials of Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs solutions for a better management of their country's image. This strategy resulted in the production of an enlightened image of the monarchy, whose advances in the human rights field were regarded as impressive and whose ambitions were in line with US foreign policy goals. It therefore justified the continuation of US military assistance and political support to Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.

Contrary to Jimmy Carter's electoral proclaims, by the end of 1977 no substantial reduction of the flow of arms sales to Iran occurred (Shannon 2015, 686), and Carter's commitment to human rights was only directed towards nations with less strategic value (Cohen 1982, 254–256). The anti-shah opposition in Iran and the United States, as well as some sections of the new bureaucracy, expected Carter to promote human rights in Iran. The new President, however, decided from the beginning to continue past American policies towards his ally. As such he prioritized US geopolitical and strategic interests in the area and neglected human rights abuses (Bill 1988, 228; Emery 2013, 482; Shannon 2015, 685). His determination to preserve the alliance emerged in May 1977, when the new Secretary of State Cyrus Vance visited Iran. It was then confirmed in November 1977, in occasion of the first shah's official visit to Washington. In both cases, the issue of human rights was briefly mentioned and the shah realized that the alliance would not be subject to significant changes (Bill 1988, 227; Emery 2013, 39).

Although Carter exerted no pressure for human rights promotion in Iran, the shah decided to continue his liberalization program, initiated earlier in 1976. In the early months of 1977 he began to

70 NARA, AAD, RG 59, Telegram 1976TEHERAN12714, Helms to Department of State, December 23, 1976.

71 FRUS, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 202, Telegram, Embassy in Iran to the Department of State, January 10, 1977.

publicize previous reforms, release several prisoners, reshuffle his government, loosen the tight of censorship and strengthen cooperation with ICJ President William Butler.[72] It is unknown whether, and to what extent, the shah's liberalization measures resulted from previous State Department's efforts to raise the shah's awareness about the importance of his image abroad, or from the impetus of Carter's human rights discourse during his electoral campaign. What is certainly known is that the Carter administration welcomed these initiatives as they further contributed to forge the image of an enlightened monarch and provided the new president with solid motives to publicly justify the preservation of American past policy towards Iran (Cohen 1982, 259–260; Sick 1985, 27). This tactic, that shows strong continuity with the previous' administration, emerged unmistakably in Tehran on December 31, 1977, in what might be regarded as the most unfortunate speech of Jimmy Carter's presidency: "Iran, because of the great leadership of the Shah, is an island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world" (Carter 1977).[73] Paradoxically, a few days later the shah's violent repression of anti-regime protests prepared the ground for the eruption of the Iranian revolution (Abrahamian 1982, 496–525; Parsa, 1989). In the end, future research should explain whether, and to what extent, the long consolidated image of an enlightened monarchy contributed to the Carter administration's failure to predict the imminent loss of the Iranian ally.

72 National Security Archive (NSA), *Spies' nest: documents from the US espionage*, Vol. 12A:114–124, Airgram A80, Sullivan to Vance, June 1, 1978; NARA, US Central Intelligence Agency Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room (CIA-FOIA), *Iran, roots of discontent. Main features of the shah's Liberalization Program 1976–1978*, NFA Notes, October 25, 1978; Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion*, 222–226.

73 The author refers to Carter's famous New Year's Eve toast with the shah. At the end of his speech, Carter briefly expressed his concerns about human rights abuses in the world. However, this brief digression ended up with Carter emphasizing that the "the cause of human rights is one that also is shared deeply by our people and by the leaders of our two nations."

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On Dictatorship, Literature and the Coming Revolution: Regime and Novels in Iraq 1995-2003

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The last years of the Saddam regime in Iraq are often described as the disintegration of the very powerful state as the result of the cumulative impact of wars and sanctions. Yet in one field, literature, the Saddam regime maintained a firmer grip during its last years. This article describes the regime's politics with regard to literature and literary production, concentrating on the novel, in the period between 1995–2003. The article explains why the regime targeted the literary field before its doom and why it focused on the novel. Examining the Iraqi regime and its "eccentricity" during this period illuminates the control of the totalitarian Ba'ath dictatorship, and sheds a new light on the belated emergence of literary reaction, silently hatching during that period, in the form of a new literary generation that would revolutionize Iraqi cultural life after 2003. This revolution is often called *Deba'athification* and only its political and bureaucratic aspects are given attention. This article is, thus, about the cultural background of deba'athification.

Keywords:
Iraq; literature; totalitarianism; cultural revolution

INTRODUCTION

The last years of the Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq are often described as the disintegration of a very strong and monolithic state as the result of the cumulative impact of wars and sanctions. Yet in one field, literature, the Saddam regime maintained a firmer grip during its last years. This article describes the regime's politics with regards to literature and literary production, concentrating on the novel, in the period between 1995–2003. By 1995, most of Iraq's prominent writers left the country and started publishing anti-regime novels abroad. I explain why the regime targeted the literary field before its demise and why it focused on the novel. Examining the Iraqi regime and its eccentricity during this period illuminates the function of a totalitarian dictatorship, and the Ba'athi one in particular, in a new way and also sheds a new light on the belated emergence of literary reaction, silently hatching during that period, in the form of a new literary generation that would revolutionize Iraqi cultural life after 2003. This revolution is often called *de-Ba'athification* and only its political and bureaucratic aspects are given attention. This article draws attention to the cultural context of de-Ba'athification as an important aspect for understanding its larger effects.

Whether Iraq was a totalitarian dictatorship during the period under study is an issue that is still debated among academics (see for example, Rohde 2010; Sassoon 2012). In my view, totalitarianism is always an aspiration to control all aspects of human life (in this case literature) by the use of repression, whether violent or soft. As such, it is never complete, always leaving some limited autonomous spaces that are not considered dangerous to the survival of the regime. Totalitarianism is never monolithic, but it still is a distinct form of political regime. This article places the autonomous spaces in literature within a totalitarian framework. Further, the article contributes to the understanding of totalitarian dictatorship in Iraq during the 1990s, a period in which the regime seemed to be compensating for its weakening by tightening the grip on the literary circles. As such, the analysis adds value to the general study of totalitarian dictatorships by focusing on the neglected subject of eccentricities of the dictator and how they shape life under his regime. If ever approached by scholars, this subject was treated from the psychological point of view, focusing on the ruler. In this study, the eccentricities of the ruler are considered an integral part of the system, affecting the lives of censors, critiques, party officials, publishers, poets and writers.

Although the main subject of the article is the meeting between a political system and the production of literature, it should be noted that the Iraqi novel received very little academic attention. The only book on the Iraqi novel in English is Fabio Caiani and Catherine Cobham's (2013), T*he Iraqi Novel: Key Writers, Key Texts*. This book is not focused on the 1990s and is more interested in the style and literary value of key texts than in the context of their publication or the discourse they produce. More relevant to this study is Salām 'Abud's (2002) *Thaqāfat al-'Unf fi al-'Iraq* (*The Culture of Violence in Iraq*). 'Abud, an Iraqi writer, poet and critic who lives in Sweden, presents a loaded and rather one-dimensional picture of the production of literature in Iraq during the 1990s, ignoring occasional dissident and independent voices. He also claims there was no clear difference between literature written in exile and literature written in Iraq at the time, which is a claim that needs to be supported by more evidence. Keeping in mind that 'Abud's book was published before 2003, the author could not have anticipated or analyzed the post-2003 literary revolution. The author, however, fails to observe the trends in Iraq preceding the fall of the regime, which created the revolution. In his view, all those who remained in Iraq and published have had to be collaborators of the regime. This article shows that this is not necessarily the case, and thus, provides a more nuanced picture of literary life in Iraq than 'Abud's book.

The primary source of data here is repeated interviews that were carried out with ten Iraqi writers, scholars and intellectuals who lived in Iraq during the period under study and most of them still live and write in Iraq today. These interviews illuminate the context when reading the novels that are dealt with here. This article is based on the reading of dozens of novels written and published in Iraq at the time as well as the reading of unpublished manuscripts, written in Iraq at the time and published after 2003. I used novels written by all of Iraq's well known writers who remained in Iraq, as well as novels by novice writers. Some of the novels were written as part of the *80 novels project* initiated by Saddam. The only guiding principle in choosing the reading was their description as novel (*riwāya*) and their availability out of Iraq. As many writers left Iraq before 2003, there is a fairly limited number of novels that fit the established criteria. Given the amplitude of the reading and the testimonies of writers I interviewed by mail, who lived in Iraq during that period, I believe that the article reflects the state of Iraq-based Iraqi novels at that time. It also defines the limits of the literary discourse. Iraqi novels written and published by exile writers are not part of the research since, as I show later, they had a rather different discourse that was not possible in Iraq under Saddam. The method used is one of literary analysis of the content and form of a number of novels, which is then put in the political context. A special attention is given to the process of publication. In terms of discipline, the article is primarily historical, analyzing a process and describing the conditions for its unfolding. This process is not linear and follows the line of extreme

repression and the reaction to it.

This article is about the attempt of a dictatorial regime to maintain hegemony in its hands despite the growing difficulties of the 1990s and the first years of the twenty-first century. Antonio Gramsci is the theoretician most associated with this term. Gramsci understands hegemony to be more than just ideology and domination but "intellectual and moral leadership" (Gramsci 1971, 57–58). However, hegemony is not only about acceptance of a worldview, it is also placing boundaries on thought processes and minimizing counter-hegemonic ideologies. To do that the regime mobilizes "organic intellectuals" to craft the hegemonic discourse and counter alternative voices. As I would later show, Gramsci's thesis only partially fits the Iraqi scene. Another theoretician I refer to is the Iraqi critic Salām ʿAbud. The latter skillfully portrays how the Baʾath regime terrorized Iraqi intellectuals into cooperating with it and how they were used to produce and instill a "culture of violence" (*thaqāfat al-ʿunf*) (ʿAbud 2002). This was particularly true about the 1980s. In the 1990s, with slightly different challenges, the regime was trying to repeat those patterns, with a measure of success. This research will try to give a more nuanced view of the relation between the regime and literary circles during the period and will also present a process which engendered the change in Iraqi prose after 2003.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: IRAQ OF THE 1990S

The 1990s were the inter-war years, set between the Gulf war and the Shiʾite and Kurdish rebellions in 1991 and the American invasion of 2003. The uprising in 1991, severe international sanctions, the no-fly zones in the North and South of the country and the occasional air raids, seriously weakened the regime. The Iraqi state, having reached the zenith of its power in the 1980s, faced a serious crisis of authority. The Kurdish north was now beyond the control of Baghdad which barely maintained control over the Shiʾite south. Corruption became a serious problem, sometimes fueled by the sanctions regime. Economic deterioration, as a result of sanctions and hyperinflation, produced the first mass emigration from Iraq, affecting particularly the middle class (Davis 2005; Marr 2012, 254–255; Tripp 2010).

The top leadership, Saddam Hussein, his family and clan and the rest of the political leadership, was more nepotistic than ever before. A sign of the time is that the president and his family sank into the depths of moral and material corruption, alienating more and more people. The oil embargo created a cash crisis that affected the loyalty of the security services and the Baʿath Party was unable to control the countryside leading the regime to delegate authority to sub-state actors such as tribes to fill the gap. Lacking ideological stimulations of its own, the regime resorted to encouraging a return to Islam through "al-Ḥamla al-Imāniyya" (The Faith Campaign) to confront the mounting despair. Though the economic situation finally stabilized with the acceptance of the "Oil for Food" arrangement in 1996, these trends continued throughout the period preceding the fall of the regime. In terms of the process of state formation that started in the 1920, the 1990s were a period of state deformation and the modest beginnings of decentralization (Abdullah 2006; Baran 2004; Marr 2012; Tripp 2010).

A LITERARY VACUUM

By 1995, almost all of Iraq's most prominent novelists had left the country: Fuʾad al-Takarli moved to Tunisia; ʿAbd al-Raḥman Majīd al-Rubaiʿi was already there. ʿAbd al-Sattār Nasir left for Jordan; Jassim al-Rasīf to the US. In most cases, their reasons for leaving were linked to the economic plight of the middle class. Writers were also affected by the narrowing of freedom of expression as well as the impact of repression. Some of those writers, especially Nasir, started writing audaciously against the regime, shortly after leaving Iraq.

A literary vacuum was created with the departure of these writers. Few prominent authors remained in Iraq. Muḥammad Khudayyir and Mahdi ʿIssa al-Sakr continued to live and write in Basra, which, during the 1990s, emerged as a rival literary center to Baghdad. Salām ʿAbud (2002) detects a measure of independence in their novels. In Khudayyir's masterpiece Basrayatha, first published in Damascus in 1996, the narrator is an observer to the realities of war-torn Basra, avoiding a moral stance but reporting on what he observes (Khudayyir 2007). These two writers, together with Aḥmad Khalaf in Baghdad, were no more than remnants of previous literary generations. Their writing during the period is symbolic and poetic. Thus they stayed on the safe side of relations with the regime (Hadi 2011, 123). Whenever they felt threatened, they would also submit to the regime (Khalaf 1990 and 1991).

In addition, some of the writers most associated with the Baʾthist propaganda of the 1980s were still around, wishing to fill the literary vacuum and willing, as ever, to serve the regime. The likes of ʿAbd al-Khaliq al-Rikābi and Ḥasab al-Shaykh Jaʿfar and others were searching for subjects for their novels and always on the lookout for signs of favorite themes from the regime. Against that background, other minor writers made their debut. In Iraq, writing a novel represents an upgrade in the literary career of a writer. Starting novelists usually lacked any trace of a literary gift and were typical party apparatchiks. Such is Muḥammad Mazīd, who wrote two novels during the period. Mazīd was a Baʿth Party member from Baghdad (Mazid 2002). Similarly, Ibrāhim ʿAbd al-Razzāq was a translator in the Ministry of

Information, with a short list of publications, who contributed two novels to the government campaign (ʻAbd al-Razzāq 2002). Not surprisingly, the general trend was that Baʼthi writers from the "Generation of the 1980s," would try to take over the vacancies left by those who left. This generation was the first generation of Iraqi writers to glorify the Saddam Hussein regime during the 1980s: the years of the Iran-Iraq War and Saddam's personality cult. Alongside the veterans, the list of novels published by the state at the time also included some new names (Al-Sharq al-Awsat, July 4, 2002).

THE MOTIVATION OF THE REGIME

David Baran showed that the Iraqi regime was seriously weakened during the 1990s and not as terrorizing as it had been previously (Baran 2004). In many fields "the barrier of fear," solid in the 1980s and brought down momentarily by the Intifada of 1991, has not been completely restored. This was not the case in literature. For writers, the Saddam regime became even more dangerous. At least two writers were killed during the 1990s for what they wrote: ʻAziz al-Sayyid Jassim and Ḥasan Mutlaq (al-Mussawi 2006,144–146). Many more were routinely arrested and tortured. Why then did the regime decide to fasten its hold on literature?

I would suggest several possible explanations: the Baʻth party came to power in 1968 with very few intellectuals in its ranks. During the 1970s, it forced intellectuals to serve it. Those who refused were either killed or forced to flee the country. Many others succumbed and served the regime. While many are considered to have surrendered to the regime out of terror, they remained loyal to it throughout the 1980s nonetheless. For the Baʻth regime, intellectuals were an important tool to transmit its message far and wide. In the 1980s, there could be no personality cult or glorification of war without their contribution. By the second half of the 1970s, the regime won absolute control over the literary world and its production. This achievement was in danger during the 1990s due to emigration of writers. Some of them, notably ʻAbd al-Sattār Nasir, were forced to cooperate with the regime in the 1970s. The fact that Nasir, and others, started attacking the regime in their novels was probably an insult to Saddam, who may have thought that he had a share in their success and felt betrayed. This may have prompted the regime to regain absolute control.

The regime was under the impression that literature can be controlled easily. In most cases there was no need for the use of repressive measures, an invitation to a talk with an official of the ministry of information (a censor or party apparatchik) was enough to streamline the writers. Salām ʻAbud describes the experience of fellow Iraqi intellectuals who had to affirm their loyalty to the regime by praising the Iran-Iraq war in their poems and tried hard to convince the editors to publish it or else those writers would be in troubles (ʻAbud 2002, 24-25). There was also, especially during the 1990s, much use of soft sanctions and remunerations that affected the writers: promotions, jobs, prizes, payments that enhanced their egos and alleviated the economic hardships (Baran 2004). Poets and writers were receiving financial remunerations from the regime at the end of every month. They were divided to three categories, apparently according to their loyalty to the regime. Poets of the first category were paid 200,000 dinars (around 160 dollars) and those of the third category got 100,000 dinars (around 70 dollars). Writers of the first category got 150,000 dinars (around 120 dollars) and those of the third category only got 50,000 dinar (around 30 dollars) s. Poets were more appreciated than writers because they were paid for writing and reading poetry in praise of Saddam and the regime in public events. Having an almost complete monopoly on the publishing houses in Iraq facilitated the regime's task.

Probably influenced by Russia under Stalin (al-Khalil 1989), Saddam Hussein attributed great importance to literature and the novel to transmit his message to the population and also for the purposes of propaganda outside Iraq. In the 1980s, state sponsored literature glorifying the Iran-Iraq war (Adab al-Ḥarb) was distributed freely to soldiers on the frontlines. In the 1990s, the regime possibly wanted to duplicate the literary campaign of the previous decade, only this time , the novels were also for consumption by the Arab public abroad, who was eager to follow Iraqi official line on the sanctions and expressed a much needed solidarity with Iraq. In his February 2000 meeting with the writers, Saddam even suggested that the state would support the publication of Iraqi novels by publishers outside Iraq. At least two books written as part of the campaign, by authors who were leading novelists, were indeed published by prestigious Arab publishers outside Iraq (al-Sharq al-Awsat July 4, 2002) This was already the era of electronic media and internet and the regime was exaggerating the influence of the novel, as a tool for shaping views, both in Iraq and abroad.

The last explanation concerns the personal caprice that Saddam Hussein nourished at that time. In political systems in which decision are mostly taken by the ruler in person, the dictator's caprices and eccentricities may play an important role and may also shift the regime's attention accordingly.[1] During

1 This is irrational, but happens in many authoritarian and dictatorial regimes. One is reminded of Hitler's interest in art and architecture when Germany was in war, of Stalin's interest in literature; or more contemporary examples: the military Junta in Myanmar (Burma) and its belief in astrology and Kim Jong Il of North Korea with his interest in (western) movies.

this period, Saddam Hussein decided to write novels. He wrote (or dictated) three novels before the fall of his regime and another was published after his death. All the novels were published anonymously with the designation: "a novel by its author" (Riwāya li Katibiha). Why Hussein decided to start writing novels is out of the scope of this article. However, this eccentricity contributes to our understanding of the relationship between regime and literature in several ways. It shows how much attention Saddam Hussien himself had given to literature in general and the novel in particular. When he spoke to the writers in February 2000, he did not speak only as a president and a politician, but he also spoke as a "writer" giving other writers "professional advice." So immersed was Saddam in the act of writing that, according to his translator, on the eve of the American invasion in February-March 2003, he was obsessed with the distribution of his fourth novel and ordered the workers of the presidential bureau to take care of that (Abdul Majid 2003, 131-133). Though his translator claims that Saddam Hussein wrote all his novels by himself (Ibid, 134), he was probably in need of professional writers to serve as "shadow writers," stylistic editors and the like. Finally, Saddam's novels are written in a very blunt style. In them, one finds violent xenophobia, sectarianism and even anti-Semitism, that, to a certain extent, subverted the main stream in Iraqi literature. Thus, "Al-Qala'a al-Hasīna" (The Strong Castle) has a Kurdish female protagonist, Shatreen. Upon the death of her Arab and Ba'thi husband, the Kurdish woman insists on parceling the common domicile, the castle. Her scheme is eventually rejected and the writer refers to the contested part of the castle , namely Kurdistan, as the "Lavatory" (al-Marāfiq al-Sihīyya) ('Abud 2008, 149-150) Evidently, Saddam was setting a line to be followed.

THE PROCESS OF PUBLISHING

The process of publishing books was almost under complete government monopoly. The main channel was the ministry of information. The two main publishing houses in Iraq were departments of the ministry. These were Dar al-Shu'un al-Thaqafīya al-'Amma (House of General Cultural Affairs) and the older Dar al-Hurīyya (House of Freedom). Apparently, there was no difference between the two as Iraqi writers failed to differentiate clearly between these two publishing houses (Davis 2005). In the shadow of these monopolistic publishers, there were little known and much smaller publishers, such as Dar al-Mansur, Dar al-Ma'arif and Dar al-Qabas, which were privately owned and not larger than bookstores. According to my interlocutors, all Iraqi writers, regardless of the publishers, had to submit the manuscript by themselves to the censor and only after his approval could they pass the text to the publisher. This monolithic apparatus was very effective in streamlining the writers without using anything more than soft sanctions.

In addition, Iraq of that period was almost totally cut off from a world becoming more and more global. All the communication lines, including the internet, were controlled by the state. It was nearly impossible and rather dangerous to maintain an independent contact with the outside world. In the Soviet Union and East Europe "Samizdat" literature proliferated and helped prepare the ground for political change. This literature was officially banned in those countries but exiles found ways of smuggling it in, where it enjoyed wide popularity. No similar "Samizdat" literature existed in Iraq, and whatever Iraqi exile writers published in exile, remained there. Somehow, Iraq-based writers managed to publish novels in other Arab countries, mainly Lebanon and Syria. In some cases, as earlier suggested, this was probably due also to the connivance of the regime (al-Jumhuriyya, February 23, 2000). Whatever the case, these novels never reached Iraq. Merely the fear, that the contents be known to the regime made the writers extremely apprehensive and cautious. Consequently, these books are not subversive and may even have served the regime.

SADDAM MEETS THE WRITERS, FEBRUARY 2000

A number of Iraqi writers recounted this story in the course of our conversations. In February 2000, Saddam Hussein invited a number of the novelists, short story writers, writers for children books and script writers to a meeting in his bureau. A glance in the Iraqi newspapers of the time shows that Saddam held meetings with all kinds of professionals to discuss coping with the embargo. But the meeting with the writers was more significant as Saddam was making his literary debut after the event. This was not disclosed to the writers during the meeting. The general subject of discussion was how to write in a manner that would represent Iraq to the world. The headline to one of the articles covering the meeting in the main newspaper quoted Saddam Hussein, showing the importance attributed to literature by the Iraqi president: "written culture survives longer and has a deeper impact than documents which interest the few" (al-Jumhuriyya, February 23, 2000). In the article, Hussein was described praising the literature written during the 1980s on the Iran-Iraq War and asking for a similar effort to portray what he considered to be yet another war against Iraq. He asked the writers to write more about the plight of ordinary people suffering from the sanctions, yet without pitying them, preserving their dignity. Finally, he promised the writers, but only those with some notoriety, to help with the publication of their works abroad (Ibid.).

In the same meeting, Hussein also issued an

admonition: "some young [writers] think that they become more important just because they oppose. Life is not like this." We may not know exactly who was targeted and whether this was said to admonish the writers. Taha Ḥāmid al-Shabīb, Iraq's only dissident writer at the time, who refused to attend the meeting, insists that Saddam targeted him alone and that he was not arrested simply because Saddam did not want to make him a "national hero." For those who attended, this was one more affirmation of the "red lines" that should not be traversed.

Typical to Saddam Hussein, the writers were invited without knowing the reason for the meeting. As the invitees were asked to cancel prior engagements they might have had, it must have been a terrorizing experience to show up uninformed of the meeting's purpose. Saddam Hussein perfectly understood that and opened by saying "you probably don't know what to say because you did not know in advance what I want from you." Then, one of the most loyal Ba'thist writer, the Palestinian Nawāf Abu-l-Hija, rose to speak about patriotism and set the tone for the others. As the meeting continued, the atmosphere calmed and one of the speakers even complained that "drama in Iraq suffers a lot from censorship and it is not possible to mention by name a lawyer or a physician who had done wrong" (al-Jumhuriyya, February 23, 2000). This was the limit of the allocated space for complaint to which Saddam replied that only he has the privilege to tell the writers what is wrong or right. One can almost hear the sigh of relief from the attendants when the meeting was finished. Why was the meeting convened? My acquaintance with the novels published in Iraq before the meeting does not suggest any rise of subversive literature that could have prompted such a meeting. It is more likely that this was a disciplinary meeting to streamline the writers and mobilize them for a campaign. On the margins of the meeting, Hussein might have found a writer to supervise his own writing. The disciplining was also meant to prevent dissemination of opposition literature from abroad. The meeting was immediately translated by the writers and officials into a project: The Eighty Novels Project (Mashruʿ al-Thamanīn Riwāya), over 50 of them were published by April 2003. By April 2001, the press secretary to Saddam Hussein advised him that the writers who met the president "have begun to write the works they were tasked with" (Sassoon 2012, 69).

THE EIGHTY NOVELS: CONTENTS AND WRITERS

The writers who participated in this state sponsored campaign belonged to several groups. The "Generation of the 1980s," veterans of the glorification of the Iran-Iraq war such as: Lutfiyya al-Dulaymi, Warid Badr al-Salim, ʿAbd al-Khaliq al-Rikābi, Saʿd Muḥammad Raḥīm, trusted "organic intellectuals" who could bring the "zeal" of their previous service (Gramsci 1972). There were also brand new names like ʿAbd al-Amir al-Majar, upgrading themselves with the publication of their first novel (al-Sharq al-Awsat, July 4, 2002). There were journalists in Ba'thi newspapers who were also political officers in the army like ʿAli Khayun, senior workers of the ministry of information like Nasira al-Saʿdun, who started writing novels at that time and focused on the daily life under sanctions. Three Iraqi prominent writers were also mentioned: Muḥammad Khudayir, Mahdi ʿIssa al-Sakr and Aḥmad Khalaf. The sectarian issue was rather blurred and motivation to serve the regime crossed sectarian lines: using available information on the writers I identified a similar number of Sunnis and Shiʿis.Therefore, answering Saddam's call was not due to a sectarian affiliation. In general, most writers were either known or unknown members of the "Generation of the 1980s" who wished to fill the vacuum left by their colleagues who fled.

A sample of nine novels, which I could find, reveals the scope of subjects covered. In many books, especially by the more zealous Ba'thists, the general trend is a vulgar demonization of the "enemy": the Shi'ite opposition (al-Jarāḥ 2000), the Kurdish rebels (Samara 2002), the Americans (al- Rikābi 2009), Iran and the Jews. Following Saddam's advice in the meeting, some novels recount the experience of Iraqi prisoners of war in Iranian captivity. In one case, in Madinat al-Dhiyāb (City of Wolves) Adel al-Shwiya (1999) writes the testimony of a real prisoner and the novel embellishes the testimonial core with literary decorations. This plot served three purposes: to help the prisoners cope with the trauma and regain some honor, to demonize the Iranians and to concretize the subject of the love of the homeland, by people who were away from Iraq for such a long period (Zeidel 2008). In the meeting with authors mentioned above, Saddam Hussein reminded the writers that Iraq is still in a war: the war against Iraq did not stop with the ceasefire of 1991 but is being carried out by other means such as sanctions. However, the heroes of this war were not soldiers on the frontline, they ordinary Iraqi citizens. Therefore, in most of the novels, ordinary people are at the center of the narrative. The Shi'ite and Kurdish Intifadas of 1991 delivered a fatal blow to the Baʿth party and the Ba'thists. Therefore, some novels written by party members depict a Ba'thi hero (al-Jarāḥ 2000, Latīf 2000, Samara 2002). These positive heroes live a happy life of model citizens and then, as part of party promotion, they are sent with their families to other regions where the pleasant routine is broken with the beginning of hostilities in 1991. The Ba'thist heroes fight, probably to dispel the view that they surrendered, yet in all cases these heroes are killed and there is no happy ending.

Concretization of the homeland is another recurring theme. Iraq is usually visualized in association

with the village, the orchard, the plantation and nature. In ʻAbd al-Khaliq al-Rikābi's novel, Atrās al-Aklām (The Files of Speech) it is the palm grove and the father of the narrator imagines the homeland in the form of the grove (al-Rikabi 2009, 93). In Bustān ʻAbud (ʻAbud's Orchard) it is the orchard, which symbolizes the homeland. In Al-Aaʻāli (The Highlands), it is the orchard that the martyr hero (who was an agronomist) planted and to which his son returns at the end (Latīf 2000, 207). In Ashjān al-Nakhīl (The Sorrow of the Palm Tree), as the title suggests, it is once more the palm grove in Abu Khaseeb near Basra (ʻAbd al-Razzāq 2002). This is a repetition of a recurrent theme from the 1980s. It also symbolized simplicity and a human attachment to the land and the soil as embodied by the fellāh (peasant). But this concretization was eventually far from being concrete and the dreamed homeland looked more like an unattainable dream. The orchard appears more in the context of the innocent past and does not fit well to the present or future. Thus, inadvertently, this state sponsored literature raises a subversive question that would bother writers after 2003: what is the homeland?

Following Saddam Hussien, this state-sponsored literature was sometimes vulgar and xenophobic. An example is Ibrahim ʻAbd al-Razzāq's Ashjān al-Nakhīl (The Sorrow of the Palm Trees) published in 2002. Set in Abu Khaseeb near Basra in the 1930s and 1940s, the novel is about Marzuq, born to a poor family of peasants, who pursues his education in Basra and then in Baghdad and dreams of returning to Abu Khaseeb. His dream is shattered when he returns there to find that his uncle married his girlfriend. Instead of marrying a poor peasant girl, Marzuq, who is now enchanted by modernization and changes his views on tradition, marries a modern woman, a teacher. The struggle between modernity and tradition is couched with classic anti-semitism, one which identifies the Jews with lust. Anti-semitism here is a by-product of the conflict and answers a need to find a scapegoat on the brink of yet another war. The Jews are the "other" in the plot. A Jewish merchant forces a Muslim to sell his beloved palm grove to pay a debt, other Jews in Basra profit from the black market of World War II. Jewish women are presented as lascivious and tempting. Finally, the Jews were not expelled from Iraq in 1951 by a government decree, they ran away with their properties and thus caused an economic crisis. Such expressions of anti-semitism were extremely rare in Iraqi literature before. Clearly, the Jews in this novel serve as a "fifth column," that was considered necessary for the Iraqi national narrative, sponsored by the state, shortly before an American invasion (ʻAbd al-Razzāq 2002).

Other novels were subtler and had a higher literary value. Such was Kurrasat Qanun (Draft Law) by Muḥammad Khudayyir (2004). This writer, who after 2003 became the spiritual guide of the new generation of writers, always wrote about Basra. This short novel is very symbolic and not easy to read. Writing more openly and clearly about the devastation of Basra would clearly have defied the censor and endanger the author. The symbolism may well be a code disguising the criticism. But it is too complicated even for the educated Iraqi reader to decode. This way, the author could be under the illusion of writing independently without irritating the regime. The narrator walks the streets of Basra during the war in 1991. The people of Basra are the heroes of the novel: Basra women who opened soup kitchens and gave free meals to the passengers, and children who get old so swiftly. This is wrapped in an atmosphere taken from the paintings of Goya – the bleakness and the resistance to a foreign invader – or the optimistic surrealism of Chagal, that allows the figures to fly (Khudayyir 2004). They are all being watched by the writer, sitting like Dodo, the Sumerian scribe, who serves as the god of history. One can see how such a novel serves Saddam's campaign. One can also see that the writer is ill at ease in that company and his novel can be interpreted differently. But in order to place the novels in connection with the requirements of the regime, one has to draw the boundaries of the "open space" for the discourse in that period.

THE SPACE AND LIMITS OF DISCOURSE

As seen in the meeting with Saddam, writers were instructed to write within the perimeters of two major themes: the situation and its impact on the Iraqi population and Iraqi patriotism (Ḥubb al-Watan). This allowed the writers a relatively wide space for expression and indeed some worthy literary works were written with the blessing of the regime. Under the term "situation," writing on sanctions and their impact, the wars, the Intifadas, the occasional air raids, social problems and even economic irregularities and corruption was tolerated and even encouraged. Hussein told the writers, as he told them during the Iran-Iraq war, not to embellish the situation and describe it as it is: sad, depressing (Al-Jumhurīyya February 23, 2000). He only insisted that the Iraqi figures should be presented with dignity. Therefore, underlining problems do not signify crossing the red lines drawn by the regime. Ideally for the regime, the daily hardships faced by Iraqis were to be combined with Iraqi patriotism to bring out the people's perseverance. This was done inʻAbd al-Khaliq al- Rikābi's novel Atrās al-Aklām (The Files of Speech). At times when Iraqi patriotism was left out and the sole focus was on the problems, this literature was tolerated, as long as it respected the other "red lines" (ʻAbd al-Khaliq al- Rikābi 2009).

The "reds lines" were quite clear. There was to be no covert or overt criticism of the regime, the Baʻth party, or any other government institution and the president. Though writing about problems

was encouraged, laying the blame on the regime or even raising the question of responsibility was utterly prohibited. Obviously, writers should not call for a political change, reform in the system or democratization, let alone demand freedom of expression and democracy. They were permitted to write about the victims of the wars, provided that responsibility for their death was always that of external factors (Iran, America, rebels) and not the Iraqi regime. Writers were not allowed to ask whether the victims died for a just cause or in vain. No sectarian, especially Shi'ite, contents, were permitted. This was a particularly sensitive subject after the repression of the Shi'ite Intifada in 1991 and the rise of Shi'ite sectarian consciousness later. All these red lines were regularly trampled by Iraqi writers in exile during that period, who did not have to fear the regime. This created a totally different discourse separating these two groups of Iraqi writers (Nasir 2002; Wali 1993; Wali 2001).

INDIVIDUAL VOICES: NIZĀR 'ABD AL-SATTĀR, IRADA AL-JABOURI

Within this literary world, there were also a few individual voices, who, while generally respecting the red lines, had stretched the limits of the open space and wrote worthy novels. They were significantly younger than the others. Nizār 'Abd al-Sattār (b.1967), published his first novel, Al-Matar wa Ghibār al-Khuyul (Rain and Horses Dust), in 1995. Between 1995-2003, he published two more novels in Baghdad. His second novel, Laylat al-Malāk (The Night of the Angel), was published in Baghdad in 1999. It tells the story of a child, in Mosul, flying on the back of a mythological creature from the Mesopotamian mythology, the Smartu. The child convinces the creature to change reality on a small scale. The Smartu is of the opinion that only a deluge would bring about change and the child helps him to change his mind by suggesting the constructive approach of making small scale changes. Notice how careful the plot is on that point: there should be no revolution, though the idea is contemplated, but only "constructive" small scale changes such as making grocers sell foodstuff more cheaply or a better sewage system in the child's neighborhood. Mosul in the novel suffers from American air raids and the Americans are the only identified enemy. By contrast, there is no overt mention of the Ba'th dictatorship and the suffering it inflicted. The Smartu in the novel recounts his suffering under the kings of Assyria, particularly Ashurbanipal. What he sees in Mosul reminds him of the deluge that was contrived by the gods in order to destroy everything and then rebuild it. This can be interpreted as subversive writing. However, by changing the Smartu's mind in favor of small "constructive" changes, this option is discredited by the writer. Instead of being banned, this novel won the state prize in 1999 ('Abd al-Sattār 2008).This means that as long as the "red lines" were respected, talk about minor problems was tolerated and, at times, even encouraged.

Irāda al-Jabouri (b.1965) published her first novel,'Atr al-Tuffāḥ (The Scent of Apples), in the official press in 1996. At the time she was working as a journalist in the official newspaper Al-Jumhurīyya. In 1997, she left Iraq for Yemen and returned after 2003. The novel is located in Karbala, al-Jabouri's hometown, with the air raids of the war in 1991 in the background. It narrates the meeting between a man and a homeless woman who finds refuge in his home. Both hide secrets: the woman was raped and the man was fired from his work as a teacher because he was accused of having illicit sexual relation with a student. The man has leukemia. Al-Jabouri is a feminist, therefore the novel is a harsh critique of Iraqi patriarchal society that sends the poor and destitute rape victim to a sanatorium instead of punishing the rapist, who hails from a respected family. The destitute woman is given power in the novel over a dying man. She detests society but is also strongly connected to it, certainly more than the reclusive man. This novel is about the plight of women, and about class differences in Iraqi society: the woman is poor and homeless, a victim of rape; the man is middle class and was left alone in his house. As poor and destitute as the woman is, she is presented as stronger and more solid than the man. Al-Jabouri, a secular Shi'ite, also defies official taboos by portraying Karbala as a Shi'ite city. She is probably the first Iraqi writer in Iraq to have done so. In this case too, this criticism was tolerated by the regime and consequently the writer never felt intimidated (al-Jabouri 1996). These two exceptional novels give a more nuanced view of the subject: not all novels were following the line Saddam was prescribing. At times, independent voices emerged which were going back to the obligation of the writer to reflect social problems. However, as long as they were not protesting against the regime, they were tolerated.

THE DISSIDENT: TAHA ĀĀMID AL-SHABĀB

The only writer in Iraq who consciously broke the barriers is Taha Ḥāmid al-Shabīb (b. 1953). His literary career started in 1995 with the publication of his first novel, Inahu al-Jarād (The Locust). Al-Shabīb did not belong to one of Iraq's literary generations and, being a physician, was an outsider to literary circles. Yet, only his second novel, Al-Abjadiya al-Ula (The First Alphabet), published in Baghdad by the official press in 1996, made him a "defiant writer" (katib tamarudi) (al-Shabīb 1996). So far he published 14 novels, eight of them between 1995-2003, and is one of Iraq most prolific writers.

Between 1995-2003 al-Shabīb claims that he felt an uncontrollable urge to write whatever he thought,

disregarding the well-known barriers and endangering his life and the security of his family. He was a loner and, to a certain extent, a gambler, yet a calculated one. In explaining the the guiding principles of his style, he explains that the reader is the one who gives meaning to the text. Human beings are universal creatures and therefore the novel should deal with universal and not local subjects. There should be no explicit mention of specific time and location. In essence, al-Shabīb used the allegorical style.

Al-Shabīb became master of making ends meet: writing and surviving. To do that he presented all his manuscripts to the censors, not knowing what they will decide. He also befriended some censors. He claims that censors approved his manuscripts because they appreciated him but also because they detested Saddam. The third step in his strategy consisted of publishing in small, privately owned publishing houses in Baghdad (some no bigger than a bookstore) but also, in one case, in Cairo. Every edition had a thousand copies (Hadi 2011). In those small presses the chances of evading the watchful eyes of the regime was considered better by all those who were willing to take the risk and publish there. Possibly, he was on the watch by the regime. Al-Shabīb was not invited to the February 2000 meeting with Hussien, which he interpreted as an admonition against those writers who oppose the regime but also considered to be directed solely to him.

The cover that al-Shabīb was using could hardly hide the meaning. All his novels from that period are set in totalitarian dictatorships that constantly torture and kill people. In Al-Dafīra (The Plait) from 1999, the tyrant is from the al-Maḥrus family, insinuating to Saddam Hussein's surname, al-Majīd (al-Shabīb 2009). Other novels abound with clues that scratch the thin surface of the cover, but it is precisely the plot which is loaded with anti-Hussein meanings. It is defiant rather than subversive writing because every Iraqi reader can easily understand the meaning.

However, al-Shabīb was an outsider and a loner, the only literary dissident in Iraq of the time. This may have protected him as much as his strategy did. A loner is not considered to be a danger. The regime probably thought that the warning from Hussein would be enough to silence him. If he was a part of a group, the regime would probably have arrested him. His exceptional case shows how well the system functioned: al-Shabīb in fact exposed the frailness of the regime, but no other writers would explore the paths trodden by this brave writer.

A REVOLUTION IN WAITING

But only looking at the surface of novels written and published during that periodis misleading. For under the surface the overbearing pressure of the regime produced totally different results. Away from the watchful eyes of the regime, there was some activity underground. Young intellectuals would meet in apartments, motels, cafes, parks and even in cemeteries to discuss their plans and express their dreams of a change and the novels they plan to write (al-'Ubaidi 2009). All of them had never written a novel before.

One of them, Nathim al-'Ubaidi, (born 1964) published a novel, Al-Ta'ir wal-Jamjama (The Bird and the Skull), in the official press in 2002 (al-'Ubaidi 2002). Set in the first years of the Iran-Iraq war this is a very personal novel written in the first person, dedicated to the writer's brother who was killed in that war. In the novel, the death of the brother in the war shatters the family and the life of the hero. Toward the end, the martyr serves as a kind of a spiritual guide for the hero and it is implied that after death he is in a better place than the Iraq of the 1980s. All these are rather dangerous red lines that the author crossed. Despite the fact that this novel is published close to the fall of the regime, the author was still very cautious. He softens the criticism by laying the responsibility for the continuation of war on the Iranians, the Imperialists and even on Israel and certainly not on the Iraqi regime (Ibid, 55-56, 67). Probably following Saddam's line, one finds traces of anti-semitism in the novel: the hero's parents live in a house that belonged to a Jewish landowner, who left in 1952 and threatens to return in order to retrieve his property. The hero dreams that the landowner returns to throw them from the house (Ibid, 33-35). Yet all this is probably the lip service which the author had to write in order to have the book published in the official press and the crux of the novel is that subversive treatment of bereavement. After 2003, Nathim al-'Ubaidi became one of the founders of the emerging literary circle that would revolutionize Iraqi literature: "The Generation of the 1990s."

Another young man, 'Ali Bader published his first novel, Baba Sartr (Papa Sartre), in Beirut 2001. This novel was a great success but was not concerned with the Ba'th or Iraq under the Ba'th at all (Bader 2001). In order to publish in Iraq, where he was still living, he approached the official publisher with a manuscript of a novel. The manuscript was written in 1993, but the novel was published in Baghdad only in 2002, the last year of the Ba'th. Nevertheless, Shitaa al-'Aaila (The Family's Winter) is a very shameless escapist novel, the romantic type (Bader 2007). In a later novel, written after 2003, Bader confessed that he wrote that novel in such a way only so that he could publish a novel in Iraq of the time (Bader 2005b). He was already known in Iraqi literary circles, but he needed a book published in Iraq to be considered an Iraqi writer living and working in Iraq and not an expat.

After 2003, Bader published six more novels and became the most famous speaker of the "Generation

of the 1990s." In 2009 he left Iraq and now lives in Belgium. In the summer of 2005, the journal *Masārat* (Routes) expressing the views of this generation, dedicated almost an entire volume to Bader (Masārat 2005, pp.19-61). Bader not only expressed the views of his generation, he also recounted the story of those agitating intellectuals in the 1990s and his novels are an important source for the study of the period (Bader 2011) Thus, in his novel Masabīḥ Urushalīm (The Lanterns of Jerusalem), he describes debates in Baghdad, preceding the American invasion about a democratic Iraq, its role in the region, its relations with the west, Iraqi national identity versus Pan Arab identity and so on)Bader 2007).

As mentioned before, these young intellectuals dreamt about writing a novel. Some manuscripts were written "to the drawer" and were not published, while some would be published after 2003. This is another important indication of the agitation of Iraqi intellectuals, many of the young and frustrated, in Baghdad and Basra during the last years of the regime. One such novel is Bayt ʻala Nahr Dijla (House on the Tigris River) by Mahdi ʻIssa al-Sakr. The manuscript was written in Baghdad in 1991-1992 and published in Damascus in 2006, shortly after the author's death. More than the aforementioned novel by Nathim al-ʻUbaidi, that was published by the official press, this novel is a complete revision of the writing on the Iran-Iraq war. First, it tells about the war from the point of view of the people in Baghdad during the war as opposed to the soldiers in the frontlines. Repression by the regime is omnipresent. It openly discusses taboo questions such as the number of Iraqi casualties and the psychological impact of the war on those who returned. Finally, almost all the main figures are about to explode in every minute and this, in itself, symbolizes the situation in Iraq during the 1990s (al-Sakr 2006).

The novel was considered the best means for expressing these views. This genre gives the possibility to "pour" out all inhibited emotions. Some novels represent a pure expression of the feelings of this generation: ʻAbd al-Karīm al-ʻUbaidi's al-Dhubāb Wal-Zumurud (Flies and Emerald) and Diyaa fi Hafr al-Batin (Lost in Hafr al-Batin), Nassīf Filk's Khidr Qad wal-ʻAsr al-Zaytuni (Khidr Qad and the Olive Colored Age), Aḥmad al-Saʻdāwi's Al-Balad al-Jamīl (The Beautiful Land). The message of this literary and intellectual revolution, a message of contents rather than style, is to reform Iraq and Iraqi national identity along the principles of democracy, a deep commitment to pluralism, religious tolerance and civic values. Some writers cross the religious lines to write about members of other communities, encouraging interreligious dialogue. Pan Arabism is substituted by a strong assertion of Mesopotamian identity, which is interpreted as pluralistic and binding the various communities to a land-based patriotism.

Nathim al-ʻUbaidi wrote a manuscript in 2002, Ard al-Layāli (The Land of Nights), which was published as a novel in Iraq in 2006 (al-ʻUbaidi 2006). Compared with his aforementioned novel, which was published before 2003, this is a more audacious novel. The heroes, four Baghdadi rather educated youth, are arrested, tortured, and witness the destruction of their country and city. Furthermore, they hold the regime responsible for all that and even curse the regime and the president. They feel despair and loss, and no hope is looming in the horizon, even if they do envision an American occupation (Ibid, 118). The only consolation and, to a certain extent, liberation, is singing and, more important, writing: the narrator, Aḥmad, is writing a novel. When the novel was published in Iraq in 2006 it was considered a genuine expression of the "Generation of the 1990s."

Taha Ḥāmid al-Shabīb, who never belonged to literary circles, let alone "the Generation of the 1990s," also wrote a manuscript for one of his most audacious novel, Tinn Ḥurri (Soft Mud), in 2002. The novel is about an archeologist who conducts an excavation in a site that was supposed to be an ancient royal palace. The novel explores the origins of civilization and whether there could be a human civilization not based on the eradication of the human being. The answers he discovers are very cruel. As usual in al-Shabīb's literature, insinuations to Saddam Hussein and his regime are all over the text, but this time the entire plot is even more audacious than his previous novels. It is not known why this novel was published in 2004 and what would have happened to al-Shabīb had he tried to present it before 2003 (al-Shabīb 2004).

In many cases the writers preferred to wait before they publish or write their novels and this was out of cautiousness and expectancy. Since 2001, these intellectuals could sense that the days of the Baʻth regime are numbered. Therefore, shortly after 2003 there was a wave of anti Baʻth novels, published in Iraq, by the representatives of the new generation such as: Nassīf Filk, ʻAbd al-Karīm al-ʻUbaidi, Aḥmad al-Saʻdāwi , Luway Ḥamza ʻAbbās and others.

Who were these writers? Most were born in the 1960s and 1970s. Not all were completely unknown before 2003: some even published poetry books and short stories between 2000 and 2003. ʻAli Bader (born 1964) was a student and a lecturer in the university of Mustansiriya, Baghdad, who, with two other students Ḥaydar Saʻid (born 1970) and Nathim ʻOda (born 1965), founded the literary journal Naqd (critique), calling for the use of tools of modern literary critique to criticize the present situation (Bader 2005a, 386). Nathim al-ʻUbaidi (born 1964) was a journalist and a member of the writers' union since 1995. Luway Ḥamza ʻAbbās (born 1965), holding a Ph.D, was a professor of philosophy. Saʻd Salloum (born 1975) was a student. Aḥmad al-Saʻdāwi (born 1973) and ʻAbd al-Karīm al-ʻUbaidi (born 1960) did not have a specific job before 2003 and after that year

combined writing with working in the Iraqi and international media. Diyaa al-Khālidi (born 1975) was selling books on the sidewalk in Baghdad's al-Mutanabi street. Nassīf Filk (born 1954) was in prison during most of the period and after 2003 works as a journalist. Most were born in Baghdad, only ʿAbd al-Karīm al-ʿUbaidi and Luway Ḥamza ʿAbbās are from Basra. Nearly all of them are secular Shi'ite and this aspect can be discerned in their writing. However, all of them were little known during the period, forming a kind of alternative culture in Baghdad and their leap forward would only come after 2003. Living in Iraq in the 1990s is an experience they all have in common. This meant a loss of any hope. The writers observed the general impoverishment of the society, the dullness of Baghdad and the impossibility of pursuing their dreams. They felt silenced by more powerful forces. They witnessed how literature is detached from the daily experiences of most Iraqis, serving the regime. And they wanted to make literature relevant as it should be. Interestingly, this literary revolution would not originate from the prisons nor would it spring from the luggage of returning Iraqi exiles after 2003. It would start with ordinary Iraqis who served in all of Saddam's wars and lived through the hardships of the 1990s. It would start with young lecturers in the university, part time journalists and the lower echelons of government service.

To close the circle, Diyaa al-Khalidi's first novel, Yahduth fi al-Bilād al-Saʿīda (It Happens in the Happy Land), from 2006 (al-Khalidi 2006), is about writers and the repressive Ba'thi regime in the 1990s. In the second half of the short novel, the writer, Marwan, is detained by the regime in a aristocratic villa, in the suburbs of Baghdad, away from his family. He is provided with prostitutes, drinks and entertainment and, in exchange, he is forced to write a novel. His manuscript will be read by a "reviewer," a literary critic working for the central intelligence (Mukhabarat) and he is expected to write a National Novel (Riwāya Wataniyya). The partial manuscript he already submitted, that we read in the first half of the novel, is classified dangerous by the reviewer. Al-Khalidi leaves an open end to this novel. However, this novel captures and criticizes the situation of most of Iraq's writers during the last decade of Saddam's regime. It also criticizes the hierarchy within the literary world with its cruel implications for new writers: the literary critique is given the privilege to decide whether Marwan would be executed or promoted. The novel is also a revolt against "the National Novel," and that is another characteristic of the novels of the "Generation of the 1990s." The first half of the novel, the "novel within the novel," is the opposite of a National Novel and reads like the classic manuscript of "the Generation of the 1990s." As this novel shows, the writers in the 1990s have had to live under two repressions: a paramount repression by the regime and secondary repression by the overlords of the literary world such as writers, poets, and critics. This novel also shows that in the 1990s it was not possible to openly defy those forces and this would only become possible after April 2003.

CONCLUSIONS

Not all the reasons for the concentration of Saddam Hussein's regime (and him personally) on the novel are known. However, this article shows that it has a lot to do with previous experience of using novelists successfully during the Iran-Iraq War and even more so with a personal proclivity of the dictator who groomed a "literary career." With the exception of one dissident, the regime managed to have an "Iron grip" on literary circles. Iraq was isolated from the distribution of anti-regime literature by expat writers. However, all this only paved the ground for the literary revolution that would erupt after 2003.

Gramsci applies to the Iraqi reality in so far he describes the use of intellectuals for the maintenance of hegemony. The structure of submissive obedience by intellectuals to the dictatorship has been laid down in Iraq already during the 1970s. In the 1990s the regime was repeating the same patterns. How "organic" were the "organic intellectuals" in the sense that they willingly cooperated with the regime is impossible to establish, though for Gramsci and ʿAbud a measure of willingness always exists. Gramsci misses the personal aspect of a dictator who grooms literary aspirations and therefore focuses on the novel. This caprice exists in many other dictatorships and does not fit into any logical model. If Gramsci sees hegemony as a reaction to the existence of alternative discourses, ʿAbud totally fails to see that. He does not see a difference between writers in Iraq and out of Iraq. He does not notice the "winds of change" which bred the "Generation of the 1990s."

For the young writers and intellectuals behind the revolution, the twelve years between 1991-2003 were years of loss of hope. The end, in 2003, rekindled this hope and they started writing about the 1990s and not about post-2003 Iraq and its problems. This is a literary revolution in delay, trying to reform the present by undoing the past and getting liberated from its chains. Their de-Ba'thification is very profound. It is based on a reappraisal of all the pillars of Ba'thist national ideology and thinking. Instead of a homogeneous society and community, they call for a pluralistic community in which even the sectarian identity would find place (Saʿīd 2009; Zeidel 2011). They strongly oppose militarism and consider the match between it and a very violent form of nationalism to be responsible for Iraq's wars. This writing expresses a reaction against Arabism and the Arabization of Iraqi culture and also against the dictator and the personality cult that surrounded him.

Gradually, some of these writers started writing about post-2003 Iraq and its problems, especially sectarian violence. Diyaa al-Khalidi's best-selling novel Qatala (Murderers) from 2012 is one example (al-Khalidi 2012). Intellectuals, such as Sa'd Salloum, direct their efforts to changing Iraqi politics and developing a more pluralistic Iraqi society and national identity. But writing about the present, all of these writers connect it to the Ba'thi dictatorship and its heritage. The writers argue that the same people continue to kill in their struggle to control. The same philosophy of power and fear prevails. The battle has not been won with the fall of the Hussein regime. The miserable situation in Iraq following 2003, makes some intellectuals, notably Sa'id, Salloum and al-Khalidi, pose historical questions on the trends of Iraqi history: what was wrong in it? Can the process of state formation be changed? All these questions require a separate study. However, most of the novels written by these writers are still about the 1990s and not about the present.

The "Generation of the 1990s" was only the by-product of the period between 1995-2003 and deserves a separate study like this one. Novels, not even those of Taha Ḥāmid al-Shabīb, did not bring down the Ba'th regime in 2003. An American invasion did that. Yet my study showed that by tightening the grasp on literature and the novel in the period of study, the Iraqi regime actually produced an antithetical and revolutionary trend in the literary and intellectual life in Iraq, emerging only after American tanks overthrew the dictatorship.

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Neither Shi'a nor Sunni: An Interview with a Mozabite

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The Ibadi perspective on the early caliphate differs from that of both Sunnis and Shi'a. From their point of view, the only legitimate way to come to power is not through familial or tribal affiliation or through divine selection, but through selection by the leading men of the Muslim community (Hoffman 2012: 7).

The Mozabites are peculiar in several respects. They represent a small Berber island in an Arab sea; they are the only city-dwellers in the Sahara; they practice a fierce and exclusive form of Islamic puritanism but in an urban and not a tribal frame of society; and they have kept their institutions intact (Alport 1954: 34).

Keywords:
Mozabites; interview; Northern Sahara

The above quotes give some introduction to the topic of this essay, which is the Mozabite people. The Mozabites live in the Mzab region of the northern Sahara in Algeria and are Ibadi Muslims. This piece is a reflection on a series of interviews I conducted between 2008–2009 with Mustapha, an Ibadi from the Mzab. Before discussing Mustapha's insights, however, I will provide some brief background information on the subject and my own interests in it.

I must firstly note that I have never been to the Mzab, but became interested in the region through my broader research. Second, while I have a degree in the History of Religion, I am not a specialist in Islamic Studies or North Africa. My interaction with the Mzab has been relatively cursory, though it is, I believe, enough to present an introduction to this seldom-addressed subject, and discuss the thoughts of my interviewee.

After doing research on different varieties of Islamic anarchism, I became interested in some of the ways small societies have been able to sustain relatively independent cultures for long periods of time. I was particularly drawn to what has sometimes been described as a third branch of Islam: Ibadism. The history of the Ibadi school of Islam dates to the period of the late 650s in which Sunnis and Shi'as split – before these categories were even conceptualized. The split within Islam came to a head during the reign of the fourth caliph, Ali, cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad. When his leadership was challenged by Muawiyah, battle erupted, and the first two lines of division were set: those who had backed Ali were to become Shi'a – the party of Ali – and those who accepted the lineage of caliphs after him (including Muawiyah) eventually became identified as Sunni.

When Ali chose to lay down arms and resolve the matter through arbitration, groups of former supporters left Ali's camp and a third line of division was created. These former supporters are often referred to as Kharijites, or 'seceders', and are said to have rebelled violently but there were in fact multiple groups who seceded. Some of those who took up arms against Ali did so for what they believed to be betrayal and mistrust in God's ability to win them victory on the battlefield. They are among the most notorious figures in Islamic history; Ali was eventually assassinated by a Kharijite. However, they have also become some of the most misrepresented in Islamic history. Others who seceded simply withdrew their support for Ali but did not take up arms against him. It is from the lineage of this group that the Ibadis claim their heritage.

This context is relevant by way of introduction to the discussion of the Ibadis as they are often characterized as a branch of Kharijites. Although no self-identifying Kharijite group survives today, the term is still used pejoratively to describe an opponent as violently intolerant. It is important to note that Ibadis reject that label. While they agree with Kharijites on the principle that a Muslim ruler ought to be the most pious Muslim and not necessarily related to the Prophet, they condemn the overbearing violence and intolerance ascribed to the Kharijites. As Ibadi and Assistant Grand Mufti of Oman, Kahlan Al-Kharusi, wrote:

> Nearly all of the sub-groups of the Khawārij [Kharijite] took an extreme view, defined corrupt Muslims as unbelievers and so applied laws demanding repentance or execution. This is the quality that is most remembered about the Khawārij in major religious circles today. The Ibāḍī sect does not inherit any of these defining ideological features (2015: 140).

To the extent that one could speak of Shi'as as forming a separate school of Islam, the same could therefore be said of Ibadis. In their theology and interpretations, they emphasize the Qur'an more than hadith and, unlike dominant currents across the Muslim world, it is not uncommon for Ibadis to view the Qur'an as created, rather than eternal. Today Ibadis number a few million in places as diverse as Zanzibar, Libya, Tunisia, and Oman – the only country where they comprise the majority. They have also sustained seven urban enclaves in the Mzabi desert of Algeria known in their own language, Tumzabt, as At-Isjen, At-Mlisht, At-Bonour, Tajnint, Igraren, At-Ibergan, and the largest town Tagherdait (Ghardaia), which a population of approximately 100,000. It was more than a 1,000 years ago that they developed a sophisticated irrigation system including six dams and approximately 3,000 wells (some as deep as 80 meters) that enabled them to thrive in this desert area. Although the Mozabites are Ibadis, and they maintain relations with Ibadis in other regions, they also have their own distinct culture. They have their own free schools, their own businesses, and their own architecture.

In conducting my initial research on the Mozabite community, I noticed that while some scholars and journalists had written about the Mzab, few have ever spoken directly with Mozabites from the region. I searched the Internet to find someone from the Mzab who spoke English and would be willing to speak with me. Eventually I stumbled across several Mozabites who were interested in presenting information about themselves and their culture. I therefore became acquainted with Mustapha whom I was able to interview. I was also driven to interview someone from within the community in order to clarify some misconceptions about the Mozabites. Some have claimed that Mozabites are exempt from Algerian military service and that police do not patrol Mozabite towns. Mustapha denied both claims and assured me that Mozabite men are required to serve as much as others, and that Algerian police patrol all Mozabite towns.

However, it was the topic of the nation-state and how the Mozabite community is organized that I found the most interesting when speaking with Mustapha. He explained that while they believed in the necessity of an Imamate or Muslim state, they did not insist that the leaders were Ibadi. In fact, he referred to the Algerian state as a Muslim government, and therefore fully acceptable to the community. They had concluded rather pragmatically that it would not always be possible to organize themselves into an independent state. As he described, they can choose either revolution or patient compliance. In the course of a revolution, then they may win – and establish an Imamate – or they may lose. Any survivors would have to choose between organizing guerilla warfare or patiently organizing themselves without an Imamate, while biding their time until it is possible to establish one. This final alternative, of waiting for more opportune circumstances, is called al-kitman and is the stage where the Ibadis in the Mzab have always been and where they remain.

What I found fascinating was how they took this situation as an opportunity to organize themselves with a relatively significant degree of autonomy. Though the community has friendly relations with the Ibadis in Oman, they do not recognize Sultan Qaboos of Oman as the head of their own Imamate. Instead, they have developed an independent council, the 'seminar of Azzaba,' whose mission, according to Mustapha, is to make decisions that affect 'religious and social' issues in Mzab. Within this structure, they have partial autonomy in Algeria and, alongside state-run schools, are able to run their own free schools where they teach Islam, Arabic, and Ibadi history. However, as Mustapha explained to me, while an Imamate comprises a full authority state with all political and governmental power, the Azzaba is solely concerned with social and religious matters, which, according to him, limits its power.

Each Mozabite city, as well as Ouargla – which is the only city outside the Mzab – has its own Azzaba, and representatives from each council together constitute a federal council called Ammi Said. In terms of their internal structure, the Azzaba appoints oumana (trustees) to manage each city's affairs such as building rules, market regulations, and managing valley barrages and water resources. The Azzaba also initially created the timsiridin (washers), a group of women who tend to women's affairs, but this council acts independently now. When something such as a home needs to be built, the Azzaba has a kind of spontaneous arrangement of mutual aid called touiza where volunteers organize to do the work together. In addition to the Algerian police, they have their own voluntary patrols guarding their area. The Azzaba councils are run by volunteers, according to Mustapha, and therefore require no taxes.

The semi-autonomy of the Mozabites stems in part from the religious and social authority wielded by the Azzaba within each city. As Mustapha explained, 'people pressure' is the best way to keep power in check given the lack of financial or electoral accountability. In this way, the Azzabas enforce their decisions through social, 'not political', pressure.

What appears to be most clear about the Azzaba for the Mozabites is the important social role they play. When Mustapha and I discussed difference between the 'social and religious decisions' that the Azzaba may take, the difference appeared to be fluid, and rooted in discretion and circumstance. In fact, such decisions are treated equally, and it is not stated if a decision is social or religious when it is announced. Mustapha particularly emphasized the 'personal discretion' involved in the Azzaba's rulings, rather than religious law. As he said to me, the Islamic law that the Azzabas draw on can be flexible according to conditions and circumstances. The non-bureaucratic character of their authority can be seen in the delivery of their unwritten declarations: often in the mosques' daily sermon.

The most vivid example Mustapha gave of the Azzaba's role in society reflects their religious and social blend. When modern technologies such as television and radio first reached the Mzab region, the Azzaba attempted to confront the issue and their new presence in society. As a result, these technologies were banned, according to Mustapha, due to the music and 'immoral materials' they brought to the community. However, in observing both the positives and the negatives of such technologies, the Azzaba began to understand the function they could serve, and decided to utilize only their positive aspects, allowing such items in the community. This pragmatic approach reflects more widely the persistence of the Mzab community: maintaining their traditions in the Azzaba while participating in Algerian society as they wait for the Imamate.

I maintained contact with Mustapha throughout 2008 and 2009 and most recently spoke with him in 2013. It was 2013 that saw the beginning of the most violent conflicts in decades between the local Arabs and the Mozabite Berbers (Reuters 2015). Mustapha and I had spoken about the history of such conflicts with the local Arab population, and he explained how they can even be sparked by rather random incidents such as children's fireworks going in the wrong direction. The recent conflicts (2013–2015) led to several dozen people killed on both sides and many Mozabite homes and businesses destroyed. Now a new generation, including human rights activist Dr. Kamel Eddine Fekhar who founded Mouvement pour l'Autonomie du Mzab, has organized self-defence groups and is challenging the traditionally more conservative response of Mozabite elders. Today, in reflecting on what I learned from Mustapha, I can only imagine how these conflicts have affected him. While this thought is somewhat somber to conclude with, I write it while recalling that he comes from a

community with a long history that lives on in these customs and organizations. It is their persistence to live their own lives as minorities, inevitably in some degree of tension with the world around them, that first inspired me to reach out to him.

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The Silk Roads

By Peter Frankopan
London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015.

It is a bold promise that the Byzantinist Peter Frankopan takes upon himself to fulfill by presenting the reader with "a new history of the world." The Silk Roads (2015) narrates three thousands of years of global history from the perspective of the Eurasian crossroads between the Mediterranean and Central Asia, but the reader who has expected a study of the golden age of silk trade between China and Europe is likely to get disappointed by the title. As the author stresses on the very first page, the main incentive is to offer an alternative vision to the "accepted and lazy history of civilization" where – in the words of the anthropologist Eric Wolf (1982, 5) – "ancient Greece begat Rome, Rome begat Christian Europe, Christian Europe begat the Renaissance, the Renaissance the Enlightenment, the Enlightenment political democracy and the industrial revolution."

Academic historians who generally – and for good reasons – tend to frown upon grand narratives may question the prudence of taking up the fight against them by constructing new ones instead of simply ignoring existing ones or breaking them down into deconstructable units. But grand narratives are no mere pulp fiction distortions of academic history: sometimes they constitute the invisible warp from which other human sciences derive their everyday definitions, notions and paradigms. By offering an alternative vision of global history, which focuses on the main land mass of Central Asia and its constant movements of goods and people over millennia, Frankopan has not merely questioned the Western historical prerogative but also the grand narrative of "the West" as a distinct and independent historical agent, in which still the post-colonial discourse all too often tend up to get stuck. Has the West ever existed, and if it has, where does it begin and end – historically and geographically?

A main fundament for the grand narrative of the West is the myth about ancient Greece as its cultural cradle. Despite the fact that historical research has since long moved away from this distorting picture of the ancient world in general, it seems that most state school systems keep recycling a notion of history that was en vogue when they were established in the mid-1800s. When Frankopan describes the multicultural interaction under the auspices of the first universal world empire, Achaemenid Persia, and the ensuing dissipation of Greek culture in the Middle East and Central Asia during the Hellenist and Late Ancient period – as it mixed with Near Eastern religions like Judaism, Manicheism and Christianity – it can hardly be called revolutionary knowledge; but it is a history that deserves to be retold, again and again, until it gets stuck in the popular consciousness. Perhaps most of all, it is also a history that is necessary to be aware of if we want to prevent Islamists and Islamophobes from maintaining the myth of Islam appearing out of the blue. From the moment when Islam left the Arabian Peninsula and spread between the Mediterranean and Central Asia, it became part of the same restless reality that would both provide it with its most lasting cultural and intellectual monuments and pave way for its greatest challenge in the Mongol invasions. A recent work that more specifically deals with this topic is *Lost Enlightenment* by Starr (2013).

Geographically, Frankopan's re-narration serves to highlight how the "Europe" that we by convention persist in calling a continent despite the fact that it is not, is a late construction that has always been a periphery either to the larger Eurasian land mass or to the Mediterranean Sea. A northwards shift from the Mediterranean took place – as already Fernand Braudel noted in his now classical work from the 1940s – in the seventeenth century and coincided with the overseas expansion of the Western European powers, a shift that has been fundamental for our presently accepted notions about globalization, colonization and modernity. Yet it suffices to throw a glance at Central and Eastern Europe – which succumbed to a second serfdom during its effort to keep up with the Transatlantic powers – or the Mediterranean countries – which were left to offer an exotic backdrop of decay – to realize why this construction would turn out to be much more fragile than the self-appointed Europeans had imagined. It began to crack and crumble already in the 1800s, and it is even tempting to ask whether the whole grand narrative of the West and its historical mission appeared in an effort to compensate for the feelings of vulnerability and insecurity (for German readers, the new study by Koschorke, *Hegel und wir,* 2015, offers a highly recommendable analysis.)

Here is where it has to be stressed that about one third of *The Silk Roads* is in fact a new history of the *modern* world, and the last hundred years in particular, for which the World Wars, the Cold War and the "War on Terror" appear as mere side theaters of a resurgent Eurasia. The premise for this way of narrating history is that the lamps really went out all over Europe in 1914 never to be lit again – that the ensuing history of European and the Western success and global dominance is a hollow myth that can only insufficiently cover up the fact that the sun has gone down a century ago and is now about to rise in the east. Especially the last chapters, which are devoted to US military activities, Russian cultural imperialism and Chinese economic penetration in Central Asia, appear as somewhat premature conclusions of a process that we are currently part of, and the self-confidence of the current Kazakh and Turkmen states is not necessarily a testimony to their actual strength.

This said, *Silk Roads* does raise important questions not least for students of modern history and the Middle East. It makes the colonial division of the Middle East appear as an almost haphazard act of desperation rather than a considerate scheme, and instead Russia re-enters the searchlights as a main historical agent behind the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. This matches an increased interest among current historians of the First World War to re-focus on the power rivalries in Eastern and Southern, rather than Northern and Western Europe as main or even actual sources of the war (Reynolds, 2010;

McMeekin, 2011; Clarke, 2012), and it later echoes the hotly debated effort of Timothy Snyder to re-frame the Nazi and Soviet genocides and the Second World War in *Bloodlands* (2010). This new way of narrating the history of the Middle East gives the reader appetite for a more up-to-date version of Hopkirk's 1990 study of *The Great Game*, perhaps with renewed focus devoted to the way in which the struggle between Transeurasian (Russian) and Transatlantic (Anglo-American) powers keep affecting the region.

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Syria from Reform to Revolt Volume 1: Political Economy and International Relations

Edited by Raymond Hinnebusch and Tina Zintl
Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press. 2015.

Syria from Reform to Revolt Volume 2: Culture, Society, and Religion

Edited by Christa Salamandra and Leif Stenberg
Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press. 2015.

The two-part edited collection entitled *Syria from Reform to Revolt* is a crucial read for anyone who wants to understand complex realities and societal, cultural, religious and economic developments and transformations that took place in Syria prior to the 2011 uprisings. It is one of the most comprehensive recent contributions to contemporary Syria scholarship. The volumes focus on the period between 2000 and 2010, signifying the first decade of Syria under the rule of Bashar Al-Assad. The publications are the result of an academic conference entitled *Syria under Bashar al-Assad* which was organized in October 2010, at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies (CMES), Lund University, Sweden. The conference was the first international, cross-disciplinary meeting of scholars of contemporary Syria. The two volumes, conceptualized prior to the Syrian uprisings, are based on grounded empirical research in Syria and shed light on some of the seeds of the Syrian revolt. Both, established scholars and young academics with more recent experience, contributed to the volumes.

The first volume is a rich book with 14 chapters divided over three parts, all providing valuable insights on the changes and transformations in Syrian society during the first decade of the twenty-first century. The three parts are respectively entitled:

1. Reproducing Power and Legitimacy;
2. Reconstructing the regime's social base;
3. Regional and international challenges.

In the introduction, the reader is informed about the developments in Syria when Bashar al-Assad took power. After years of austerity in the 1980s and the death of Hafez al-Assad in 2000, his second son, the young 34-year old Bashar al-Assad became president. Bashar's presidency was made possible by an immediate change of constitution, which previously stated that a president of Syria should be at least 35-year old. Immediately after his inauguration speech, a new wind was felt in Syria. People started to openly discuss previously forbidden subjects like politics. Where the old discourse of Hafez had been nationalist and anti-Western, the new discourse introduced relative openness through the introduction of government guided economic markets.

The Damascus Spring shook the old guard of the Hafez reign and when the political openness of this first revolt in 2001 became too threatening to the old power structures, Bashar decided to clamp down on this new openness and its main initiators were arrested. Syrian civil society was controlled and co-opted by the introduction of so called GONGOs, government organized non-governmental organizations, headed by the first Lady, Asma al-Assad. Young urban entrepreneurs replaced the members of the old Revolutionary Youth Union. The First Lady, with a background in banking and a British upbringing, served

as a role model for young Syrian women who were highly educated. Despite the promised reforms, Bashar's rule turned out to be a charade of openness where authoritarianism was neo-liberalized and upgraded. The introduction, written by Hinnebusch and Zintl, sets the tone for this volume with its focus on political economy, national reform policies and how Syria transformed from a closed dictatorial regime to an upgraded authoritarian state.

The first part, comprising of three chapters, identifies how power and legitimacy were reproduced under Bashar's rule. Hinnebusch describes how the presidential succession led to an intra-elite power struggle whereby new elites were formed through the economic reforms. The replacement of old guards by modernizers did not go without a major challenge to reform, which reached a watershed during the 10th party congress in 2005 that signified another dissidence towards Assad. Important in this chapter is the analysis of the power struggles between *Assadists* vs. *Khaddamists*, the latter are former supporters of vice-president and longtime friend to the old Hafez. Abdul Halim Khaddam was the second most powerful man in the country and had been one of Hafez's closest allies. The age gap between Khaddamists and Assadists was on average 30 years. Parallel to the internal strife within the Assad circle, the country was lifted into a new kind of national economic openness, also known as the *social market economy*.

The social market economy, Bashar's core concept of his reform project, is central to the chapter written by Samer Abboud. Abboud's chapter gives a thorough overview of what a social market economy in a Ba'athist framework entailed. Aurora Sottimano elaborates on the function of the Syrian social market economy as means of ensuring stability for the regime and maintaining power, whilst implementing politically cautious reform policies. The term became an ambiguous slogan that enabled the regime to micro-manage the envisaged reforms to usher Syria into the new twenty-first century. Reformist and nationalist discourses served as the ideology behind the regime's domestic and foreign policies and provided Bashar al-Assad a narrative to justify why the Arab spring would not affect Syria. As Sottimano rightfully concludes, however, the Syrian uprising transformed Al-Assad into an "emperor without clothes" who continues to cling to an outmoded paradigm of authoritarian power and control.

The second part of the book addresses the reconstruction of the social base of the Assad regime. This part is the core of the volume with most chapters covering opposition activism, co-optation of foreign-educated Syrians and domestic reforms, volunteerism and education, politics of Islam, female citizenship and agricultural transformation. Najib Ghadbian explains that the 2011 uprising was preluded by a variety of previous opposition movements and dissident activism. Beginning with the Damascus Spring, encouraged by the inaugural speech of Bashar al-Assad in 2000 that raised expectations for genuine reform. The speech encouraged the publication of an open letter that called for the end of martial law, release of political prisoners and reduction of the influence of security services. Political salons in Damascus were tolerated and well attended. This phase of political opposition lasted less than a year. After the crackdown of this first wave of opposition, the movement rose again between 2003 and 2005, after the issue of the *Damascus Declaration for Democratic National Change*. Lastly, between 2008 and 2010 opposition movements took place mostly in form of human rights organizations led by young lawmakers and digital savvy young professionals, which saw another government crackdown on dissident movements focused on breaching the Ba'ath party political monopoly. Ghadbian then links these three phases to the uprisings of 2011 whereby the initial demands of the protesters were not to call for the fall of the regime but rather more reformist and local: to call for the release of child prisoners and end local political corruption. Chants on the streets, however, soon called for the fall of the regime, after the violent crackdown with casualties. Zintl follows up with a chapter on how foreign-educated Syrian technocrats helped create a veneer of reform by the Assad regime. It led to the creation of NGOs, previously banned in Syria, but under the strong control of the regime. The establishment of private banks, prestigious private universities, and English-language media lured highly foreign-educated Syrians back into Syria, which allowed these professionals to exercise some sort of political influence but only within the limits set by the regime. Mandy Terç analyzes volunteer campaigns and social stratification during the first decade of Bashar al-Assad's regime during the transition from a state-run socialist economy to a market-oriented social market economy. It turned young Syrian entrepreneurs from prominent wealthy families into young social engineers, very much compliant with the regime. The *Syria Trust*, the First Lady-led charity organization and largest Government-organized NGO (GONGO), played a strong role in promoting the culture of volunteerism, fund-raising and charity whilst maintaining the strict hierarchies and normative social rules of the Assad regime. The uprisings of 2011 undermined this idea of inclusiveness and showed that those with limited resources (rural non-elites) had been losing out all along and therefore rose up against the regime whilst educated urban elites stood by the regime.

The uprisings put an end to the image of Assad as a reformer and Asma al-Assad as an open-minded care-taker of the poor. Paulo Pinto's chapter on the politics of Islam under Bashar al-Assad indeed concludes that the image of a reformer was quickly crushed during the uprising of 2011, by his determination to hang onto power using all violent means possible. Despite his attempts to co-opt religious Islamic leaders and factions, the regime ultimately lost control over the religious field when Islam became one of the main discourses to mobilize opposition. The chapter by Rania Maktabi touches upon a much understudied and little understood field of study in Syria; female civil rights and citizenship laws. Constraint by a regime loyalty to orthodox clerical power structures, weak reforms took place in this field prior to the uprisings but the outcome of the civil war will have a profound, not necessarily positive,

impact for female citizenship in Syria. Myriam Ababsa's chapter details an important yet often unrecognized dimension in the decade leading to the uprisings of 2011; the impact of droughts and agrarian transformation in North East Syria. Between 2007–2009, Syria endured a long period of consecutive droughts whereby tens of thousands of farmers fled to urban areas in search of a new livelihood. Consequences on agricultural production were considerable and led to a call for aid from UN organizations to care for 300 000 families or so, who were driven out of their homes into camps around the major cities. The chapter gives a well-informed overview of the developments in the Jezira area (north east Syria between the Euphrates and the Tigris) with regard to history of agricultural reform and development policies.

The third part of this volume deals with the international political environment and regional challenges. Carsten Wieland describes the regime's policy paradox of domestic oppression and international openness. Not long before the uprising in 2011, the regime sought to connect to the global international community through initiatives in foreign policy and attempts to move out of isolation. Cautious but strategical engagement with Western government and politicians took place and Wieland gives a thorough overview of the various phases in Bashar al-Assad's rule and the characteristics of Syria's main foreign relationships. Kamel Dorai and Martine Zeuthen's chapter on the impact of Iraqi migration to Syria based on fieldwork between 2006 and 2009 is interesting in the light of the Syrian refugee crisis. The chapter concludes that Iraqi refugees felt trapped after 2011, between accelerating violence in both host society and country of origin. Valentina Napolitano concludes the third part with a chapter on Hamas' rhetoric in Palestinian Refugee camps in Syria. She concludes that the Syrian uprising undermined and destroyed the partnership between the Syrian regime and Hamas, when its leaders left Syria out of protest and settled in Gaza, Egypt and Qatar.

The final chapter by Hinnebusch and Zintl reflects on the Syrian uprising and the many developments during Bashar al-Assad's first decade in power. It casts light on the seeds of the uprising in 2011 and concludes that the reforms that were set in motion created a veneer of openness and modernity which was in fact a kind of authoritarian upgrading that quickly turned into authoritarian persistence reflected in the violent crackdown of the Syrian uprising since 2011.

The second volume focuses on transformations and changes in the role of culture, society and religion during the first decade of Bashar al-Assad's rule. Introduced by Christa Salamandra and Leif Stenberg, this volume presents a wealth of scholarship with work by seasoned scholars with decades of experience and young scholars with field experience that took place just prior to the uprisings. The writers indicate that Syria was rarely a chosen destination for researchers due to restrictions on access and the many logistical challenges to conduct fieldwork there. Much in line with the first volume, the second volume demonstrates how the regime's rhetoric of reform led many to believe that a gradual dismantling of dictatorship was approaching and that working through institutions would render the regime responsive to real change. The volume addresses the paradoxes of hope, anticipation and eventual betrayal and grievances that were present in life in Syria prior to 2011. Exploring the space between regime support and public support, the chapters illustrate the diversity of positions of the social actors in sectors such as the arts, religion, culture and media where the paradoxes can be found. Central to understanding these transformations is what Stenberg and Salamandra call *limited autonomy*, accepted agency under the control of Bashar al-Assad reformist policies. Under this limited autonomy, hopes for greater freedoms were kept alive but when these hopes were dashed, the disappointment led to impatience and frustration, which ultimately fueled an uprising and public contestation.

In the first chapter, Max Weiss studies criticism in contemporary Syrian fiction and shows that in 2010 the content of the Syrian novels represents a transformation indicating gradual liberalization of politics. Whilst the security police, or *mukhabarat*, still terrified the daily lives of Syrians, in the first decade of Bashar al-Assad's rule, the fictionalized characters of these *shabihha* created a partial dissent towards these daily sources of fear in Syrian society. The psychological *wall of fear*, so obviously present in Syrian society where one out of four Syrians was assumed to be full or partial government informers to check upon their fellow citizens, plays a central role in the analysis in this volume. Whilst most political conversations prior to 2011 would take place at locations not overheard by the *mukhabarat*, in private kitchens, cars or gardens, the novels provided a cultural non-physical space to debate politics relatively free and without repercussions.

Salamandra observes similar transformations in the Syrian TV drama industry, where creators during the first decade of Bahar's presidency pushed the boundaries of censorship through dark comedy and social realism. She observes that many professionals in this industry had their hopes set high on the young president and believed that reforms were gradual but eminent. Syrian soap series, or *musalsalat*, have put Syria on the map of the Arab World as the center of Arab nationalism and resistance based on socialist ideals. Syrian drama distinguished themselves from the studio-based Egyptian drama with regard to on location filming, giving the shows a more realistic feel to it. The legacy of social realism and satire filtered through in the early peaceful protests against the regime, and Salamandra concludes that Syrian television drama exemplified the critical reflection by young protesters in the Syrian revolt. Donatella Della Ratta continues the writing on Syrian TV fiction, as she identifies *the whisper strategy* that guides the communication between drama directors, producers, crew, and representatives of the Assad regime and indeed the president himself and pushes for a reformist agenda. TV drama is seen as a strategic sector for conveying messages to domestic audiences and marketing and projecting a new Syrian to the outside world. The next chapter describes developments in the performing

arts. Shayna Silverstein discusses the cultural politics of Syrian folk dance during the period of social market reform. Highlighting the importance of *dabke*, Silverstein demonstrates that the *dabke* became a unifier in the Syrian revolution when protesters danced the *dabke* in public squares as a show of defiance and resistance against state domination.

The volume then turns to another sector in Syrian society, that of religion. Laura Ruiz de Elvira describes the role of Christian charities during the first decade of Bashar al-Assad's presidency. In this chapter, the study of charities provides an insight into transformations in society as well providing a method to explore the impact of the transition to a social market economic model. The chapter is empirically rich, based on in-depth ethnographic fieldwork with Christian charities in Aleppo and Damascus. Ruiz de Elvira concludes that Christian charities enjoyed privileges under Assad's rule as well as a tolerance from the regime of the tight relationships Syrian Christians tend to have with foreign organizations. The chapter that follows, by Andreas Bandak, analyzes the performance by Syrian Christians on the national stage, exemplified by an analysis of the annual Christmas concert in the national opera house in Damascus, that took place on 17 December, 2009. He extends his study with an analysis of the performances by the choir of Juwat al-Farah founded by the Greek Catholic priest Abouna Elia Zahlawi. The choir's main role was to promote a message of nationalist unity and peace in Syria, epitomized by the Christmas concert. Bandak extends his observation to another staged performance where the choir takes part in the annual *Fakhr Baladi* campaign for national pride, led by the Syrian First Lady Asma'a al-Assad. Bandak concludes that the classic analysis of support to the regime as public dissimulation and living "as if" the public revered al-Assad, as first observed by Lisa Wedeen, cannot be generalized to understand the ordinary lives in Syria before the 2011 uprising. The expressions by Christians during the annual Christmas concert and *Fakhr Baladi* are not merely staged performances but many Syrian Christians, and indeed other minorities, genuinely felt part of the nation and Bandak observed that many Christian Syrians feared a situation where the Assad regime would no longer be able to protect them.

The last two chapters of this volume focus on the Syrian *ulama* (religious scholars), economic liberalization and the transformation of Muslim organizations during the first decade of the twenty-first century. Thomas Pierret studies the economic situation of the *ulama* and their reliance on resources from the private sector. Heavy reliance on the private sector caused some clergymen to take sides with the merchant communities in Aleppo and Damascus, who favored stability and thus remained loyal to the Assad regime. The merchant communities did not want to jeopardize their business. Other religious scholars supported anti-regime protesters from the beginning of the revolt in 2011 and did not rely that much on the economic elites. Stenberg focuses on the transformation of the Shaykh Ahmed Kuftaro Foundation, one of the largest religious organizations in Syria that is linked to a branch of Sufism of the *Naqshbandiyya* order. The chapter focuses on the religious leader Saleh Kuftaro who succeeded his father Ahmed Kuftaro in leading the organization. In 2009, Saleh Kuftaro was arrested, after the minister of religious affairs and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor issued a decree to curtail the agency of Sunni religious organizations in Syria. The decree diminished the support for the regime among many Muslim religious individuals.

These two volumes are must-reads for anyone who wants to be thoroughly informed about the seeds to the Syrian revolt in 2011 and learn about Syrian society, culture and politics during the first decade of the twenty-first century in detail. Empirically, however, both the volumes suffer from a general problem that can be found in most Syria scholarship prior to 2011 that still resonates in the current scholarship; the heavy focus and emphasis on Damascus and studies at national level. The majority of contemporary Syria scholarship has been based on fieldwork in and around Damascus and urban areas, with the exception of occasional studies carried out in Aleppo and with Bedouins in the countryside. The only chapter in these two volumes, which breaks away from the traditional focus on Damascus and urban areas, is Ababsa's work on droughts and agrarian transformation in north-eastern Syria.

Despite the focus on Damascus, the two volumes provide a good reference for policy makers and professionals engaged in discussion and debates on what should be done for peacebuilding and reconciliation in post-war Syria. The volumes successfully illustrate what is meant by the often-mentioned social market economy and the wall of fear, ever so present in daily life in Syria during this decade. It demonstrates how the reformist policies, rhetoric and narratives gave Syrians hope and how these hopes were crushed during the uprising. As the chapters in each of the volumes were initially written for a conference that took place in 2010, the volumes do not discuss extensively how Syrian civil society and culture were sustained and transformed after the uprising. For example, in the liberated opposition areas in the north and northwest of Syria, a new wave of cultural expression, grass-root civil society and governance emerged in Syria, leading to a dismantlement of the mythical wall of fear under the Assad regime. Open political debates and public meetings were suddenly possible in those areas where the regime had lost control and the extremists militias and ISIS fighters had not taken control.

Syria will never be the same again after years of war, mass killings and violence, and large scale displacement, and it is very unlikely Syria will continue to exist as a nation within the 2011 borders. New forms of local governance and authoritarianism have since emerged. However, these two books provide a good historical reference of what was in Syria and what might be done once the fighting and killing has stopped and those who can return home.

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