ABSTRACT

REMEMBERING IS RESISTANCE: IN PHYSICAL AND VIRTUAL PLACES OF DOWNTOWN CAIRO

by Genevi Schindelhutte

The Egyptian government is increasingly monitoring, prosecuting, and limiting political dissent. This thesis examines how Egyptian activists use, experience, and construct physical and virtual spaces in their activism. To answer the research question I interviewed protesters who participated in the 25 January Revolution in downtown Cairo. Additionally, I conducted discourse analysis of interviews and social media content. In the current restrictive political environment, respondents are concerned with contesting government narratives and reclaiming spaces for resistance. I present this argument in two main sections. First, I present a conceptual discussion of the connection between resistance and memory in physical and virtual places of resistance. I argue that the spaces in downtown Cairo connected to the revolution are being appropriated by both the government and activists often resulting in contested narratives about the revolution and broader notions of citizenship. Secondly, I argue that both public and social media places used by activists to plan and orchestrate the revolution are now utilized to commemorate dead and jailed revolutionaries.
REMEMBERING IS RESISTANCE: IN PHYSICAL AND VIRTUAL PLACES OF DOWNTOWN CAIRO

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Genevi Schindehutte

Miami University

Oxford, Ohio

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Advisor: Dr. Bruce D'arcus
Reader: Dr. Marcia England
Reader: Dr. Ian Yeboah
Reader: Dr. Mark Peterson
Reader: Dr. Nathan French

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by

Genevi Schindehutte

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The College of Arts and Science

and

Department of Geography

____________________________________________________

Dr. Bruce D’Arcus

____________________________________________________

Dr. Marcia England

____________________________________________________

Dr. Ian Yeboah

____________________________________________________

Dr. Mark Peterson

____________________________________________________

Dr. Nathan French
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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the respondents who informed it
and to Shimaa el-Sabagh
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Chapter 1: Tweeting Tahrir

On 25 January 2011 thousands of people marched through the streets of Egypt to demand dignity, freedom, and justice. In Cairo, protesters converged in Tahrir (Liberation) Square where they staged a sit-in. The world watched as Egyptian citizens resisted the onslaught of security forces, thugs, and thieves. For 18 days, Egyptians occupied squares, streets, and neighborhoods across the country until president Hosni Mubarak resigned. The mass demonstrations were orchestrated by a coalition of opposition groups - particularly youth movements - to protest government corruption and police abuse. Protest organizers used social media platforms to coordinate, plan, and publicize these act of resistance.

These historic events were part of a larger wave of protests known as the Arab Spring. In December 2010 Mohamed Bouazizi, a Tunisian street vendor, doused himself in gasoline and set a fire that would spread across North Africa and the Middle East. Despite cultural differences, activists were able to successfully use social media to transmit messages across the Arabic speaking world and beyond. Consequently, the role of the Internet in fueling the Arab Spring has garnered widespread interest (Castells 2012; Khamis et al. 2012; Fuchs 2012; Erlich 2009; Shahin 2012).

As protests extended across North Africa and the Middle East journalists, pundits, and scholars debated the role of social media in the so called ‘twitter revolutions’ (Hudson 2011). First popularized during the Iranian protest in 2009 (Sullivan 2009), the notion of a “Twitter revolution” emphasizes activists’ use of social media to communicate and coordinate protest activities. The 25 January Revolution in Egypt has similarly been called a “Facebook revolution” (Ghobrial & Wilkins 2014). Critics of these characterizations are quick to point out that 25 January was not a virtual revolution. Additionally, they argue that characterizing the Arab Spring as Twitter or Facebook revolutions elevates the role of the tech savvy middle class, while diminishing the significance of economically marginalized participants (Erlich 2009). Finally, it also ignores decades of work done by activists to promote and sustain resistance (Shahin 2012; Khamis et al. 2012).

Scholars weighing in on the Arab Spring have also emphasized protesters use of physical space in fanning the revolutionary flames. In a 26-page pamphlet circulated prior to the 25
January protests in Cairo, organizers provide tactical advice on ‘How to protest intelligently’ (Gregory 2013). Protesters were encouraged to meet in smaller groups across the city then gather in Tahrir Square. The pamphlets explicitly asked that the content be distributed via e-mail and photocopy only, rather than posted on Facebook and Twitter. Scholars continue to discuss the relative significance of activists uses of both physical and virtual spaces in promoting resistance. Tahrir Square - because of its strategic location, visibility, and symbolic value - invigorated academic debate on the power of place rather than social media (Tawil-Souri 2012).

Making Martyrs

This thesis contributes to geographic debate on the role of social media and public space in resistance by examining how protest participants in Cairo use, experience, and construct physical and virtual places in their political activism. Drawing on in-depth interviews and discourse analysis, I argue that activists use virtual space to remember, experience remembering in physical space, and construct practices of memory in physical and virtual space as resistance.

To support the research question, I begin by presenting a framework informed by geographic literature on resistance, public space, social media, and memory. The framework is organized around resistant subjects, places of resistance, and practices of resistance. Geographies of resistance focuses on how resistance, identity, and citizenship unfold in place. Public squares and online platforms are spaces where people have visibility and voice. In Cairo, resistant subjects use physical and virtual places to express and communicate collective memories. Activists, protesters, and dissidents also use these places to express their identity and exercise citizenship.

Next, I detail the qualitative methods used to answer the research question. To examine how protest participants in Cairo use and experience physical and virtual places I rely on in-depth interviews. To address how protest participants construct these places I conducted discourse analysis on interviews as well as social media content.

I present the research findings both spatially and then narratively. First, I explore four physical and one virtual space where memory and resistance are visibly intertwined. Respondents identified these places as meaningful to their activism. Additionally, I address how respondents use and experience these places as part of their political activities. Second, I present the larger shared narratives respondents constructed around 25 January. Drawing on geographies
of resistance, public space, social media, and memory, I argue that activists use martyr narratives and memorial landscapes to contest government narratives, inform resistant identities, and expand notions of citizenship.
Chapter 2: Resistance and Memory in Place

The 2011 Egyptian Revolution was a collective act of resistance. Protesters organized in virtual space and occupied physical space to make demands on their government. For 18 days, Tahrir Square was the epicenter of Egyptian politics constantly being broadcast, shared, and tweeted around the world. During the protests activists graffitied ‘Twitter’, ‘Facebook’, and hashtags on walls and shop shutters across downtown Cairo while tweets, Youtube videos, and Facebook posts went viral. These historic events present an opportunity to explore geographic concepts including the relationship between the local and global, the physical and virtual, and the significance of place in political and social processes.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine linkages between geographic literature on resistance, public space, social media, and memory. These literatures are organized around resistant subjects, places of resistance and practices of resistance (Fig. 1).

![Conceptual Framework](image)

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The relationship between resistance, identity, and citizenship in critical geography highlights questions about exclusion and marginalization from the public sphere. Literature on public space
considers normative practices in and discourses about public space as well as broader implications of being included and excluded from the public. Recent scholarship in geography and communications examine the capacity of social media to facilitate political change and serve as a public platform. Memorial landscapes inform social identity and dominant conceptions of citizenship. Geographies of memory consider the potential for counter memory to resist dominant identities and contest official rememberings.

Together, these literatures provide a framework through which to explore how activists, protesters, and dissidents engage practices of memory in physical and virtual space. A geographic analysis of the places and practices of resistance in downtown Cairo inform our understanding of the role of physical and virtual places in politics. Furthermore, this framework contributes to disciplinary conversations about the relationship between place, identity, and citizenship. Finally, geographies of memory can inform our analysis of the politics of social movements.

Geographies of Resistance

Geographic discourses on resistance focus on the spatial practices of subjects embedded in power relations (Rose 2002). Everyday practices in everyday places are bound up in power relations. Political geographers present resistance in opposition to power (Cresswell 2000), but acts of resistance are also viewed as reconfiguring power relations rather than destroying them (Keith & Pile 1997). The latter conceptualization of power enables theorists to view both acts of domination and resistance as expressions of power. Consequently, acts of resistance are expressions of power with the potentiality to produce new forms of domination and marginalization (Hannah 2007).

The cultural turn, starting in the 1970’s, describes a shift among scholars towards analyzing culture (Gregory et al. 2009). In geography, the cultural turn ushered in research outside the cold hard laws of positivist logic and toward the everyday (de Certeau 1984; Scott 1985). New social theories championed by radical, Marxist, and feminist geographers focused on counter culture (Cresswell 1993), class exploitation (Harvey 1973), and feminism (Valentine 1989), respectively. These geographic inquiries focused on the structures through which particular identities and subjectivities are produced. As a consequence of the cultural turn,
human geographers began asking questions about people’s everyday experience in everyday places.

In the 1980’s, critical geographers started asking similar questions within the context of power relationships. Inspired by the work of the philosopher Michel Foucault, discourses on power relations provided a new method for geographers analyzing where and how power is performed (Crane 2012). Following these critical traditions, geographers of resistance examine how people act against domination and marginalization. Critical geographers have considered how social movements turn “sites of oppression and discrimination into spaces of resistance” (Keith & Pile 1992, 234). Others have focused on how marginalized people are alienated and excluded from public places (Valentine 1989). At the beginning of this millennium, geographers were practices of domination, entanglements of power, and acts of resistance were topics of inquiry (Sharp 2000).

Drawing on these critical traditions in geography, I conceptualize resistance as the contestation of identity and the structures through which marginalized subjectivities are produced and maintained. In the context of my research, activists’ practices of resistance in public and social media space are aimed at challenging their political marginalization and renegotiating citizenship. Here, I conceptualize citizenship as everyday practice. From this view citizenship is understood as a set of practices informed by normative social frameworks (D’Arcus 2004).

Resistant Subjects

Influenced by post-structuralist thought, geographers typically view the subject as constructed and relational (Castells 1997). Pile (2008, 211) asserts that, “[i]n general, geographers interested in subjectivity have avoided assuming that people’s subjectivities are somehow singular, autonomous and/or fixed. This has meant a basic assumption that the subject and the social are somehow constituted together, mutually”. Consequently, subjectivity is viewed as constructed within social relations.

Critical geographers contextualize the city—and public space in particular—as the premier site of politics. The relationship between the political subject, citizenship, and geography is tied to ancient Greek city states (Painter & Philo 1995; Isin 2002). A resident of a territory,
recognized as a citizen, is inferred with rights and obligations. However, not all those residing in the territory are considered “true” citizens, a category which often requires a shared history, culture, ethnicity, language, and religion (Painter & Philo 1995). In other words, a body must be present in the territory—as well as belong—to be recognized as a legitimate political subject or citizen.

Geographers also explore the relationship between identity and place through a ‘sense of place’. Gillian Rose (1995) nominates three ways the relationship between identity and place unfold namely, identifying with a place, against a place, and not identifying it. Identifying with a place is connected to a sense of belonging and can occur at a range of scales. A ‘sense of place’ or the meaning associated with a particular space pervade everyday life and experience (Rose 1995). Everyday places can be associated with belonging, alienation, or exclusion (Rose 1995).

For some to belong in a political community, it is necessarily for others to be excluded (Staeheli 2008). Feminist discourses concerning identity, difference, and domination focus on how space is gendered, sexualized and racialized (Cresswell 2012). Geographic literature on resistance has focused on political subjects asserting their identity through practices in places against marginalization and domination (Keith & Pile 1992). Acts of resistance are often aimed at expanding the definition of citizen (Secor 2004). Resistant subjects, through acts of resistance, appropriate places that facilitate this challenge (Staeheli 1994).

**Places of Resistance: Public Space**

The concept of public space is grounded in the distinction between public places, those that imply equal access, and private places, those that imply exclusion. Despite the assumption that public space is equally accessible by all members of the public, social spaces are implicated in power relationships. Place contains “power struggles over control and exclusion” (Meital 2007, 857). Those who are excluded from public space are usually also politically marginalized by dominant groups.

Critical geographers examine how public places are constituted by and constitutive of social norms and practices. The repetition of normative activities in public space are productive of the public (Mitchell 1995). Critical geographers are concerned with those excluded by normative practices in and discourses about public space (Cresswell 2000). They identify
discourses and representations of public space that function to exclude marginalized people, such as women (Valentine 1989), ethnic minorities (McCann 1999; Ruddick 1996), and the homeless (Mitchell 1995). Politically disenfranchised people are spatially marginalized through their exclusion from public places. Their identities and activities are excluded from public view and consequently from conceptions of the public.

Public places contain and reproduce dominant power relations through which marginalized people are excluded. This exclusion occurs both through the physical characteristics of public space and the activities permitted and encouraged in those places. Control over public space is tactically and symbolically significant for protests movements (D’Arcus 2010). Representations of and in public space contribute to conceptions of the public.

Access to public space can be situated in broader discourses of political rights and citizenship, because the political rights of people impact how and which spaces they use (Staeheli 2010). Everyday citizenship is expressed in the ability to freely access public spaces (Painter & Philo 1995). Thus, everyday practices and the spaces where they occur are implicated in citizenship and the rights afforded through inclusion in the state.

The state creates and enforces laws that regulate behavior in public space. Access to public space for political protest is generally formalized through legal codes which limit the acceptable activities and locations (Mitchell & Staeheli 2005). When restricting certain publics from accessing public spaces or certain spaces from the public, governments invoke concerns over public safety and maintaining law and order. Legal measures to limit who occupies public space—and the activities they are allowed to perform in that space—constitute a policed public (Valentine 1989).

Counterpublics

Counterpublics is one way geographers discuss subaltern groups excluded from the dominant public. In Rethinking the Public Sphere, Nancy Fraser (1990) challenges Habermas’ (1974) conception of a singular public. In this view, public space contains multiple and often conflicting emotional relationships and publics. Speaking of ‘the public’ communicates a social totality. This totality implies the existence of others, but irrelevant others (Warner 2002). Don Mitchell (1995) examines how marginalized groups can create their own “spaces of representation” and
express themselves to a public from which they are excluded. In asserting their rights to the city—and public space particularly—marginalized groups can increase visibility and legitimacy.

Graffiti culture is an often-cited example of a counterpublic (Shobe & Banis 2014; McAuliffe & Iveson 2011; Moreau & Alderman 2011; Macdonald 2001; Cresswell 1996). Graffiti is part of complex systems of meaning and power (Macdonald 2001). Scholars analyze graffiti as a means of contesting place by challenging dominant views of place. There are two dominant views of graffiti: graffiti as vandalism and graffiti as resistance (Shobe & Banis 2014). Although for some people graffiti is associated with fear and unease, it is also a means through which marginalized people can influence their urban landscape (Moreau & Alderman 2011). Counterpublics can also use graffiti to exclude and discriminate against other groups (Nayak 2010).

**Places of Resistance: Social Media**

The Arab Spring reinvigorated academic discourse on the political and social implications of virtual spaces and practices. In academic literature, physical and virtual spaces are often constructed in a binary relationship. Physical space is considered fixed and local, while virtual space is seen as fluid and global (Graham 2008). Geographic inquiry on the Arab Spring has employed the binary of the power of social media vs. the power of the street (Barnett 2011; Gregory 2013).

Others have looked beyond this oppositional relationship by grounding virtual space to physical infrastructure (Zook et al. 2004). Samuel Kinsley (2014) argues that the materiality of virtual space are not sufficiently considered or discussed by geographers. He calls for future research in ‘digital geographies’ that incorporate greater attention to the material conditions of digital spatial practices and processes. Yet others have focused on how virtual spaces reframe and reshape material spaces (England 2011).

Social media practices are part of larger media networks (Tawil-Souri 2012). These platforms can enable counterpublics to circumvent the hierarchically controlled media landscape by directly engaging the audience or through entering the mainstream media discourse (Khamis & Vaughn 2013). This provides an important counter narrative to those produced by dominant groups. Tweets are now both the subject of news and the source of news. The impact of social
media should not be analyzed in isolation, but should instead be examined as part of broader mediascapes (Aouragh & Alexander 2011).

Social media has transformed how information is produced and consumed (Kitchin et al. 2013). Virtual spaces are political. They are sites of mobilization, censorship, community, identity, and belonging (Graham & Khosravi 2002). Clive Barnett (2011) asserts that the role of new media in the Arab Spring presents “an occasion through which changing forms of organization, long-term processes of dissent or class restructuring, or changing social relations” (263) can be researched.

Social media has transformed the protest landscape. Political geographers are increasingly interested in the intersection of physical and virtual spaces and their impact on the strategies of social movements (AlSayyad & Guvenc 2013). Social movements have used media platforms to promote acts of resistance, mobilize protests, and establish political identities and communities. Protest participants have successfully used social media platforms to share their political narratives (Galan 2012). These platforms are also important places that should be considered as part of public geographies (Kitchin et al. 2013). Consequently, scholars can consider social media in its dual capacity as networking and narrative tool to mobilize resistance as well as a place where dissent occurs (Aouragh & Alexander 2011).

Practices of Resistance: Memory

There are many ways people remember. We remember through words, places, and images. Geographies of memory have paid particular attention to how humans endow landscapes with meaning through memory. Inquiries into social memory have paid attention to where and how people chose to materialize rememberings. In this subsection, I focus on geographies of collective memory. That is to say, the contested ways that memory informs people's understanding of the state and citizenship.

Pierre Nora’s (1989) Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire is widely recognized as a seminal text for examining how memory is constituted spatially (Legg 2005; Johnson 2005). Nora (1989) uses the notion of ‘sites of memory’ to explore the concrete and physical places where people, events, and ideas are remembered. According to Nora, the tension between history and memory is particularly important because “[m]emory takes root in the
concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects; history binds itself strictly to temporal continuities...” (1989, 9). For Nora, history is always in the temporal past, while memory is locatable in the spaces of the present. In contrast, Legg (2005) argues that:

[m]emory and history are, as such, locked in an intimate embrace rather than in the aggressive duel that Nora suggests. It is only through combining an analysis of national lieu de memoire with spaces of memory contestation and survival that complete and inclusive conception of the spaces of the nation can be created (500).

For Legg, history is singular, maintained by authority, and universal while memory is multiple, contested, and particular.

According to Legg (2005), memory must be considered within power relations. For Legg memory is never incontestable. Rather, “[c]ollective memory must be dereified and viewed as a product of individual and institutional memories, as well as their precursor. Collective memory is a narrative that excludes rival interpretations and is thus haunted by the potential to remember differently or to refuse to forget” (Legg 2005, 459). Viewing collective memory as a social construct rather than an independent or concrete thing enables one to question the work done through remembering as well as who is doing it.

Geographies of memory focus on how people use landscapes and architecture to assert collective identity. Hoelscher and Alderman (2004, 348) note that “[t]ogether, social memory and social space conjoin to produce much of the context for modern identities—and the often rigorous contestation of those identities”. Blunt (2003) investigates the interplay of memory, identity, and geography in her analysis of McCluskieganj, an Anglo-Indian homeland in the east Indian state of Bihar. This nostalgic remnant of the British Raj represents a space of belonging for those who are neither fully Indian nor fully British. The nostalgia for a bygone time also encompasses remembering a past place where being Anglo-Indian was not out of place.

Monuments and memorials manifest collective memories in space (Johnson 2005; Till 2005). Geographers have focused their analysis on official landscapes of memory. That is to say, the sites of memory that are selected, made visible, and maintained by representatives of the state (Jordan 2006). Memories can also be suppressed or erased. Jennifer Jordan (2006) examines how, predominantly through urban planning, East Berlin’s architecture has been transformed since the fall of the Berlin Wall to reflect a sanctioned remembering of National Socialism.
Those with control over policy and the owners of property thereby control the collective memory as well as the collective identities represented in particular places.

**Counter-memory**

Official landscapes of memory can be contested (Kosek, 2004). Counter-memory is one way counterpublics can resist broader social remembering. Sites of counter-memory are places and practices which evoke imagined, buried or repressed memories (Legg 2005). Memorialization of the Holocaust, its victims, and its horrors are often cited as examples of contested rememberings. The former Plaszow camp in Krakow is an example of how power can be represented through landscape, mediated through Spielberg’s Schindler’s List, and contested (Charlesworth 2004). Charlesworth argues that the site of the former concentration camp and practices in that site function to remember a repressive past and transgress it. “The meaning of a place is the subject of particular ‘discourses of power’” (Charlesworth 2004, 309). The Hollywood narrative of the site remembers it as a site of oppression, while local residents’ everyday activities often include prohibited activities ranging from romantic interludes to drug use. These activities are transgressive, because they function to make spaces of resistance against authoritarian power, represented and remembered in the ruins of the camp.

Significantly, memory--while tied to the past--is often pointed to the future. Allison Blunt (2003) uses the term ‘productive nostalgia’ to elucidate how temporal remembering can be used to construct a sense of spatial belonging. Long (2009) demonstrates how landscapes can be imbued with imagined histories to give legitimacy to claims of citizenship. Memory is a powerful example of how meaning is attached to place.

**Conclusion**

Building on these literatures, I examine how activists in Cairo use, experience and construct physical and virtual spaces. Both the government and activists are using public places in downtown Cairo to materialize their rememberings of the revolutionary period. Each, in turn, contests the others memories and the legitimacy to utilize particular places for memory. The government is severely restricting speech in both physical and virtual space.
In this thesis, I argue that both spaces are intimately connected to respondents remembering of the revolution. Activists actively remember places of protest and police violence in downtown Cairo. Respondents use social media to remember government abuses and memorialize martyrs of the revolution. These memories are shared, distributed, and discussed. Activists and artists have covered the walls of downtown Cairo with graffiti, broadly focused on memorializing resistance. Themes in the graffiti are centered around the martyrs of the revolution. Activists and artists are engaging places of politics through practices of politics. Respondents use these contested spaces to articulate new narratives about national identity and citizenship.
Chapter 3: Talking, Posting, Sharing

To answer the research question—how protest participants experience, use, and construct physical and virtual places in their activism—I use data collected through in-depth interviews and discourse analysis. In-depth interviews consist of semi-structured interviews with protest participants, conducted in downtown Cairo. The questions were broadly centered on ascertaining respondents’ experience and use of public space and social media. Discourse analysis of online content and interviews address how these places are contextualized in broader narratives of resistance. After laying out the research methodology, I describe the research setting and limitations.

Drawing on the conceptual framework presented in the literature review, I designed interview questions about places of resistance in the context of respondents experience of particular places and questions about practices of resistance in terms of use (Fig. 2). Questions about experience and use were answered through in-depth interviews with nine respondents in downtown Cairo. Discourse analysis is used to answer questions about how resistant subjects construct their political activism.

Experience and Use in Place

I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with nine participants in the 25 January Revolution about their experience and use of physical and virtual spaces (Fig. 3).
I interviewed respondents in downtown Cairo between June 20 to August 8, 2014. Respondents were between 18 and 35 years old, from diverse economic backgrounds, and worked or lived in the downtown area. I conducted all the interviews in English. None of the respondents had previously been interviewed by journalists or scholars. Interviews typically consisted of several hours of conversation over the course of three separate meetings. During the first meeting, respondents and I would discuss different aspects of their activism beginning with their participation in the 25 January Revolution. The second meeting focused on their use and experience of virtual space. During the third meeting, respondents and I discussed their use and experience of physical space. During this conversation, I asked respondents to take me to places that were significant to them.

Interviews are a widely used method for collecting data on the experiences of individuals and groups (Bailey, White, and Pain 1999). Geographers use interviews to explore the spatial practices of research subjects. Wouter Vanderstede (2011) identifies patterns of teenagers’ use of public space through interviews and observation. Rita Padawangi (2013) uses observation and interviews with leaders and protest participants in Jakarta to examine the relationship between public space and media. Interviews provided a grounded perspective on how respondents experience, use, and talk about places they associate with the Revolution. Tahrir Square and Facebook were the most significant physical and virtual places respectively.

My research question is aimed at collecting personal narratives and experiences rather
than establishing generalizable data for a larger population. “Talking” methods are the best way for determining how participants experienced events, places, and practices (Fontana and Frey 2000). Intensive interviews allow the researcher to explore specific issues at length and provide information on the specific rather than the generalizable. A semi-structured interview format is most suited to my research because questions are based on themes, but can vary for each participant. This allows for more flexible and personalized conversations than structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews also enable researchers to respond to new and unexpected topics while having guiding questions (Bailey, White, and Pain 1999).

I originally planned to interview members of the April 6 Youth Movement, but the Egyptian government banned the organization shortly before my departure. Once I arrived in Cairo, I tried contacting other well-known activists, but the phone calls and emails went unanswered. While in a downtown cafe, I decided to tell an Egyptian friend about my graduate research. He quickly surveyed the area and informed me that many of the people around us participated in 25 January. He introduced me to a handful of protest participants that evening, one of who became the first respondent for this research.

After establishing initial contact, I used snowball sampling to recruit respondents. At the end of interviews I asked respondents to introduce me to other protest participants. I then selected respondents who had evidence of their participation in 25 January, usually in the form of pictures on their Facebook timeline. This method is ideal for researchers seeking access to and doing research on participants’ social networks (Fontana and Frey 2000). Snowball sampling does have some disadvantages, such as vague sample size and the disproportionate influence of initial participants in selecting future participants (Secor 2010). This recruitment method enabled me to building on established relationships in the community and gain access to potential respondents more quickly.

Building trust and rapport with respondents was an important part of the interview process. Given the sensitive political nature of my research, it was especially vital during recruitment. Once a respondent agreed to participate in the research, the work done earlier to establish a relationship of mutual trust was invaluable. Respondents were willing to participate in multiple sessions and dedicated several hours to the research. This enabled respondents and I to discuss questions in more detail as well as clarify previous conversations. Most significantly, it contributed to the quality of the research by providing the foundation from which I could learn
about respondents’ use and experience of place in the streets where they lived, worked, and protested. Through conversations with respondents, I collected important data that fundamentally shaped this thesis.

**Constructing Resistance**

Interview data collected during fieldwork was used for discourse analysis (Fig. 4). The purpose of this step was to identify patterns in respondents discourse on public space, social media, and resistance.

![Figure 4. Research Method: Discourse Analysis of Interviews](image)

I also conducted discourse analysis of online content published and distributed by youth movements and prominent activists on social media, especially Facebook, Twitter and Youtube (Fig. 5).
The objects of discourse analysis included written and spoken communication as well as images. The purpose of this process was to determine if patterns could be identified in activists’ discourses on public space, social media, and resistance. The principle online sources used for discourse analysis are the April 6 Youth Movement (predominantly Arabic) and We are all Khalid Said (predominantly English) Facebook pages. Additionally I analyzed prominent Twitter handles and blogs (Appendix A). These sources were selected because they are frequently referenced as playing an important role leading up to and during the Revolution (Ghonim 2013; Idle & Nunn 2011). In instances where content was in Arabic, I used Google Translate to establish the overarching theme of the post. On a few rare occasions I asked a native Arabic speaker to translate selected content.

In poststructuralist theory, discourse is considered a process through which objects and identities are constructed (Lees 2004). Language, whether in the form of text or spoken word, communicates and constructs meaning. Discourse analysis is the practice of identifying and analysing patterns in language (Dixon 2010). Patterns can be found in a variety of communication mediums, including images, texts, and spoken word. Analyses of these patterns are used to address questions of representation and discursive practices. Discourse analysis can also be used to analyze how local narratives diverge or converge from broader discourses (Dixon 2010).

Images—particularly maps, photographs, and symbols—are also mediums through which meanings are constructed and transmitted. Discourse analysis is the academic practice of
“delving into the character of these meaning-laden objects: that is, how they are produced under particular conditions, how they are able to move in time and space, and how they connect with particular people in different ways” (Dixon 2010, 393). Language and the image are processes by which we encode and decode information. These processes are democratic in the sense that everyone has access to them, but in varying scales, power relations, and affect. Consequently, there is a multitude of varying and (at times) conflicting meanings expressed through places and practices. These conflicting meanings are contained in and expressed through language.

Critical geographers have used discourse analysis to identify patterns in how places are represented and discussed. Don Mitchell (1995), for example, examines how different stakeholders articulate competing visions of public space. In his formulation, public space is representational space, a representation of space, and also a space for representation (Mitchell 1995, 115). That is to say, public space is simultaneously a site for everyday activity, symbolic of a public, and political. Discourses on public space can reinforce certain activities, exclude certain publics, and are bound through power relations. Gill Valentine (1989) argues that discourse on public space articulate patriarchal visions of women’s place and reinforce patriarchal use of space. Both Mitchell and Valentine use media narratives and representations in their analysis of discourse.

During the interview process, respondents continually emphasized the importance of martyrdom. Respondents were particularly concerned with remembering the heroic actions and death of revolutionary martyrs. The theme of memory also arose in other contexts, including government efforts to erase the Revolution and the importance of securing places of remembering. Similar themes are also prevalent in social media (Fig. 6). I present discourse analysis of interviews and online content focused on the role of memory in respondents political activism. Respondents experience memory in public space, promote memory on social media, and construct memory as resistance.
Through this process of conducting discourse analysis of data published and distributed by youth movements and protests participants on social media I established three recurring themes, namely:

1. Activists are concerned about police brutality, judicial corruption, and labor rights.
2. Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube content are used in a variety of ways, including to warn protest participants of policing activities and violence, encouraging and galvanizing participants, updating each other on dates, times, and locations, or entreatying others to join.
3. Images of protests, jailed activists, and police are common.

In the analysis chapters, I present these themes as they overlap with respondent’s experiences and uses of physical and virtual places. When presenting the themes from respondents discourses, I distinguish between stories that respondents shared unprompted—memories—and when stories are a response to a specific questions I asked about a past event or experience—recollections.
Research Setting

In this section I provide a brief description of the fieldwork environment as I experienced it. This will provide relevant context for the interview setting. I also address the relationship between the interviewer and interviewees.

Downtown Cairo is heavily policed. During the two months I lived in the area, uniformed police officers stopped and questioned me several times in the street. They routinely demanded to see pictures on my camera and phone, deleting those they deemed inappropriate. The officers intermittently accused me of being a spy, a journalist, or immoral. These encounters rarely lasted more than a few minutes, but made me hyper aware of police presence. Their presence was near constant around the high concentration of government buildings, heritage sites, and financial institutions in the downtown area. I walked through Tahrir Square almost daily, usually to buy an English language newspaper across the street from the American University in Cairo’s downtown campus. On three occasions police erected barricades restricting or prohibiting public access to the Square (Fig. 7).

Figure 7. Personal Photograph. Police barricades in Tahrir Square
I arrived in Cairo the day after Abdel Fatah al-Sisi was inaugurated as Egypt’s new president (Fig. 8). During celebrations in Tahrir Square there were multiple reports of women being sexually assaulted (Taha 2014). Many of Cairo’s news media prominently featured the new president visiting one of the victims in the hospital, offering her red roses and a personal apology (Kirkpatrick 2014). Gender issues were a constant topic of conversation in the news,
cafes, and on Facebook during the two months I lived in the downtown Cairo. Female respondents told harrowing stories of near daily sexual harassment, especially on public transportation. Several protests against harassment were planned and publicized on Facebook during my fieldwork. Despite progress in highlighting gender discrimination since the revolution, one respondent explained that Egyptian usually only apply cultural expectations for proper female behavior to Egyptian (Muslim) women. As a Western woman, I was already expected to be promiscuous.

My citizenship also impacted the research process in less obvious ways. Access to a U.S. and South African passport offers me mobility not available to most Egyptians. Even on a student stipend, I earned more than most of the respondents and could afford a higher standard of living. It is reasonable to assume that my outsider status and gender—among many other factors—influenced interview conversations. One reason given by a respondent for participating in the research was the importance of informing an international audience of the political situation and activists’ causes in Egypt. However, I did not ask respondents how they felt about my gender and I don’t know how they would have responded had I been a man. By including a brief description of my field experience and the research setting, I aim instead to point to significant social and political factors that I think impacted the research in varying and incalculable ways.

Limitations

During the research process the most significant limitation was my Arabic language deficiency. While much of the online content is available in English or translated, there were still times when the ability to speak and read Arabic would have provided a more complete picture. Additionally, during interviews respondents and I frequently used gestures and free online translation services to overcome this limitation. Gestures and other nonverbal communication can be an important part of qualitative research (Feyereisen & Havard 1999). Learning common gestures and expressions was important to facilitating the interview process. In the event that it was necessary to use a translation service, we would enter only one or two words at a time and use gestures to confirm mutual understanding.
Scholars using qualitative research methods often face criticism about the rigor of analysis (Clifford 1988). In order to strengthen qualitative work the researcher should address positionality and reflexivity (Baxter & Eyles 1997). Additionally, rigor can be strengthened by using multiple methods, describing respondent selection and using direct quotes (Baxter & Eyles 1997, 506). In my analysis, I provide visual examples to illustrate quotes from respondents and provide evidence for my conclusions.

The security situation in Cairo limited where and how interviews were conducted. To protect the confidentiality of respondents, I proceed with an abundance of caution. I purposefully limit demographic and other identifying information. During interviews—most of which occurred in public—I relied on respondents to determine whether the setting was sufficiently confidential to discuss politically sensitive topics. Respondents were usually most concerned about plainclothes and off-duty police as well as employees of the Ministry of Interior, but their level of concern varied greatly. Respondents considered the right to speak freely and openly about politics in public as one of the victories of 25 January, but some were still reluctant to do so within earshot of strangers. I used either a journal or my phone to document interviews, but remained attentive to respondents’ comfort level and would stop if respondents indicated concerns about the proximity of others. Additionally, if respondents were uncomfortable with me taking photographs during the interview, I would return to the area later to document the place we discussed.

Finally, I gave respondents pseudonyms familiar to an English speaking audience. I hope it will make the names easier to remember and allow the reader to focus instead on respondents’ voice. It is an imperfect solution that might also remind the reader that the stories are presented and organized from a western perspective. I am not Egyptian or Muslim. Rather than detract from the analysis, I think it demonstrates what is not “lost in translation” and what makes the 25 January Revolution so compelling to an international audience. Still, I’m sure there are many connections I failed to make and perhaps, though I hope not, misrepresentations. I plan to share this thesis with respondents’ and will address their feedback.
Chapter 4: A Geography of Memory in Downtown Cairo

On 24 January 2015 a small group of activists marched through Talaat Harb Square to commemorate the fourth anniversary of the 25 January revolution. Among them was Shimaa el-Sabagh, a labor organizer in the Socialist Popular Alliance Party. Sabagh was carrying flowers toward Tahrir Square to mourn the martyrs of the Revolution when she was shot and killed, allegedly by a Central Security Forces officer (Ibrahim 2015). The Minister of Interior responded to accusations of government involvement by saying that if security personnel wanted to shoot, they would have killed more than just one woman (Nader 2015).

The process of memorialization that activists undertook with Shimaa el-Sabagh is an accelerated version of the memorialization of Khalid Said. Within minutes a video and several images of her frail and bleeding body went viral on social media (Farid 2015). Within a day activists began tagging her image on the walls of downtown Cairo (El-Sadany 2015). Within a week several protests and vigils were held in her honor (Ortiz 2015). Sabagh has since been memorialized in cities around the world (Ali 2015). Through collective remembering Sabagh has been gradually—and spatially—transformed into a revolutionary icon.

The mourning of revolutionary martyrs are emblematic of the power and spatiality of collective social memories. In this chapter, I explore the relationships between place, resistance, mourning, and memory in downtown Cairo. I discuss four places that respondents highlighted as sites of memory; Mohamed Mahmoud Street, Tahrir Square, the National Democratic Party Headquarters, and the The We Are All Khaled Said Facebook page. Common in both physical and virtual places are collective memories about the revolution, frequently articulated through martyr narratives. Each physical location represents common ways collective memories are spatialized; memorials, monuments, and museums. I provide examples of Facebook content that activists similarly use to mourn, honor, and document martyrs of the Revolution. Additionally I provide quotes from respondents in and about these places. I then connect respondents’ discourses about the specific places back to themes from the literature.
Broken Bodies: Mohamed Mahmoud Memorial

On 19 November 2011 police attempted to disperse a small group of protesters staging a sit-in in Tahrir to demand an end to military rule (Shenker 2011). Among those occupying the Square were the families of revolutionary martyrs (Abaza 2013). The confrontation quickly escalated and major street battle ensued. Now known as the ‘battle for Mohamed Mahmoud Street’ this incident has become a prominent aspect of activists’ narratives online, respondents’ on the streets, and artists’ on the walls.

Activists and artists painted the large murals on the walls of Mohamed Mahmoud street for the first time on 25 November 2011 (Karl et al. 2014). The murals focused on the martyrs of violent clashes between protesters and government forces. Significantly, the appearance of murals coincided with government efforts to segregate the city with concrete walls, barbed wire barricades, and tanks (Abaza 2013). The government claimed their territory with physical barriers, while artists reappropriated the physical barriers to broadcast resistance.

In the months that followed authorities continually whitewashed the murals of Mohamed Mahmoud Street. Each time, artists and activists quickly returned to Mohamed Mahmoud Street to fill in the blank spaces (Abaza 2013). Consequently, the graffiti content remains dynamic and relevant to the everyday life and experience of Egyptians (Nicoarea 2013). The most iconic of the murals - portraits of revolutionary martyrs - were erased in September 2012. The whitewashing of the martyr murals sparked widespread criticism of central security forces. In addition to the murals, portraits of dead protesters lined the streets of Mohamed Mahmoud Street. The street and surrounding area serve as a memorial space for activists and family members (Abaza 2013).

A common theme for respondents in the Mohamed Mahmoud Street murals visible today was government abuse of the people. Activists have frequently criticized the security forces for using snipers that deliberately blind protesters with rubber bullets (Karl et al. 2014). Artists and activists remember these government practices in physical and virtual places. The 6 April Youth Movement Facebook page frequently make reference to the ‘eye sniper’ in online posts. One cartoon image shows a young activist with a bandaged eye. A sinister face leans in over is shoulder. The face grins while whispering: “Give Up” (6th of April Youth Movement 2014). In the street art image (Fig. 9) a deathly military figure holds a collection of eyeballs. Above him
are the exposed legs on young female activists subjected to virginity tests after arrest. To the right is a pharaonic vitruvian man displaying several injuries including an eye patch.

It was while looking at this mural on Mohamed Mahmoud Street that Sam first told me the story of Dr. Ahmed Harara. Dr. Harara is greatly admired by protest participants for his work in the revolutionary clinic. This is why, Sam believes, security forces blinded him in one eye during the January 2011 protest in Tahrir and then the other during the November 2011 clashes.

Sam: *We will not forget what they [security forces] did to us.*

Andrew later relayed a similar version of events during a conversation about justice.

Andrew: *How many people from Tahrir [protest participants] are in prison? But the men who take the people’s eyes are free. This is justice?*

The treat of the body, by representatives of the government, is a point of contention for respondents. This is also evident in graffiti content. Protesters demands for dignity were—in
part—a reaction to excessive police interference in the everyday lives of Egyptians, especially the most marginalized (Ismail 2012). The graffiti and murals of Mohamed Mahmoud street are representations of collective memories of resistance. The act of painting the mural is an act of resistance, while the message it communicates points to the reason for resistance. It is a reminder to the viewer, that the regime does not treat people with dignity nor offer them justice.

**Claiming the Martyrs: Tahrir Monument**

Tahrir Square is a site where national memories are expressed and contested by multiple publics. The government, activists, and tourists in particular have left physical traces of these contested memories in the heart of Tahrir. After the ousting of Mohamed Morsi in June 2013, the transitional government erected a monument in Tahrir Square. Dedicated to honoring those killed in pursuit of ousting Presidents Hosni Mubarak and Mohammed Morsi, the monument angered activists. At issue is the legitimacy and authority of the government to claim a part of the revolutionary narrative by co-opting the martyrs. Adding insult to injury, the government monument contains a plaque that prominently displays the names of the three government officials who commissioned it and only briefly making mention of the martyrs in the bottom two lines (Fig. 10). The graffiti on the monument is predominantly not political (e.g. __ loves __, __ was here) (Fig. 10). In the center of the image however, in bright red, the graffiti in English reads “FUCK CC” (i.e. president Sisi).
On 19 November 2013, the second anniversary of the battle for Mohamed Mahmoud street, protesters flooded the square and destroyed the monument (“Egypt revolutionaries make return to Tahrir Square” 2013). Their actions were not merely destructive. Activists carried flags bearing the faces of the martyrs with them. Thus, activists target the physical structure linking the government to revolutionary martyr narratives while reinforcing their own linkages and claims to the martyrs through performance. The memorial has repeatedly been vandalized since its installation.

Tahrir Square is also a site of memory for domestic tourists. Egyptians travel from all over the country to take pictures of themselves and their families in the Square. I was frequently told that prior to 25 January police would have confiscated cameras or harassed the families due to the proximity of government buildings. But after the Revolution, police monitoring the area tolerate Egyptians taking photographs in the Square. The simple everyday act of taking a picture—capturing a memory—in a place that has come to symbolize freedom, is a political act.
Respondents expressed their disapproval of the monument by critiquing the legitimacy of the commissioners.

*Andrew: The government killed my brother, now they say “I’m sorry, police like the people”. Then why they killed him?*

Sam frequently referred to the memorial as the monument to “their crime” in the center of Tahrir Square.

*Sam: We want justice. They gives us only stone. We will give them back their stone.*

Here, Sam is expressing his desire to utilize the monument as a weapon against those that erected it.

*Sarah: Even the people they didn’t come to Tahrir [to protest], now they want be part of the Revolution.*

The vandalism targets the government and connects visitors to a historic national moment.

Monuments are frequently cited in geographic literature as places where national memories are contested (Hoelscher & Alderman 2004). The government, activists, and citizens use the structure of the monument to express their relationship to the Revolution and those who died in its making. For respondents, the monument is an attempt by the government to deny their culpability in the death of protesters and thereby reframe history. The vandalism of the monument did not anger respondents, because in their view the government officials who commissioned the monument did not have the legitimacy to claim the martyrs in their narrative.

Activists and the government negotiate power on the streets and squares of Cairo. Activists and the government have both attempted to marginalize narratives and target places of memory that do not conform to their own. In the case of the Mohamed Mahmoud memorial, activists and artists create the street murals to commemorate revolutionary martyrs and communicate political messages, which the government then whitewashed. Similarly, the government erected a monument in Tahrir Square to commemorate revolutionary martyrs, which the activists promptly destroyed. It is important to note however, that the government has—and exercises—its legal authority to censor memorial spaces and narratives that conflict with theirs.
Activists’ contest official memorial spaces and narratives with illicit practices. Consequently, activists’ narratives are systematically marginalized and consistently vulnerable to erasure.

**Replacing the Regime: Revolutionary Museum**

During the 25 January Revolution protesters documented the ongoing protests by displaying images of the martyrs, collecting newspapers articles, and creating art works. At first dispersed in different locations throughout the protest site, these artifacts were later collected and displayed in the center of Tahrir Square. Named the Revolution Museum, the installation was dominated by images of the martyrs as well as banners, slogans, and caricatures representing the demands and ideals of the Revolution (Fahmy 2011). The museum was eventually removed, but would temporarily return to Tahrir at various points in the years since. On the 2nd anniversary of the 25 January Revolution, activists reconstructed the reading “Revolution Museum” in Tahrir Square. Prominently displayed along the entrance were the photographs and graffiti stencils of the revolution’s’ iconic martyrs, including the image of Khalid Said (Davila 2013).

On 28 January 2011 the National Democratic Party (NDP) headquarters was set ablaze by protesters (Hyde 2011). The building, symbolic of the regime, was targeted to symbolize the destruction of the old order. Four years after the Revolution, the charred building remained unoccupied (Fig. 11). Activists have campaigned to construct a museum documenting the Revolution and the country’s recent political turmoil. The museum would be part of a larger cultural center to encourage civic engagement. However, developers are eager to take advantage of the beautiful Nile view the location offers (Allam 2012). At issue is the strategic location of the building and now its political significance.
Respondents view the building, or rather its destruction, as a major triumph of the Revolution. Walking past the building, Carl proudly proclaims;

    Carl: *We did that. It should be remembered.*

He wants the building to remain as it is. He decided not to linger, because the area is heavily policed and in view of the rows of tanks stationed in front of the Egyptian Museum. Daniel was in favor of demolishing the building and reconstructing a Revolutionary Museum.

    Daniel: *We make revolution not for us, but for our children. How will they know if we do not teach them? We need a place to do this.*

As a symbol of the Mubarak regime, the former NDP headquarters continues to be a site of contestation and power. For respondents, it is important that a symbolic site of the regime is now a symbolic site of resistance. It is evidence that something significant happened. Whether it is as the charred remains that stands today or a new building to house a cultural center and museum, many activists want this act of destruction to be remembered.
Activists and commentators attribute Khaled Said’s murder by Egyptian police in 2010 as being a major instigator of the initial 25 January protest (Lim 2012; Khamis & Vaughn 2012). The We Are All Khaled Said Facebook page is a potent example of how activists disseminate martyr narratives used to mobilized the public (Halverson et al. 2013). The primary Arabic version of the Facebook page, then anonymously administered by google executive Wael Ghonim, rallied people to participate in Silent Stands in the months leading up to 25 January (Ghonim 2013). In his memoir, Revolution 2.0, Ghonim attributes the success of the activism in part to the novel tactics and respectful tone encouraged by the social media site.

The potency of the widely circulated image of Said’s tortured face played a significant role in motivating Egyptians to engage in activism both online and on the street. The image was a visceral reminder of police brutality, a broken justice system, and the precarity of life under Mubarak. Merlyna Lim (2012, 242) argues that, “[b]y propagating the message that “We” are all Khaled Said, the group was successful in identifying who the “we” was who could make change. This collective identity was characterized by a sense of shared victimization as well.” Thus, proclaiming “we are all” signifies solidarity as well as vulnerability.

An image of Khaled Said’s brutalized face began circulating on social media. In addition, one particular image of Khalid Said—smiling and wearing a grey sweatshirt—began dominating the social media landscape. The image (altered, adorned, painted) has been circulated around the world. Khaled Said received the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Human rights Award posthumously (Doerr, Mattoni, & Teune, S 2013). In honor of the award, German graffiti artist Andreas von Chrzanowski memorialized the same image of Said on remnants of the Berlin Wall to be placed in the city’s Freedom Park. This image has been used to make political demands on the government through protest, express dissent through graffiti, and communicate international solidarity through murals. Halverson et al. (2013) characterize the We Are All Khaled Said Facebook page as a virtual reliquary, a container of mementos, which produce and reinforce the martyr narrative. The image enables viewers to identify with him and his death.

Henry and I are sitting in a cafe when he points to a stencil of Khaled Said on a nearby wall.

Henry: You know this man?
I affirm.

Henry: *I think total world know this man in Facebook. We make 25 January because this man.*

Tim equates the treatment of Said to larger issues of police corruption and brutality which he attributes as the primary cause of the protests.

Tim: *Police are not good when they are working, but after they finish work they are good. This is not right way. Police should be good when they work. Egypt has no justice.*

For him, it is the position and the system - not the man - that is corrupt and little has changed since Mubarak.

Tim: *The police don’t speak straight then and they don’t speak straight now.*

Khaled Said became a revolutionary symbol due to complex interactions between social media, martyr narratives, and shared identities characterized by victimization and vulnerability. The *We are all Khaled Said* Facebook page mourns, honors, and memorializes him as a national symbol. Since its creation, it has also been used to document police abuse of Egyptians. There are many other virtual archives that document the Revolution, including *Tahrir Documents*, *University on the Square*, and *Wiki Thawra*. These archives are freely accessible from anywhere in the world and provide a counter narrative to official versions of events. Communications literature has addressed the political impact of martyr narratives disseminated online (Halverson et al. 2013). A geographic perspective complements this analysis by focusing on the spatial manifestations of these narrative.

**Conclusion**

How martyrs like Shimaa el-Sabagh and Khalid Said, among many others, are remembered can be examined spatially. Whether through memorials on the walls of Mohamed Mahmoud street, the monument in Tahrir Square, or the possible Revolution Museum in place of the NDP headquarters, memories of the Revolution are made visible and contested. The Mohamed
Mahmoud murals are transgressive, because they claim territories of resistance against authoritarian power. They are illegal and actively erased by government agents. The Tahrir Monument, an official government structure, is vandalized because its commissioners are viewed as illegitimate stakeholders in martyr narratives. The future of the former NDP headquarters is uncertain. Activists want to construct a museum to document the historic struggle of the Egyptian people, but the headquarters strategic location and the politics of memory works against them.

Representatives of the state have the authority to make visible, suppress, or erase memories (Jordan 2006). The location of sites of memory determines their visibility and accessibility, thereby also determine their communicative potential. Individuals and groups mobilize to resist dominant memory through the maintenance of subaltern memories (Johnson 2005). In Cairo, counterpublics impact the memorial landscape through illegal activity. The vulnerability of the revolutionary body is both represented in the content of graffiti and implicit in the act of writing. In order to protect the authenticity of martyr narratives - through destruction of the Tahrir Monument - activists risked their freedom. Maintaining counter memories is significantly more difficult than official memories, because activists frequently have to resort to illegal means to promote them.

Activists use social media to create, maintain, and distribute counter memories. This medium increases the geographic extent and speed at which memories are shared. Murals of both Shima el-Sabagh and Khalid Said were painted on walls in Berlin, Sabagh’s within a week of her death. More significant however, is the reflexive relationship between virtual and physical space. The activism promoted by the We are all Khaled Said Facebook page was both online and on the street, each space reinforcing the message in the other. Martyr narratives have effectively mobilized activists to demand political reform and they continue to impact the aesthetics of resistance.
Chapter 5: The Politics of Remembering

On 25 June 2014 Hisham Rizk, a 19 year old graffiti artist and April 6 Youth Movement member, went missing. I was in Cairo conducting fieldwork when everyone I spoke with suddenly had a story about him to share. A week later Hisham’s body was found in the Zeinhom morgue. The autopsy attributed the cause of death to drowning in the Nile, but social media and the streets of downtown Cairo were abuzz with speculations that Hisham’s death was instead part of the relentless government persecution of revolutionaries (“Activists mourn graffiti artist Hisham Rizk” 2014). Murder and indiscriminate arrests are common tactics in the Egyptian governments’ attempt to stifle political dissent (Michael 2014). This is just one of many similar stories of activists’ extreme distrust of the Egyptian security state apparatus, particularly the Ministry of Interior.

Hisham Rizk’s membership in groups, including the Revolution Artists Union and the Mohamed Mahmoud Street Graffiti Union, active in promoting political dissent through art, contributed to activists seeing his death as suspicious. Graffiti is an important part of the aesthetics of resistance (Tripp 2012). Tags and murals in downtown Cairo frequently reference dead or jailed activists, call on citizens to return to Tahrir, demand the viewer remember acts of police brutality, and seek justice for those wronged. Activists also circulate images of graffiti online, reaching audiences far away from Cairo’s walls. These practices in physical and virtual space are one prominent way through which activists activate memory.

Activists continue to resist the Egyptian government today by actively remembering the 2011 and 2013 revolutions via interventions in online and offline communities. In this chapter, I discuss the respondents’ discourses on the politics of memory. Focusing on conversations about place and spatialized memory, I address the relationship between memories of 25 January and identity in Memories of Freedom. In Shared Struggle, Dividing Junction I explore the major issues around which activists mobilize as well as the division that arose after the 2013 ousting of Mohamed Morsi. Deleting the Brave demonstrates how respondents articulate government efforts to erase critics, revolutionaries, and martyrs. Finally, Culture and the Square explores how activists have continued to perform resistance through building a culture industry around the
Revolution. An important overarching theme throughout this chapter is the aesthetics of resistance. Through music, graffiti, poetry, and performance in physical and virtual places activists solidify revolutionary memories.

Memories of Freedom

Respondents joined protests in Tahrir Square during the 25 January revolution. All nine of them live or work in downtown Cairo. Their everyday practices are in the everyday places where the seemingly impossible happened. The cafe where they serve shisha (hookah), the microbus station where they pick up passengers, or the law office where they shuffle paperwork are surrounded by memories of those historic 18 days and its aftermath. Tahrir sits in the heart of Cairo and is a functional and symbolic node in the downtown area. It links the residential neighborhoods to the Nile, providing access to bridges and major transportation networks. It is a significant green space in an urban landscape that is otherwise sparsely beautified with palm trees. Located next to the Mogamma government complex, the Interior Ministry, and many other significant national and international agencies (Fig. 12), the Square is rife with political overtones. For respondents

Figure 12. Personal Photograph. Tahrir Square with Mogamma in background
however, the significance of Tahrir Square extends beyond that of a place. It is a battleground, it is freedom, and she is personified.

For respondents, Tahrir Square evokes many emotions associated with the Revolution. Respondents frequently characterize downtown spaces as places of both death and unity. Henry, Tim, Mark, and Carl discussed performing ritual ablution before departing to Tahrir. Usually done before entering the mosque, respondents described this act of washing oneself as a preparation for death.

Henry: *I wash and make ready my total body before coming to Tahrir. Because I want to be ready to go to [heaven].*

The performance of ritualistically purifying the body conveyed to me the commitment and obligation with which respondents viewed their journey to the Square. Tim expressed the assumption of imminent death in Tahrir when he recalled feeling relief upon recognizing neighbors among the protesters.

Tim: *I was happy to see someone from my area so they can [identify] my body.*

In his retelling of the experience in Tahrir, because death is assumed, being properly buried is his primary concern. Respondents did not participate in the protest lightly, but rather decided that dignity, freedom, and justice were ideals worth dying for. Their bravery in the face of death, plays a significant role in respondents articulation of their revolutionary identity.

A week into the 25 January protest in Tahrir Square, Mubarak loyalists rode on camels and horses into Tahrir Square and began attacking protesters with sticks and knives. The incident commonly referred to in media as the “Camel Battle” or the “Battle of the Camel”.

Mark: *I stood right here as the men on horses came from there (pointing toward the museum). I was thinking I will die, but there they pull the man from the horse before he can beat me.*

For Mark, the willingness to die and withstand police violence makes him a more authentic revolutionary. Respondents with visible scars were eager to show me and tell stories of the street clashes, rubber bullets, and tear gas canisters that caused them. The willingness to face death unified participants in the Square. Respondents’ commitment to martyrdom in the name of
dignity, freedom, and justice is not only Islamic, despite significant religious influences (Yasien-Esmail & Rubin 2005), rather it is also nationalist (Halverson et al. 2013). Protesters were making demands on the government and respondents were willing to die for Egypt rather than Islam.

Respondents grieved the loss of fellow protesters, but view death during the Revolution as an honor. In bearing witness against government injustice, martyrs of the Revolution died amidst the birth of a new citizenship. The camp in Tahrir produced a shared vision of a new citizenry. Respondents remember experiencing the occupation of Tahrir Square as productive of an ideal Egyptian and an ideal society. Respondents frequently argued that it is the government that divides and causes conflict among different groups in Egypt.

*Alex: After the police leave the streets, I saw the Egyptian people at their best. In Tahrir, we are free and we are one. Not the same, but together.*

*Sarah: I was not afraid. I see what the people can make and think Egypt will have good tomorrow.*

*Andrew: Each body is a pillow for the other. All of Tahrir is one body connected to another.*

The unity of the protesters, despite their differences, gives respondents hope for the future and confidence in their fellow citizens.

Respondents often referenced and occasionally sang revolutionary songs from and about Tahrir. One in particular, Ya El Medan (Hey Square), by Cairokee captures the sentiments expressed by respondents about their emotional connection to the Square. The rock band distributes their revolutionary songs on Youtube, underscoring the symbolism of their name; singing along with Cairo (Srgany 2014). In the song, Cairokee sings to the Square as if it were a fellow protester and as if it were freedom. In the beginning of the song, the band references the willingness of protest participants to die as well as their subsequent rebirth in Tahrir.

*0:45 There is no going back
1:11 We were born again.*
In the next verse, memory and forgetting are invoked in relation to the distance and death of the revolutionary idea.

2:02 Sometime I worry that you’ll become a memory.
2:06 That you’ll become distant from us and the idea will die.
2:11 And we’ll go back and forget what happened.
2:15 And tell stories about you in our tales.
3:11 Our idea is our strength
3:13 Our weapon is our unity
3:45 And what has been done is now written.

The lyrics insist that what happened in Tahrir cannot be erased. At the same time, it suggests that Egyptians must keep the idea—Tahrir—alive. This points to a similar sentiment expressed by respondents; that the spontaneous self organization of people in the Square demonstrated the unity and strength of the Egyptian people. Their experience was also characterized by the absence of police harassment. For respondents, 25 January was not only a protest against the Mubarak regime, but also demonstrative of a diverse and unified public. Consequently, the people were reborn with a new understanding of themselves and the expectation of an active and embodied citizenship.

The song features Aida el Ayoubi, who according to Sarah is a once popular artist who retreated from the limelight some two decades ago. For Sarah, the long absence and then return of Ayoubi is representative of the absence and return of Tahrir referenced in the song. Ayoubi’s union with Cairokee is also significant because it represents and bridges major divides in Egypt. Though the official music video never shows her in the same room with the young male band members, the architectural features and light fixtures indicate they occupy the same space, if temporally separated. The youths modernity stands in contrast to her tradition, even in the instruments they strum. I read this in part as the revolutionary youth respecting Egypt’s virtues and maintaining her dignity. At the same time the separation also represents one of the underlying tensions in the unity of the Square.

The shared experience of Tahrir—expressed by respondents, activists, and artists—resulted in a more active conceptualization of citizenship. Respondents frequently expressed a fear of forgetting the ideals—dignity, freedom, and justice—around which protesters coalesced
in Tahrir. They stressed that remembering the Revolution cannot be passive (e.g. reading about it in a history book) but should seek to “rebirth” the Square. Tahrir must not only be remembered, it must be lived. For respondents, the 18 days in the Square represents a microcosm of an ideal state. A place where—despite the near constant threat of violence—Egyptians from diverse backgrounds, religions, and ideologies worked together for a common purpose. Respondents spoke of the idealized square not only to communicate their attachment to the place and revolutionary events, but also to express personal ideals about themselves as citizens, the Egyptian people, and the state. Through memories of Tahrir, respondents also articulated their hopes for the future. Common among them, is a desire to live in an Egypt where the people are united despite their differences; a place where the people are free from fear.

**Shared Struggle, Dividing Junction**

The aesthetics of resistance that predominates online and on the street of downtown Cairo are personal stories and images that capture the shared struggle of everyday people. In this section, I explore activists use of graffiti and social media to communicate their political messages, goals, and aspirations. Here, activists are utilizing both tagging and posting in the post-revolutionary period to broadcast continued resistance to government abuse and injustice. Significantly, the unity among dissenting voices represented in Tahrir Square during 25 January, quickly fractured. The most significant fissure occurred between the youth movements and the Muslim Brotherhood, exacerbated by the election of Mohammed Morsi and his subsequent ousting a year later on 3 July 2013. Rather than the diverse mosaic of the 2011 Revolution, Morsi’s ousting saw two rival protest camps in sharp contrast. These divisions are also evident in the physical landscape of the city.

Along with martyred revolutionaries, the stenciled faces of jailed activist adorn the urban landscape across downtown Cairo (Fig. 13-15).
Figure 13. Personal Photograph. Graffiti in downtown Cairo.

Figure 14. Personal Photograph. Graffiti in downtown Cairo.
Activists use these images to communicate their political objectives, broadly centered around stopping military trials for civilians; prosecuting officers who killed protesters; ending mass sentencing. Consequently—when walking through the streets—one is constantly surrounded by the graffitied faces of Egyptian citizens who are dead or imprisoned. The faces provide the viewer an image, a person, and a cause with which to connect viscerally. The repetitive black and read faces were haunting to me at first, but became a familiar and welcoming refrain. The shared struggle against fear, injustice, and indignity that united Egyptians across religion, class, and gender in Tahrir Square is represented in the faces on the walls of downtown Cairo.

The faces of jailed and martyred revolutionaries are also prominently featured on activists’ Facebook profiles. The April 6 Youth Movement uses their Facebook page consistently to document arrests, trials, and prison conditions. They also consistently make use of cartoons to mock government crimes and seek justice for those wronged. In one of their campaigns, the youth movement advocates the release of Ahmed Jamal Ziada, a press photographer. In February
of 2015 wrote a letter from prison that was widely circulated in social media. The translated letter reads in part;

Does a president care about his last promise to release the revolutionists in the memorial of the revolution and he released Alaa and Jamal Mubarak?!...Do comrades care about my case as they were [sic] never fear to be blamed to say the right, but even if they cared what's the benefit of caring while the silence has become the most louder of voices!. (Ziada 2015).

The campaign post is accompanied by a black and white image of Ziada reminiscent to the graffiti in downtown Cairo. In the campaign to free Al Jazeera journalist Abdullah Elshamy, the youth movement posted images of Elshamy before and after his hunger strike. He was released in June 2014 on medical grounds (Greenslade 2014).

The April 6 Youth Movement frequently post political cartoons that reference police violence and judicial injustice. One cartoon mocks a torturer trying desperately to avoid stepping in blood when leaving a prison cell. A lifeless arm on the floor implies the brutality of the interrogation (6th of April Youth Movement 2015). Many cartoons center on the imbalance in the scales of justice. People in positions of power are usually portrayed as tall and robust figures, while everyday Egyptians are drawn as small and frail.

Social media has increased the speed and ease with which people communicate and share (Khamis & Vaughn 2013). Except for Daniel, all other respondents heard about the initial 2011 protest on Facebook. Interestingly however, respondents reported a variety of different message pathways through which they first encountered 25 January. Respondents accessed information about the planned protest through friends’ posts, through private messages, and through comments by strangers.

Tim: *I was reading the news in Facebook and I see comments so many people angry and some comments speak for protest. So I go Tahrir and look.*

Sarah stressed the functionality of Facebook that facilitates sharing information.

Sarah: *If it’s really important you can share with all your friends or you can share on their wall. Sometimes I share with just one person because I want make sure they see it.*
In this way, she argued, everyone could participate in honoring the dead or work toward freeing those in prison. Even events people did not witness can become part of their virtual wall, inform their resistance, and become part of a larger shared narrative. Sarah also expressed hope that in sharing content online, friends would keep each other informed and increase their likelihood of participating in protests.

Since the 2013 revolution or popular coup, tensions between the government and protesters have escalated. Divisions between 25 January participants, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood and Tamarod, have facilitated government efforts to suppress political dissent all together. The logic is simple, if flawed: The Muslim Brotherhood are terrorists, terrorists criticize the government, therefore if you criticize the government you are a terrorist.

Carl: *Sisi no good, because he [accuses] everyone in Muslim Brotherhood to be terrorists. Even I don’t like Muslim Brotherhood, but how all these people can be terrorist? How we can permit him arrest and beat them all?*

Although many activists initially supported the ousting of Mohamed Morsi, the repressive measures subsequently taken under the leadership of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has eroded his support. Respondents were divided in their support for Sisi. They unanimously agreed that Morsi had to go, but Alex disagreed with how it was done. For her, the violent dispersal of the pro-Morsi occupation at Rabaa al-Adawiya Square on 14 August 2013 was a step too far. She views Sisi as an illegitimate president and wants to oust him. Henry however, was open to the possibility of Sisi being Egypt’s new legitimate leader.

Henry: *We don’t want revolution total time. The people need work, need food, need [tourists] come. We want only [bread, justice, freedom]. If Sisi give us this, no problem. He not give us this, it’s problem.*

He was more concerned with the outcomes than the means through which Sisi came to power. After more than three years of political turmoil, he stressed that the economically marginalized were the most adversely affected.

These same tensions are present in the graffiti in downtown Cairo. Henry insisted that members of the Muslim Brotherhood vandalized the martyr murals below (Fig. 16). He
believed it was targeted because the wall surrounds a church and Mina Daniel, the haloed martyr on the right, is Christian. Mark wasn’t sure, but he thought it was likely desecrated by government agents. The targeted attack on the eyes of the martyrs, he said, was a reference to the intentional blinding of protesters by the eye snipers. Sam was very critical of the divisions between revolutionary youths and the Muslim Brotherhood.

Mark: The Muslim Brotherhood [betrayed] 25 January, now we have turned against them. Easy, they put us both in jail.

I discuss the Egyptian government’s use of anti-Muslim Brotherhood rhetoric to silence anyone critical of the status quo further in the next section.

On the walls of downtown Cairo and activists’ Facebook pages, the faces of jailed and murdered revolutionaries stand as a monument to the injustice of the government. The graffiti of downtown Cairo mirrors the fragmentation expressed by respondents after the ousting of Mohamed Morsi (Fig. 17). Though respondents approved his removal from office, there are clear divisions on the manner in which he was removed, the dispersal of the Rabaa sit-in, and the future of activists solidarity with members of the Muslim Brotherhood. Political alliances in Cairo are often expressed with a single hand gesture; the victory sign if you support Sisi, four fingers if you support the Muslim Brotherhood, and three if you support neither. Despite their shared struggle against strong-handed military rule, respondents contest memories of the 2013 Revolution/Coup. They also contest the events’ broader linkages to narratives about 25 January.
Deleting the Brave

Andrew and I are sitting in a cafe near Tahrir Square discussing Facebook and Twitter. I pause to take notes and, without missing a beat, he unlocks his mobile phone to show me a video of protesters getting shot followed by images of mutilated bodies. This is a familiar ritual, not just with him. This time it feels like he is trying to shock me and I react in anger.

Me: *I don’t want to see these pictures. Why are you showing me this?*

Andrew: *We have to remember them.*

His answer is simple and profound. I couldn’t just listen to the stories of police brutality, I had to see it. Andrew realizes the political advantage of martyr narratives, but the nameless men and women in the images mean more than that to him as does bearing witness to their martyrdom. He explicitly links the consumption and distribution of martyr narratives via social media to a political obligation. In other words, social media practices are part of Andrew’s conceptualization of citizenship, as is remembering.

An important theme that arose in my conversations with respondents is their assertion that the government is actively erasing the Revolution. Killing protesters is an obvious, albeit extreme, way to silence opposition. Outlawing protests, monitoring social media, indiscriminate arrest and highly compromised military trials for civilians are others. Respondents witness these government measures in everyday physical and virtual places. The “deleting” described by
respondents also occurs in more subtle ways. Respondents linked less overtly political actions such as government efforts to whitewash graffiti and media censorship to this active erasure.

On 24 November 2013 the military-backed government, under the stewardship of General Sisi and interim president Adly Mansour, issued sharp restrictions of the right to assemble in public space. International audiences took it as a sign of the Egyptian government returning to authoritarianism after the popular ousting of two presidents (Kirkpatrick 2013). The military’s ousting of Morsi and violent dispersal of the pro-Morsi sit-in, was quickly followed by anti-Islamists rhetoric which linked resistance to military rule to terrorism (Khalil 2014). Since Sisi’s inauguration, anti-Muslim Brotherhood rhetoric has reverted back to that of Hosni Mubarak’s government.

The government uses public animosity against Islamists as a pretext to curb all political opposition. The 2013 protest law\(^1\) states:

Participants in public assemblies or processions or demonstrations are prohibited from violating security or public order or impeding production or calling for this, or impeding the interests of citizens, or harming them or exposing them to danger or affecting their ability to perform their rights and their work, or influencing the course of justice, or public facilities, or blocking roads or public transportation, or ground, sea, or air transportation, or blocking traffic or assaulting individuals or public or private property or endangering them. (Egypt: Deeply Restrictive New Assembly Law 2013)

The criminal penalties for violating the law includes up to five years in jail and/or the equivalent of roughly $14,513 (Ibid.). Respondents argued that the law is not enforced in a content neutral manner. I watched while police hauled off a person protesting alone, out of the way, and in silence carrying only one small sign. Pro-government demonstrations however usually continue, uninterrupted by police.

Indiscriminate arrests and indefinite detention without charge is common practice in Egypt today. The controversial protest law has resulted in the arrest of more than 40,000 protesters (Gulhane 2014). Several of the most prominent revolutionaries, including Ahmed Maher, Alaa Abdel Fattah, and his sister Sanaa Seif remain in jail. Abdullah Elshamy, the Al Jazeera journalist discussed in the previous section, spent 306 days in detention without charge.

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\(^1\) Article 7 from Law 107 of 2013 on the Right to Public Meetings
(Nader 2014). These revolutionary voices are being silenced, harassed, and intimidated by the government.

Another highly controversial government measure is the use of military trials for civilians (Nader 2015). On October 27, 2014 the government announced they were extending the jurisdiction of military trials to “crimes against public institutions, facilities and properties fall under the jurisdiction of the military judiciary,” public infrastructure is now military infrastructure (Egypt widens military trials of ‘terrorism-linked’ civilians 2014). The government insists the decree was not meant to target protests but would deal only with terrorism. Sisi’s spokesman, Alaa Youssef, said: “There is a big difference between attacking public installations and protesting. They are two different things” (ibid). Yet, despite these claims of nuance, shortly thereafter a judge sentenced 23 people to three years in prison for violating the protest law (King & Hassan 2014). The police officers who brutally beat Khalid Said to death were sentenced to seven years (Youssef 2014). Justice under the current government demands three years in prison for dissent, seven years for murder.

Government efforts to stifle dissent also extend into virtual space. At the end of 2014, the Egyptian government announced that it would begin using a deep-packet inspection system to monitor popular social media platforms including; Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Skype, WhatsApp, and Viber (Frenkel & Atef 2014). A document from the Interior Ministry details the activities of concern to the government:

- Blasphemy and skepticism in religions; regional, religious, racial, and class divisions; spreading of rumors and intentional twisting of facts; throwing accusations; libel; sarcasm; using inappropriate words; calling for the departure of societal pillars; encouraging extremism, violence and dissent; inviting demonstrations, sit-ins and illegal strikes; pornography, looseness, and lack of morality; educating methods of making explosives and assault, chaos and riot tactics; calling for normalizing relations with enemies and circumventing the state’s strategy in this regard; fishing for honest mistakes, hunting flesh; taking statements out of context; and spreading hoaxes and claims of miracles. (ibid.)

Two months after BuzzFeed broke the story, Karim Ashraf Mohamed al-Banna was arrested at a cafe in Cairo. Earlier this year he was sentenced to three years in prison for announcing on Facebook that he is an atheist (“Egyptian student jailed for proclaiming that he is an atheist”
Similar incidents have began to confirm activists fears that under the new law the government can target any individual or community regardless of their terror threat.

Respondents highlight these government measures in their communications in both physical and virtual places. Respondents describe graffiti and media as important tools to bring attention to their cause. These communications are also under threat from government censorship. Andrew thinks activists use graffiti and the walls of the city to express political dissent.

Andrew: They make graffiti because only place they can speak.

Graffiti has an important communicative function in the city. Through graffiti—when no one is watching and no one is seen—activists can share political messages. As discussed in the previous chapter the Mohamed Mahmoud martyr murals were whitewashed under supervision by security forces. This was one of the most highly visible and actively discussed incidents of government censorship and is representative of an active silencing by government officials.

Bassem Youssef, commonly described as Egypt’s Jon Stewart, cancelled his comedy program just days before Abdul Fattah al-Sisi was sworn in as president citing continued harassment of him and his family (Malsin 2014). Mark was especially angered by this:

Mark: Why the fucking people (Ministry of Interior) cancel the show? Because he (Youssef) will show the people what Sisi said today and what he said last week, and last month, and, and, and. They want the people to forget. [I swear].

Government censorship of media personalities are limited to Youssef. After the military ousted Morsi, the interim government shut down several Islamist television network. In June 2014, Egyptian courts sentenced Mohamed Fadel Fahmy, Al Jazeera Cairo Bureau Chief, and Peter Greste, a correspondent, to 7 years in prison. Al Jazeera producer Baher Mohamed was sentenced to 10 years (Nader 2014).

The Egyptian government is rapidly outlawing legal means of expressing dissent. Respondents frequently expressed concern about the coordinated government crackdown on political opposition and dissent. Whether through intimidation, monitoring, whitewashing, arrests, or violence, the voices of the revolution are being actively silenced. Alex described the crackdown as a government effort to “delete the martyrs from the walls and the revolution from
our head”. This memory wipe however, Alex argues, will not succeed because the freedom won in Tahrir will always be in her heart.

Protest participants appropriated “The Brave Men are Brave”, a poem written in 1969 by Ahmed Fouad Negm, into their political activism during 25 January (Abdalla 2014). The words are used as a rallying cry for people to join protest in Tahrir and continue to crystalize the meaning of dissent:

The brave men are brave  
The cowards are cowardly  
Come with the brave  
Together to the Square

Youth activists also used lines from his poem “Who Are They, and Who Are We?” in their street slogans (Fahim 2013). Negm’s poems often invoke a dualism of the powerful against the poor. These poems are an important part of the cultural fabric that informs revolutionary identities in Cairo. Government efforts to silence opposition reinforce rather than undermine this revolutionary message: If the Revolution is to succeed the people must continue to be brave. The brave will be remembered.

**Culture and the Square**

Cultural artifacts are an important part of resistance in downtown Cairo. In this section I explore two examples of cultural production, which respondents highlighted and participated in. In physical space, El Fan Midan (Art is a Square) is a potent example of the creativity that continues to be sustained by activists after the Revolution. In virtual space, the proliferation of online communities of resistance that produce media content and broadcast to global audiences also demonstrate the productive potential of revolutionary narratives. The production of a cultural industry centered on memories of the Revolution is also aimed at achieving activists’ political goals.
El Fan Midan is a monthly celebration of 25 January. Usually held on the first Saturday of the month in Abdeen Square not far from Tahrir, the festival features music, film, theatre, and art. Festival goers attend picnics, musicians perform on stage, vendors sell snacks and revolutionary merchandize, while activists distribute pamphlets and fly flags bearing the faces of martyrs (Fig. 18). Around one of the stages, organizers display a banner with the familiar stenciled images of revolutionary icons (Fig. 19).

For Carl, El Fan Midan comes the closest the recreating his emotional connection to Tahrir and is therefore an important use of physical space. He and I planned to conduct our final interview session at the festival on 2 August. When he arrived at our meeting point, he was visibly upset and informed me that he just saw a Facebook post announcing the event was postponed. Despite securing clearance from the Ministry of Culture and permission from the Cairo governorate, access to the Abdeen Square was blocked by the Palace’s security forces (Al-A’sar 2014).

Carl: Now you see, I speak straight. Sisi wants finish the revolution. Total thing we have, they take.
The arts have a long and highly censored history as a significant outlets of political expression in Egypt (Tripp 2012, Gafaiti 1997). El Fan Midan, in its name, performance, and history, insists that the public squares of the city are places for art, politics, and resistance.

Respondents also highlight creative activities that facilitate engagement for political expression in virtual space. Social media has facilitated the production and dissemination of user generated content (Khamis & Vaughn 2014). Apart from their daily communicative function, social media platforms also play an important role in providing alternative media voices under authoritarian regimes. Henry, together with a group of friends that met during protests in Tahrir, has been producing media content that is distributed through a Youtube channel. A combination of news, comedy, and poetry, the channel is intended to keep an international Arabic speaking audience informed about what is happening on the streets of Cairo.

Henry: *After 25 January people speak [about politics] in the street, in the café, no problem. We need speak to people in Tunis, Marrakech, Amman.*

Henry: *Politics not for politicians only. The young people want to be part of deciding the future.*

Online communities, the members of which consist of a new generation of activists, artists, students, and intellectuals from Egypt and across the region, share strategies, jokes, and art. Henry is constantly checking the status and likes of the groups social media platforms on mobile phone.

Henry credits Asmaa Mahfouz’s Youtube “vlog that sparked the revolution”—posted on 18 January 2011—for inspiring him to attend the protest in Tahrir as well as for the group deciding to produce their own channel.

Henry: *This woman come to Tahrir Square and speak in Youtube video for people to come. How a woman can fight for Egypt and I stay home. This is no good, I can fight for Egypt.*

Asmaa’s video explicitly challenges men to protect the women protesting in Tahrir. She also references the self immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in Tunisia and the four Egyptians who followed him. Given the highly censored media landscape in Egypt, respondents use social
media as their primary news source. The ease with which people can generate and distribute their own content on social media offers Egyptians important alternative to state-run and supervised media.

El Fan Midan and vlogging are two prominent ways respondents remember 25 January and promote their political objectives. Respondents utilize new media communications tools to stay informed as well as to inform. With a few keystrokes on their mobile phones, respondents can build a community around their political activism. In their pockets is a device that enables them to reach audiences globally in a matter of seconds. Scholars have pointed out however, that a successful revolution requires more than just communication tools (Shahin 2012; Hofheinz 2011; Wilson 2011). The ‘Spirit of Tahrir’, characterized by pluralism and civility, is rooted in a long history of protest movements and political activism (Shahin 2012). Respondents experience the ‘Spirit of Tahrir’ in activities in physical places—such as El Fan Midan—as well as virtual places—such as through Facebook vlogging.

Conclusion

Museum, traced back to ancient Greece, denotes a place dedicated to the nine muses; daughters of Mnemosyne, memory personified. The daughters of memory are in turn the personification of knowledge and the arts, particularly poetry and music. Whether in a place—such as a museum—or through narrative traditions—such as music—respondents, activists, and artists are memorializing 25 January. The memories are broadly centered around unity and freedom, government injustice, and martyrdom.

In addition to martyr narratives, respondents also articulate memories of Tahrir, violence or injustice on the part of the government, and those imprisoned as important to their political activism. Respondents talk about Tahrir as a place of protest, a place of freedom, and a place of virtue. Their memories of the 18 days in the Square and its aftermath are not passive nostalgia for a time past, but an active part of respondents’ continuing political activism. These memories are also an important part of respondents’ articulation of an ideal self, citizen, and state. Music, graffiti, poetry, and performance are important elements of the continuing practices of resistance in downtown Cairo. These art forms are appropriated by protesters and tie nationalist narratives
to the revolutionary cause. These art forms also frequently reference the martyr narratives proliferating online and on the streets.

Even when the memorial landscape is demolished, altered, or replaced the stories are remembered and passed on through shared community narratives. In Cairo, respondents shared a common narrative about the relationship between memory and resistance in place. These narratives inform both nationalist and revolutionary identities, promote resistance, and mourn the loss of lives and freedom. The cultural politics of memory can present opportunities for political engagement (Kosek 2004). Respondents talked about collective remembering as an opportunity to mobilize the public toward resistance. This active remembering is part of larger narratives sustaining new opportunities and aspirations for political engagement among Egyptians.
Chapter 6: Downtown Divided

During a 2015 Economic Summit in the Red Sea resort town of Sharm el-Sheikh, the Egyptian government announced plans to build a new capital (Tharoor 2015). It will be located east of Cairo and closer to its biggest investors Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (Said 2015). A new capital raises important questions about the political memories embedded in the landscape. Government buildings, rather than being in close proximity to historic sites of protest—such as Tahrir Square—or surrounded by the stenciled faces of revolutionary martyrs, will be spatially removed from the memory of resistance.

Memories of resistance are an important part of activists’ continuing strategies of dissent. Furthermore, activists use memories of government sanctioned violence, martyrs, and prisoners in overtly political ways. Respondents use, experience, and construct practices of memory in physical and virtual space as resistance. Through discourse analysis of online content I demonstrate that other activists similarly use memory in their political activism both online and on the street. Rather than presenting these spaces as oppositional or substitutive, I argue there is a reflexive relationship which activists use to amplify the potency of their political messaging.

Contribution

The contribution that this research can make to the field of geography is the synthesis of geographies of resistance and memory. In geography, this relationship is generally studied as memorializing resistance. In this thesis, I assert that remembering is part of the ongoing resistance. The disciplines spatial focus presents an opportunity to analyze how these forces materialize in physical and virtual spaces. Political geographers have established the link between resistance, citizenship, and public space. That is to say, resistant subjects—in order to make demands on the state and perform their citizenship—use public space to lay claim to a different conception of the public. Human geographers have similarly established the link between memory, society, and public spaces of memorialization. Publics and counterpublics, through memory and counter-memory, materialize a social narrative in physical space.

The connection between memory and public space is well established in geographic literature. Yet, little attention has yet been given to the use of virtual spaces in memory making. In this research, I explore the relationship between resistance, memory, and place—both physical
and virtual—as it is unfolding in Cairo. Additionally, I elucidate the role of activists social media activities in disseminating particular rememberings. In bringing together these four literatures, I illustrate ways in which Egyptian activists are making and disseminating memories as well as how these shared memories are used in their political struggle.
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**APPENDIX A**

**DOCUMENTATION OF ONLINE SOURCES USED FOR DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

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