



## Full Length Article

# Urban spatial politics and collective action in revolutionary Cairo: Counter spaces and paradoxes of mobilisation

Salwa Ismail

Department of Politics and International Studies, SOAS, University of London, Russell Square, 10 Thornhaugh Street, London, WC1H 0XG, United Kingdom



## ARTICLE INFO

## Keywords:

Collective action  
Everyday spatial politics  
Oppositional subjectivities  
Revolutionary Cairo

## ABSTRACT

This article centres the role of Cairo's popular forces in the 2011 revolutionary Uprising in Egypt. It does so by bringing to focus the relationship between these forces' everyday spatial practices and forms of contention, on one hand, and revolutionary activism and protests in central places like Tahrir Square, on the other. It demonstrates that everyday life in popular neighbourhoods of Cairo is constitutive of a political domain in which ordinary citizens cultivate resources, dispositions and capacities for collective action and mobilisation of the kind witnessed in the January Uprising. It also shows how the lived experiences of ordinary citizens in the city's popular neighbourhoods are formative of the oppositional subjectivities enacted in the context of this revolutionary mobilisation.

The article identifies and illuminates two primary paradoxes of revolutionary mobilisation. The two paradoxes arise out of a disjuncture between modalities of action pursued by Tahrir-oriented revolutionary activists (*al-thuwwar*) on one hand, and popular forces' tactics, strategies and conception of the Revolution, on the other. Tracing the engagement of popular forces in the context of the Uprising, this contribution reveals that in enacting their oppositional subjectivities popular forces articulated their own conception of the Revolution. More specifically, the article expounds on how they did so by shifting the locale of revolutionary action from Tahrir Square to Cairo's streets and popular neighbourhoods, and by widening acts of urban insurgency to advance rights claims to the city.

The spectacular events of the Arab Uprisings draw our analytical attention to the urban dimensions of the mass mobilisations and the widespread contestation that they ushered in. Accounts of the Uprisings that explore their urban dynamics have tended to focus on the high-profile events and the central and visible places in which they took place (see for example Trombetta, 2013; Rabbat, 2012). In many cases, the accounts centre on the theme of public space reclaimed. Rightly, they point to the re-appropriation of public space that was achieved through extended periods of occupation of public squares in major cities (Gregory, 2013). Cairo's Tahrir Square is an emblematic instance. Often, the focus on the public square privileges particular urban actors, namely the educated youth issuing from middle class backgrounds (see Kandil, 2011 & 2012, and Adly, 2011). Left out of public-square-oriented narratives are urban spaces that through practices and discourses of state control

were rendered socially and politically peripheral. In effect, the public-square-centred narratives neglect the revolutionary mobilisation of the city's popular and informal neighbourhoods and their residents. In earlier discussions of the limitations of these accounts, I have demonstrated that urban popular forces not only took part in the Uprising but that their participation was crucial (Ismail, 2012 & 2013). In Egypt, this was manifest in the following: Cairo's popular and informal quarters were the sites of mobilisation and contestation during the initial Tahrir occupation days and afterwards; during the first days of protest, residents of informal neighbourhoods marched to Tahrir in large numbers and joined the occupation of the Square; additionally, residents of these neighbourhoods clashed with the police and, through attacks on local police stations, were instrumental in forcing the police off the city's streets; street battles and urban guerrilla warfare took place not only in

E-mail address: [sil@soas.ac.uk](mailto:sil@soas.ac.uk).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2022.102716>

Received 15 March 2020; Received in revised form 22 December 2021; Accepted 9 July 2022

Available online 31 July 2022

0962-6298/© 2022 The Author. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

the immediate backstreets of Tahrir but also in the city's outer neighbourhoods (see [Ismail, 2012](#) & [2013](#)).<sup>1</sup>

This article seeks to centre the role of urban popular forces in the 2011 revolutionary Uprising and to bring to focus the relationship between these forces' everyday forms of contention and action, on one hand, and revolutionary activism and protests in central places like Tahrir Square, on the other. In analytical terms, it aims to integrate modes of action and patterns of social interaction at the micro level into the analysis of macro national-level action. To this end, it examines the spatial politics of the inhabitants of Cairo's informal and popular neighbourhoods and their modes of inhabiting the city. The spatial politics of urban popular forces develops in and through neighbourhood-based forms of social organisation, through practices of navigating the city beyond the neighbourhood, and in daily encounters with agents and agencies of government. As will be shown below, through these everyday practices and interactions, counter-spaces form in neighbourhood alleyways and markets, and extend beyond to the sports stadiums. In alignment with writings on the spatialities of power and contestation, urban spatial politics, as used here, indexes both governmental processes, techniques and mechanisms of spatial control and domination ([Foucault, 1984](#); [Keith & Pile, 1993](#); [Soja, 1989](#)), and spatially inscribed contestation and contention on the part of ordinary people ([Arampatzi, 2017](#); [de Certeau, 1984](#); [Eder & Oz, 2017](#); [Lefebvre, 2001](#); [Leitner et al, 1 2008](#)). My analysis of the interplay of spatial relations of domination and contention is focused on the formation of oppositional political subjectivities and the forms in which these subjectivities came to be enacted during the 2011 revolutionary Uprising and in subsequent events and episodes of popular mobilisation.

With a view to centring urban popular forces in the account of the 2011 Egyptian revolutionary Uprising and its aftermath, the article advances a number of interrelated propositions. First, it demonstrates that everyday life in popular neighbourhoods of Cairo is constitutive of a political domain in which ordinary citizens cultivate resources and capacities for collective action and mobilisation of the kind witnessed in the January 25th Uprising. Second, it examines and shows how the lived experiences of ordinary citizens in Cairo's popular neighbourhoods are formative of the oppositional subjectivities enacted in the context of this revolutionary mobilisation. Third, the article elucidates two paradoxes of this popular mobilisation. These paradoxes are manifest in the disjuncture and divergence between the popular forces' tactics, strategies and conception of the Revolution on the one hand, and the organised activism that, for most of 2011 and 2012, was localised in Tahrir and that became associated with "revolutionary activists" (*al-thuwwar*),

<sup>1</sup> The occupation of Tahrir Square began on 25 January 2011 and lasted for eighteen days. Although the police dispersed the initial occupation late into the night of the 25th, the Square was reoccupied on 28 January. During that Tahrir occupation, mass mobilisation took place across Cairo and other major cities such as Alexandria and Suez. In Cairo, the scope of mobilisation and confrontation with the police in the first few days to a large extent shaped the course of events leading up to President Mubarak's resignation. On 28 January, clashes with the police intensified in popular neighbourhoods. The following day, protestors in popular neighbourhoods across these cities surged on local police stations and burned many of them down. The street battles lasted until January 30, before the police and central security forces withdrew from the streets.

on the other.<sup>2</sup> One paradox arises out of the fact that while urban popular forces joined the mass protests and contributed integrally to the political gains made in the initial stage of the revolutionary Uprising in Egypt (25 January 2011–11 February 2011), their strategies and tactics, during the revolutionary processes of the subsequent four years, did not always harmonise with a national political movement. In particular, these popular forces' actions were not necessarily aligned with the narrowly defined political agenda that was advanced by various organised revolutionary youth groups and centred initially on the removal of President Mubarak and his coteries, and then on questions of constitutional change and parliamentary elections. Although right after the dispersal of the Tahrir occupation, popular forces continued to participate and collaborate in demonstrations with organised revolutionary youth activists, popular-class youth action unfolded beyond the Square in street activism that aimed primarily at confronting the police. In this respect, popular-class youth activism diverged from the organised revolutionary activists' focus on the processes and procedures of political transition. A second paradox is that while popular forces' appropriation of the revolutionary moment, through the expansions of acts of urban insurgency, challenged government and dominant elites, it also tactically and concretely challenged the formal revolutionary activist movements. These two paradoxes reveal ambivalence and conditionality in the mostly tacit and informal alliances that mobilised popular urban actors had with the revolutionary youth activists. The investigation of the paradoxes of mobilisation brings to light facets of popular collective action that interrogate linear, homogenising and reductive accounts of the revolutionary Uprising, as found in Tahrir-centred narratives.

The article pursues lines of analysis that address certain lacunae and blind spots in both political and urban theoretical writings on social mobilisation, collective action and uprisings. As Theresa [Enright notes \(2017, 557–558\)](#) the situational empirics of spatial antagonisms are often absent in political theoretical literatures on counter-hegemonic urban mobilisations as witnessed in the recent uprisings. If political theorisations of uprisings neglect their concrete and specific urban dynamics, urban theorists for their part, as Erik [Swyngedouw \(2014\)](#) notes, have yet to approach the urban as a proper political domain and as

<sup>2</sup> The activists who acquired the label "revolutionary youth" issued from divergent political backgrounds, having affiliations across the ideological spectrum from liberal, to revolutionary socialist to Islamist. Some had been involved in the April 6th movement, and in the Kefaya movement, among others. These movements were active in the last decade of Mubarak's rule. On the background of organised activists see [El Chazli, 2018](#). In terms of both its initial and subsequent use, the category "revolutionary youth" refers to various actors and formations and does not name a socially and politically homogeneous and stable group of actors. In its initial use, the category was deployed to refer to the organisers of the 25 January protests who issued from different political groupings, and who were thought to be predominately of middle class backgrounds. Subsequent to the removal of Mubarak, the category came to index amorphous youth coalitions and proliferating groups who frame their activism with reference to the January Revolution (*thawrat yanayir*). In the wake of the eighteen days of protest in Tahrir, many of these revolutionary activists organised into formal groupings such as the Coalition of Revolutionary Youth (CRY), and some subsequently formed political parties (see [Barbary, 2019](#)). The CRY was formed of experienced activists and encompassed others new to activism. Its organisers centred their action in Tahrir and privileged political reform. The CRY was dissolved on 8 July 2012 following the Presidential elections. Some popular class youth joined these coalitions, and some others formed groups organised at neighbourhood level such as the Maspero Youth. There were fissures and tensions regarding strategies and objectives within and across coalitions and groups. What is important to note here is that the category "revolutionary youth" does not refer to a single grouping or organisation, and its denotation was fluid depending on specific junctures and contexts in which it was deployed. An examination of the revolutionary youth groups is beyond the scope of this paper. For excellent accounts of youth revolutionary trajectories and activism, see [El Chazli, 2018](#), and [Barbary, \(2019\)](#).

constitutive of the polis. In addressing the neglect of the situational empirics of spatial antagonisms in political writings on collective action, my examination of the urban politics of popular forces in Cairo offers an on-the-ground account of the everyday antagonisms and contention that grounded popular mobilisation in the Uprising. Further, as a corrective to urban theorists' under-theorisation of the political, my analysis advances that the urban, as a political domain, is constituted through ordinary citizens' everyday socio-spatial practices and processes of political subjectivation that unfold in and through these citizens' contentious encounters with agents and agencies of government.<sup>3</sup> This exploration of urban spatial practices as constitutive of a domain of politics, thus, engages with writings concerned with bringing everyday urban contestation into the study of the complex interconnections between urban space and diverse political geographies (Featherstone & Korf, 2012; Dikec, 2012, Rokem et al., 2017; Arampatzi, 2017).<sup>4</sup>

These lines of analysis also resonate with theorisations of the political agency of "peripheral" urban actors and the forms that their struggles take (Benjamin, 2008; Holston, 2008 & 2009; Caldeira, 2017; Pithouse, 2008). In his analysis of the politics of insurgent urban actors in Brazil, James Holston (2008) underscores that during the democratisation period in that country, these actors shifted their activism to citizenship rights claims in order to secure gains made, in an earlier period, through acts of auto-construction. The shift to making rights claims tends to be seen as marking the initiation of the subaltern into the domain of politics. In some analyses, subaltern actors are thought to enter this domain only when their quietly secured gains are threatened (Bayat, 1998). In this contribution, however, I underscore that everyday urban spatial politics is constitutive of a political domain in its own right. The contours of this political domain are drawn in urban subalterns' processes of appropriation of space and related contentious quotidian encounters with government. In this domain, ordinary citizens occupy oppositional positioning in relation to government. In revolutionary situations, these ordinary citizens enact their oppositional subjectivities in ways that reveal the character and nature of their specific experiences and their own projects of socio-spatial transformation.

By placing the focus on everyday-life politics of popular neighbourhoods, the article makes a core contribution to the enquiry into the forms of politics that develop in processes of "peripheral urbanisation", and into the connection between specific spatial practices and mobilisation in popular uprisings and protests. At the heart of this contribution is an elucidation of the urban experiences and practices that are formative of oppositional subjects. Further, tracing the engagement of these oppositional subjects in the context of the Uprising, this contribution reveals how they articulated their own conception of the Revolution. More specifically, the article expounds on how they did so by shifting the locale of revolutionary action from Tahrir Square to Cairo's streets and popular neighbourhoods and by widening acts of urban insurgency to advance rights claims to the city.

In the first section, I sketch constellations of socio-spatial relations and practices within which oppositional subjectivity is constituted. I also outline facets of everyday living in the city that ground collective action of the type seen in Tahrir. In the second section, I probe facets of popular collective action in the context of the Egyptian revolutionary Uprising and the ensuing government-led campaigns of demobilisation. Looking

<sup>3</sup> My argument here resonates with propositions advanced by Eder and Oz (2017) with reference to the Gezi events in Istanbul, and by Arampatzi (2017) with reference to the formation of "struggle communities" in Athens.

<sup>4</sup> In their individual interventions on urban geopolitics, both Rokem and Fregonese (Rokem et al., 2017) underscore the need to bring the everyday and the spatial dimensions of urban conflict into the "urban geopolitics" research agenda. While not engaging with matters pertaining to geopolitical conflicts, my discussion of everyday urban contestation grounding the Uprising speaks to the call for a broader conceptualisation of urban geopolitics that incorporates everyday spatial contests.

closely at the counter-spatial politics of popular forces, the section traces the lines of disjuncture between "revolutionary activists", on one hand, and insurgent citizens, on the other. More than being simply the expression of differing tactics or disagreements about specific demands and goals of activism, this disjuncture arises in relation to divergent experiences and understandings of power and politics that are grounded in modes of everyday living in the city.

## 1. Everyday spatial politics and the infrastructures of collective action

In this section, I will zero in on dimensions of urban politics with a view to demonstrating that the infrastructures of oppositional action develop in the urban everyday, away from the central public square, in more peripheral sites such as neighbourhood alleyways and informal markets. It is in these spaces that community institutions are established and resources and capacities for action are accumulated. These institutions are built to counter exclusionary government policies, repressive measures and economic exploitation. In other words, the everyday locales of subordination are also the sites where practices and structures of oppositional action are cultivated. As noted by Holston (2009: 246), the dynamics of exclusion unleashed by elite-favouring public policies are the same ones that incite struggles for equality and dignity of life in the city.

An important dimension of urban politics in Cairo has been the reconfiguration of the city over the last four decades in conjunction with the adoption of economic liberalisation in the 1970s and neo-liberal restructuring in the early 1990s. In a similar manner to developments in other cities of the Global South, Cairo's landscape was recast through state-sponsored modernising projects as well as ordinary citizens' efforts to meet the basic needs of housing and shelter. Thus, as the state withdrew from the provision of subsidised housing and adopted policies that catered to the wealthier segments of the population, a speculative high-end real estate market was able to grow and informal housing construction was allowed to expand on both privately-owned agricultural land on the urban fringe or on public land in the desert periphery, eventually accommodating over one half of the city's inhabitants.

Against the retrenchment of welfare provision, informal neighbourhoods carved out spaces for living that owed less to government and more to individual and collective efforts. To meet their need for shelter, ordinary citizens undertook tasks of planning, housing construction and management of basic services. The labour that went into the establishment of neighbourhoods, the securing of amenities and the guarding of community spaces entailed practices of autonomisation and place making (see Ismail, 2014). These practices served to recalibrate relations with government, establishing local frames of governance and normative conventions that defy officially sanctioned norms.

The spatial politics of informal neighbourhoods is akin to the politics that Henri Lefebvre (2001: 381-3) terms "counter-spaces". In Lefebvre's conceptualisation, counter spaces are produced through practices that challenge hegemonic state spatial representations and that transgress capitalist dominance. Although Cairo's informal neighbourhoods do not necessarily originate to question the predatory logic of capital as suggested in Lefebvre's conceptualisation, they ultimately challenge its effects. In a first instance, the neighbourhoods are established in defiance of official regulations and the resulting exclusionary politics and government neglect by design. As lived spaces that are produced through citizens' everyday practices and experiences, they are invested with antagonisms that are made manifest in quotidian encounters with government. These everyday practices pose a challenge to governmental rationalities and representations aimed at the management of people's

conduct in space.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, I argue that through these citizens' modes of living and inhabiting their neighbourhoods and through their experiences of encounters with government, counter-spatial politics developed. Consonant with Lefebvre's conception of counter-spaces, the appropriation and use of space by popular forces in informal neighbourhoods confront state forms of regulation and control of space. Informal and popular neighbourhoods devise forms of social organisation and use of space, which resist state-imposed ideas and practices of spatial ordering. Popular forces' counter-spatial politics, discussed further in this section, was manifest in the context of the mass mobilisation of January 2011. From this prism, the mobilisation embodies a movement that comprised and connected inhabitants of urban neighbourhoods whose experience of the city was shaped by particular modalities of the government of space, which I will sketch briefly below.<sup>6</sup>

To understand the full import of the spatial politics that is constituted through practices surrounding the inhabiting of neighbourhoods, we need to take account of the inhabitants' relations and patterns of interaction with government in the everyday. These relations and modes of interaction have been shaped by the Egyptian state's politics of security, which became entrenched with the expansion of economic liberalisation and the retrenchment of welfare provision. The politics of security has entailed increased monitoring and surveillance of citizens, in particular of residents of informal quarters. Government and official media constructed these residents as agents of social disorder and their neighbourhoods as breeding grounds for social ills and pathologies. Within the framework of a police project of government in the sense discussed by Michel Foucault (2007a & 2007b), the police along with other state agents put into effect an extensive range of governmental practices intended to manage the population, particularly in informal and popular neighbourhoods. The police's domains of intervention cover a wide range of activities and social spheres, with specialised departments that maintain oversight of outdoor markets, the use of public utilities, transport and public morality. Further, the policing of the social merges with the disciplinary and security remit of the more specialised security police.

Socio-spatial arrangements in informal and popular neighbourhoods challenge the state's control of space. For example, the proximity of homes, the narrowness of alleys and their normative investment through practices of sociability constrain government efforts of control and population management through surveillance and monitoring. The mode of inhabiting popular and informal neighbourhoods facilitates the formation of territorialised identities around everyday social interaction and activities.<sup>7</sup> A vast array of practices and relations in the everyday enable community making and the articulation of neighbourhood identities in opposition to state agents and government. Practices of sociability in the alleys, where women, children and youth congregate at doorsteps or in coffee shops, connect the residents and feed into frames of collective life. Invested with the norms of sociability and ties of intimacy that the closeness of lived space engenders, alleys are guarded

<sup>5</sup> In Lefebvre's terms (2001, 39), as lived spaces, the neighbourhoods are "spaces of representation" which challenge the conceptions and representations of space in the discourse of urban planners and governmental authorities.

<sup>6</sup> This discussion of the spatial politics in informal and popular neighbourhoods draws on different periods of fieldwork conducted between 1999 and 2015. In the early 2000s, I carried out snowballing open-ended interviews and participant observation primarily in Bulaq al-Dakrur. In 2010, I spent over six months researching in Old Cairo's informal markets of Gammaliyya and al-Muski. Post 2011, I undertook shorter field research in several neighbourhoods, namely Ramlet Boulaq, Helwan and Matariyya. For an account of everyday life politics in popular neighbourhoods see Ismail, (2006).

<sup>7</sup> As suggested by Escobar (2001), there is also a sense of groundedness in concrete places to the identities and subjectivities forged in socio-spatial processes and experiences at the neighbourhood level.

collectively against the intrusion of government agents, thus, enhancing the relative autonomy achieved through processes of auto-construction and community development.

Acts of spatial opposition develop in the everyday life of informal and popular neighbourhoods. It can be argued that the ways of living in these neighbourhoods are by their very nature oppositional. This is so because the inhabitants' claims to the space by virtue of being its developers and protectors stand in fundamental contradiction to the transgressive, if not illegal, status ascribed to them by government. The neighbourhoods offer spaces for community-formation and self-identification and hence constitute socio-spatial infrastructures for action. Concretely, these infrastructures are laid out in everyday practices and take the form of informal associations and institutions that enable the residents to eschew recourse to governmental institutions (e.g. customary and arbitration councils for resolving disputes and conflicts among neighbours and within families).<sup>8</sup> Further, within the neighbourhood's social networks and around its spaces, frames of a collective life take form, best exemplified by work fraternities. Work fraternities are formed on the basis of occupational affiliation, proximity of place of work, and reciprocal exchanges surrounding economic activities. Constituted primarily as small groups of young men who meet, on a daily basis, in their workshops, coffee shops and on street corners, these fraternities provide the framework for countering a host of state regulations and governmental practices that constrain, if not inhibit, the pursuit of a living. Counter-hegemonic practices arise in work fraternities as exemplified by the preference accorded to bonds of friendship and male solidarity over formal rules and state laws regulating employment and market transactions (Ismail, 2014). Invested with relations of reciprocity and norms of trust, work fraternities contribute to fostering counter spaces of action.

By tracing the contours of urban politics in which popular-class youth are engaged, we find that particular constellations of spatial relations of domination and resistance emerge. Police government of popular neighbourhoods takes the form of patrols of streets, public-order campaigns and surveillance of segments of the population categorised as "suspicious subjects".<sup>9</sup> Within the schemas of population management, discourses and practices of government construct young men from popular neighbourhoods as subjects in special need of discipline and taming, with policies targeting their bodies and selfhood. Indeed, from the early 1990s onward, the government and official media promoted a discourse on "thuggery" (*baltaga*) as a national security threat, and identified young men from these neighbourhoods as embodying this threat. With the aim of entrenching the politics of discipline, Law 6 known as the Baltaga law was passed in 1998. In tandem with the application of this law, the police practice of *ishtibah wa tahari* (literally "suspicion and investigation") has constituted a primary

<sup>8</sup> In creating these councils, it is evident that discord and conflict among neighbours and within families are a common occurrence, and that everyday communities are by no means harmonious or animated solely by relations of solidarity. I have discussed, elsewhere, diverse forms of social hierarchies and power within the neighbourhoods.

<sup>9</sup> Police powers and operations expanded, in part, under the emergency laws in effect since 1981, and in connection with the role they assumed in countering the rise of militant Islamist movements in the 1970s and 80s. However, it is important to locate police practices of surveillance and discipline in the context of the retrenchment of welfare provision, and the articulation of the politics of security with the wholesale adoption of neo-liberal economic policies in the early 1990s, entailing privatisation of public sector companies and marketisation of a wide range of social services.



instrument of managing popular-class youth.<sup>10</sup> Young men apprehend, through their experiences of subjectivation, that, for agents of government (the police, in particular), their self-presentation and their residency in popular neighbourhoods are indicators of their status as subordinate subjects. For example, in their accounts of police use of the practice of *ishtibah wa tahari*, the youth detail how their spatial positioning and appearance are determining factors. In Bulaq al-Dakrur, an informal neighbourhood in the Greater Cairo region, young men I interviewed identified bridge crossings in and out of their neighbourhoods as sites where they are likely to be stopped and investigated by police officers, particularly after eleven o'clock PM. In their effort to avoid being subject to the practice of *ishtibah wa tahari*, these young men opt for outings in their home neighbourhoods, preferring local coffee shops, many of which are located in alleyways. Late evening socialising within their areas of residence was, for these youths, a way to manoeuvre around police checkpoints. However, avoidance manoeuvres are not feasible throughout all popular neighbourhoods and not at all times. In a neighbourhood such as Gammaliyya, located in a historic district of the city, young men working in the various trades based in the area - such as garment manufacturing, retail sales, goldsmithing and silversmithing - or working as street vendors, are routinely and randomly stopped and questioned by the police as they go about their daily work. In 2010, and only a few months prior to the January 2011 events, police monitoring and surveillance in the neighbourhood intensified, partly in connection with heightened concerns about the security of tourists who visit the area for its historic and commercial attractions. Indeed, a number of workshop owners with whom I spoke indicated that it was common for them to spend a period of their day trying to secure the release of one of their workers arrested under the provisions of *ishtibah wa tahari*. One afternoon, two of my male informants, with whom I was walking in the al-Muski area, were stopped several times for identification and on-the-spot investigation at security police checkpoints positioned in close proximity to each other.

The encounters with the police orient the youth's adoption of manoeuvres for navigating the city. Based on their experiences of such encounters, young men map the city into spaces where they are likely to be constructed as subjects of suspicion, and spaces where they are accorded respect. Spatial control entails their being stopped by the police stationed at checkpoints and entry points into the neighbourhoods. Police practices of surveillance and monitoring enframe the youth's mobility and out of the spatial politics of their encounters with the police, young men configure the city into zones of safety and zones of danger.<sup>11</sup> Through the experience of encounter with the police, popular-class youth recognise that their neighbourhoods are targeted and stigmatised and that privileged city districts could be safer if, through dress and outward appearance, they succeed in neutralising the markers of class and residential location. This kind of "passing" was poignantly noted by Ayman, a twenty-six-year-old tile layer, when describing the different types of treatment he receives from the police at different locations in the city. Reflecting on the occasion when he visited a police station in Dokki, an upper-middle-class neighbourhood, Ayman noted:

<sup>10</sup> The practice of *ishtibah wa tahari* follows similar rationalities to the ones guiding the "stop and search" practice in other settings such as the UK and the USA. The practice works to profile categories of the population as "suspicious" and potentially "dangerous". In both the UK and the USA, it is predominately applied to young black men who are variously constructed as "suspicious". The practice is also predicated on investing discretionary powers in the police as determining the quality of "suspiciousness" in particular individuals or acts, serving as a mechanism of governing up-close, and not at a distance as it is commonly the case for populations constructed as capable of self-governing.

<sup>11</sup> Spatial hierarchies develop on the basis of multiple and at times criss-crossing lines, including social class, gender, ethnicity, and religion. In Cairo, women in popular neighbourhoods gave accounts of both gender- and class-based constraints placed on their mobility and ability to access diverse city spaces (see Ismail, 2006).

"When I went to the Dokki station, I was treated with respect because I was well-dressed, ...and I do not have Bulaq al-Dakrur written on my forehead". Similarly, outward appearance is a factor determining whether or not one is treated as a suspicious subject. For a young man from a popular neighbourhood, dressing in work clothes or having a scar on the face or hand could be a marker for suspicion by the police. Hisham reasoned that during a brawl incident in Saft al-Laban, on the fringe of Bulaq al-Dakrur, he was spared arrest because of his style of dress on that evening when police officers came to disperse congregating youth. Hisham cited one of the officers interceding on his behalf saying: "he looks clean" (*shakluh nadif*)— an assessment which he explains as being made on the basis that he was dressed well (*labis kiwayyis*) and that he had no visible body scars (Ismail, 2006). For devout Salafi-oriented youth, maintaining "a clean appearance" according to police profiling required shaving off their beards and thus abandoning one of the embodied forms of Salafi piety. In the accounts of a number of traders, their arrest and detention at police stations was due to their having been marked by police as suspicious because they had beards. Haj Ahmad, a trader in his early forties, recalled being stopped by the police one evening on his way back from a delivery of goods in another part of the city. He was taken into detention and subjected to questioning for three days about possible affiliation with Islamist groups. He denied such links and dissimulated a non-practising self, making claims to being religiously transgressive in personal conduct. Following that experience he shaved off his beard (Ismail, 2011). The experience of subjectivation recounted by Haj Ahmad was shared by other young men in different popular neighbourhoods, and commonly incited feelings of humiliation and anger towards the police.

If, through dissimulation and avoidance, young men at times evade the police's monitoring and disciplining practices, at other times they challenge them openly. Police patrols of neighbourhoods, false charges, arrest and torture are formative of the urban popular-class youth's oppositional subjectivity. This subjectivity can be discerned in the youth's articulation of a selfhood in popular-class terms as *awlad al-balad* (sons of the country)— a selfhood that rejects police humiliation. Youth narratives cast the police as a network of oppressors and as corrupt agents of government. In their narratives of encounters with the police, there is anticipation of confrontation and of levelling. The normative and affective dispositions orienting these narratives find expression in instances of outright defiance of the police. Police patrols in the alleyways may occasion moments of rebellion revealing the spatiality of embodied dispositions on the part of the subjects. For example, young men standing by the entrances of their homes or at the corners of their alleyways adopt an assertive posture, refusing to step aside for patrolling police officers. Indeed, embodied expressions of defiance were among the reasons that young men cited for their becoming subjects of *ishtibah wa tahari* ("suspicion and investigation"). In some cases, according to a number of my informants, the arrest and detention took place because of their refusal to perform a docile subjectivity or accept humiliating practices. Thus, looking a police officer in the eye during a patrol of the alleyway, or answering back to a police officer's insult during verification of personal identity cards at a checkpoint or a traffic light, are often cited as the causes of arrest and detention by several of the youth I interviewed. Young men narrate episodes of defiance that express their self-identity as popular-class youth. Inevitably, such episodes involve standing up to practices of humiliation. This may take the form of refusing to be addressed disrespectfully, or turning down police entreaties to act as an informant and to report on neighbours in return for the extension of concessions such as getting permits to open a vending kiosk on a thoroughfare in the area. In such moments, young men display a self-assertiveness and assuredness that counters the objective of disciplining and controlling their presence in public space.

Counter-spaces are formed in the interplay between the police's practices of enframing the population and young men's patterns of mobility and movement within and outside their neighbourhoods.

Concretely, these counter-spaces are drawn in police patrols and street public order campaigns and in the youth's tactics of evasion and confrontation (Ismail, 2006, p. 156). I suggest that the quotidian chases, evasions and clashes between the police and the youth in the markets, on the streets and in the stadiums encompass constellations of actors and patterns of interaction that were brought into play during the revolutionary action seen in Tahrir Square and in its backstreets. During the initial Tahrir occupation days, youth protestors gathered in the alleyways and organised processions within local networks of family and friends. The ensuing protests revealed a replay of everyday interaction and exchanges: the chases in the outdoor markets between the vendors and the police; the duels in the stadiums between the Ultras (football-fan youth groups) and the security forces. Importantly, the emotions embodied in the mass action of the revolutionary Uprising were cultivated in earlier encounters with government agents. These interconnections were noted by Rami, an Ahly Club Ultras activist, when speaking about how the symbolic work of the Ultras fed into the Uprising: "Everything we did is politics; the slogans and chants. We practice politics using our language, the language of the people organised in the public square. The slogans we shouted during the Revolution protests, we had shouted before. In fights with the police we had chanted '*ah ya dawlat al-haramiyya, hiyya klabik al-dakhliyya*' ('O State of Thieves, the Interior Ministry are your dogs'). After the 2010 elections, we had chants like '*iḥna shababik ya hurriyya*' ('O freedom, we are your youth')". Further, in reflecting on the confrontations with the police both in clashes on the street and in the stadium, Rami stated: "It is a way of saying [to the Police]: 'I have broken you. You sold the country, you are not respectable. You humiliated me and belittled my dignity. You made me take off my clothes when entering the stadium. This is how you treat us. I will answer you from your own perspective and your culture.' This expresses a condition (*hala*) ... I was beaten. I experienced humiliation. For twenty-five years, I was a non-participant." (Cited in Ismail, 2013).

Rami's comments draw our attention to the interconnections between the everyday episodes in the markets, neighbourhood raids and the experience of *ishtibah wa tahari*, and, also, to how these latter are constitutive of a structure of oppositional subjectivity (Ismail, 2014). For urban popular forces, everyday encounters with agents and agencies of government, the police in particular, were formative of their subjectivity and their positionality vis-à-vis government. To understand how this subjectivity is enacted, it is important to take account of the emotionality of the subject. As noted above, the experience of humiliation incites feelings of anger, disdain, and revulsion towards the police. These emotions were enacted in the burning down of ninety-nine police stations - most of which were located in popular neighbourhoods - during the first few days of the revolutionary Uprising (Al-Hay'a al-Ama lil-Isti'lamat, 2011). The residents of neighbourhoods such as Bulaq Abu El-Ila, Bulaq al-Dakrur and al-Matariyya set out to demolish sites of systemic subjugation. In the account of the attack on the police in al-Matariyya, as in accounts of other assaults on police stations, one objective was to facilitate marches and processions to Tahrir, but another was to overthrow the government of the police. In al-Matariyya, the attack during the early days of the Uprising embodied the emotionality cultivated in prior encounters with the police. The crowd, composed of youth residents of the neighbourhood, outdoor vendors, and tradesmen in the area, burned dozens of central security vans stationed in the al-Matariyya Square. They also surged on a mosque where a police officer took refuge. The footage from inside the mosque shows the protestors congregating by the Imam's office and, as the officer appears in sight, they all chant in unison "that is the one" (*huwa da ...*

*huwa da*), in reference to the officer being responsible for shooting protestors in al-Matariyya Square.<sup>12</sup>

More than being an individual vendetta, the charge on police stations and the pursuit of police officers is an actualisation of an anti-systemic movement anchored in everyday experiences of government. Subsequent to the removal of Mubarak, and throughout a four-year period of mobilisation and counter-mobilisation, the battle against the police continued unabated across a number of popular neighbourhoods such as al-Matariyya, Ain Shams and Helwan. With anti-police mobilisation and action continuing after the military coup led by General Abdel-Fatah El-Sisi in 2013, these three neighbourhoods have been labelled in public discourse as Salafi and as pro-Muslim Brotherhood, once again reducing the scope and import of the opposition to ideological conflict (based on a review of pro-regime media in 2014 and 2015).<sup>13</sup> However, the use of these labels in public discourse aimed primarily at discrediting popular mobilisation against the post-coup regime. Further, this manner of framing the continued mobilisation in these counter-spaces neglects their infrastructures of opposition.

The scenes of assaults on police stations in informal neighbourhoods on January 28, 2011, confirm the focus of anti-systemic action on the police as the apparatus of coercive government. What should be highlighted in approaching the practices of resistance enacted in the January 2011 revolutionary Uprising are the chains of interdependence and links that formed in the stadiums, the alleyways and informal markets, and that furnished resources and infrastructures of the spectacular events witnessed in the public squares of Egypt. If, in South African and South American contexts, insurgent citizenship takes the form of organised movements confronting local and national regimes (see Holston, 2008 & 2009, Haarstad et al., 2012; Pithouse, 2008), in Cairo, it is everyday modes of organisation that contain the force of an oppositional movement. Indeed, in Cairo, this oppositional movement manifested itself in the protests of January 2011. It should be noted that prior to the revolutionary events of 2011, incidents of urban contentious action had picked up pace. In various localities, residents engaged in collective action in pursuit of specific locally based demands. They also mobilised around translocal and systemic issues such as police brutality. In the aftermath of the Tahrir days, different forms of mobilisation and spatial politics continued to ground a movement of urban multitudes for the right to the city, as I will elaborate below.

## 2. Counter-spaces and paradoxes of mobilisation in the revolutionary uprising

In the aftermath of the ousting of President Mubarak on the eighteenth day of Tahrir occupation, popular organisation and activism on the streets continued. While street activism and confrontation with agents of government persisted in various locales, protest organisers in Tahrir Square embarked on cleaning and beautification as acts of civic engagement.<sup>14</sup> With the stalling of progress on the political front, political protests centred on Tahrir resumed in an episodic fashion between

<sup>12</sup> The officer in question is reported to be Wael Tahun who was assassinated in April 2015 in the context of growing police violence against anti-regime protestors in al-Matariyya.

<sup>13</sup> See for example Al-Mugaz, (2014), and Al-Ahram al-Yawmi, 2015. The post-coup, official discourse equated belonging to the Muslim Brothers or to anti-coup Salafi groups with extremism and violence. An examination of the political affiliations of anti-regime protestors in these quarters is beyond the scope of this paper. Undoubtedly, some had sympathies with the Muslim Brotherhood and independent Salafi trends. However, the drawn-out confrontations with the police and security forces in these quarters also attracted youth who were either associated with other anti-coup activist groupings or who had no affinities with any political current.

<sup>14</sup> These confrontations with agencies and agents of government included assaults on the Central Security Intelligence Headquarters in Cairo and Alexandria on 5 March 2011.

March and December 2011. During this stage of mobilisation, diverse and distinct modalities of action began to play out and intimate the disjuncture and divisions between organised revolutionary activists (*al-thuwwar*) and popular forces. The disjuncture and divisions then crystallised over the following four years of mobilisation. The contours of disjuncture and divisions are drawn in relation to two main structuring on-the-ground developments that brought a divergence from the Tahrir-centred mobilisation for political transition: one was the proliferation of street activism by popular-class youth who were primarily motivated by antagonism and opposition to the police; and two, was the heightening in urban insurgency and its anchoring in claims to revolutionary citizenship on the part of ordinary citizens.

It is important to note here that concurrent with the expansion of street activism and intensification of acts of urban insurgency, anti-revolutionary forces, comprising the military, the media and dominant elites, began to focus their efforts on achieving the de-mobilisation of activists and of youth, particularly those from popular neighbourhoods. By late March 2011, the Egyptian Cabinet had issued decrees criminalising protests and strikes that adversely affect the work of public and private establishments. In various respects, demobilisation campaigns targeted popular-class youth and street activism. With the aim of containing youth protests, the government authorities erected walls and fences in central city streets to block movement and to fence-in protesters. Following the battle of Mohammad Mahmoud Street in November 2011 (the street is located in central Cairo and opens on to Tahrir Square), a number of surrounding streets were closed to traffic and had various types of barricades erected on them, particularly those with approaches to Tahrir Square (for example, Al-Qasr al-Aini Street, Sheikh Riham Street, Yusuf al-Guindy Street, and al-Falaki Street) (see [Trew et al., 2012](#), [Abaza, 2013](#)).<sup>15</sup> Police and security forces were deployed in greater numbers and made use of lethal weapons. Undoubtedly, a key aim of government was to demobilise youth. What is relevant for us, here, is that popular-class youth were the main targets of the dominant moral panic discourse about public disorder, criminality and chaos on the streets. This discourse portrayed youth from popular neighbourhoods as thugs and denied them the status of revolutionaries. The government's adoption of the politics of security against mobilised youth connects with broader campaigns to demobilise urban popular forces, partly through the implementation of plans to remove poor residents of central Cairo districts to far-removed desert outskirts. Eviction and removal plans are elements of the entwining of the politics of security and population management with the neo-liberal urban projects aimed at the remake of Cairo as a global city open to multinational investment ventures in services and tourism. The state-led demobilisation campaigns entailed a reaffirmation of "the geographies of repression" localised in popular neighbourhoods and their residents.<sup>16</sup>

Having outlined the grounds of the mobilisation and participation of popular forces in the revolutionary Uprising and their centrality to the political gains of its first stage, I would like now to examine some facets of the politics of urban popular forces in the context of mobilisation and demobilisation. In my sketch above, I traced the acts of opposition that develop in everyday living in the city. These acts were the repository of know-how and capacities that were put into use in the national

mobilisation for radical political transformation. In the aftermath of the mass occupation of Tahrir over eighteen days, and with regrouping of what some called "the deep state", an assault on revolutionary forces was mounted on various fronts.<sup>17</sup> Public discourse sought to delegitimise the protesters, drawing distinctions between the 'orderly, peaceful and civilised' first occupation of Tahrir (25 January-11 February 2011), and the concurrent and subsequent 'violent' activism on the streets of downtown Cairo where predominately popular-class youth battled the police and challenged the police officers at the Ministry of the Interior. In this respect, the labels of "revolutionaries" and "thugs" became the focus of contests over the kind of subjectivity and agency enacted in street protests and other forms of mobilisation. This distinction is associated with another differentiation in the lines of activism between political demands and sectoral demands. The lines were drawn between legitimate objectives of political transition focused on elections and representative government and broader societal interests defined in sectoral terms (*matalib fi'awiyya*) and aiming at improving working conditions, and achieving greater social and economic rights. This differentiation gained currency not only in the media and official discourse, but also among activists and self-identified revolutionaries. Though the mass mobilisation in the early Tahrir days (i.e. the eighteen days of occupation) has been portrayed as a rising aimed primarily at a change of political regime, social rights have been central to the mass mobilisation as captured in one popular protest chant calling for bread, freedom and justice.

The narrative accounts of "the Revolution" embody contests of who can be recognised as a legitimate agent of change and who should be discounted and delegitimised. The contest over revolutionary agency illuminates aspects of urban struggle as it enmeshes with political battles. During the early Tahrir days, the Mubarak regime cast the protesters as *baltagiyya* (thugs)—a characterisation that many Egyptians put into question in light of the regime's use of violence (see [Ghannam, 2012](#)). In the aftermath of mass mobilisation in January and February 2011, the parameters of legitimate action and recognised actors came to be drawn with reference to two categories: *al-thuwwar* and *al-baltagiyya*. The *thuwwar* were in Tahrir. They led the civic action that conformed to prevalent norms of civility and took the form, among others, of cleaning the Square after protests (see [Winegar, 2012](#)). In contrast were the *baltagiyya*, who were associated with agitation in informal neighbourhoods and with attacks on police stations. The official rhetoric and its disputation by ordinary citizens foretell broader dynamics of contestation in the Tahrir events and their aftermath.

The spatial politics born out of mobilisation or advanced through it was polyvalent, involving a multiplicity of actors with diverse agendas. On one hand, revolutionary youth mobilisation was localised in Tahrir and placed greater focus on political causes relating to formal and procedural issues of government. This Tahrir-based action attracted diverse political groupings at different times. Between March and December 2011, revolutionary activists (*al-thuwwar*) organised several marches and sit-ins in Tahrir to press for political demands centred on the removal of regime figures, investigation and prosecution of corrupt officials, the drafting of the constitution, the composition of the government's Cabinet, and sequencing of the constitution writing and

<sup>15</sup> For a critical analysis of the battle of Muhammad Mahmoud Street see [Ryzova, \(2020\)](#).

<sup>16</sup> Interrelated economic and political factors are at play in the formation of these geographies of repression. See [Steinberg \(2018\)](#) for an exploration of economic factors orienting spatialised state repression in a number of African capital cities.

<sup>17</sup> The notion of "deep state" refers to forces embedded in state structures, in particular in the military and security apparatuses, and to the unaccountability of those holding the reins of state power.

parliamentary elections.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, other actors, in particular, popular-class youth, continued to be oriented by opposition to police brutality. Emblematic of anti-police action and mobilisation were the clashes that began on June 28, 2011, at the Baloon Theatre in Cairo when police attempted to block popular-class families from joining a memorial celebration of “martyrs of the Revolution”. These clashes with the security forces and the police were transposed to Tahrir and its vicinity when the families of the martyrs moved to the nearby Ministry of the Interior to stage a protest.<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, other families of martyrs had staged a sit-in at another nearby central location namely the Maspero Radio and Television Building to demand the trial of the former Minister of the Interior and high-ranking officers for the killing of family members. On the June 28 and 29 nights of the clashes with the police, these martyrs’ families were joined by displaced residents from al-Salam and al-Nahda districts who had been there for weeks demanding that they be granted housing units previously promised to them by the government.

In a similar vein, the battles of Mohammad Mahmoud Street (19–25 November 2011) unfolded after the police used violence to disperse peaceful protests in Tahrir calling for the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) to cede government power to civilian institutions. Once the security forces had begun shooting protestors in Tahrir and once footage of this violence had been circulated, popular-class youth joined in to take on the police. The anti-police movement, here, drew in the organised football fan groups known as the Ultras alongside a wide range of urban actors with their own claims to the city’s streets. For instance, motorcycle delivery boys joined this street battle and volunteered to transport the wounded.<sup>20</sup> From the early days of the revolutionary Uprising and over the next four years, popular-class youth activism coalesced as an anti-police movement that took protests to the spaces of state power. For example, the Ultras held regular demonstrations in front of the Ministry of the Interior to demand restitution and retribution for the murder of Ultras group members either by the police or as a result of police complicity.<sup>21</sup> Oriented by their anti-police positioning, the Ultras youth were full participants in the major events of street confrontations and battles (El-Zatmah, 2012). The November 2011 protests and the Mohammad Mahmoud Battle are illustrative of the disjuncture between the Tahrir-centred action and popular-class youth street activism. During these events of mobilisation,

<sup>18</sup> Divisions regarding strategies and tactics arose among the revolutionary activists during these episodes of protests localised in Tahrir, including clashes between those who wanted to end sit-ins and those wanted to prolong the occupation of the Square. See Said (2020) for a nuanced account of how, following the fall of Mubarak, Tahrir-oriented mobilisation changed over time, reflecting not only disagreements on strategies of action, but also polarisation along ideological lines between secularists and Islamists and between leftists and other groupings on the political spectrum. Importantly, Said highlights that the general public withdrew from engaging with sit-ins and occupation of the Square and some expressed outright hostility towards Tahrir as a “repertoire of action”.

<sup>19</sup> The transposition of the protests from the Baloon Theatre to Tahrir underscores the importance of the Square to the escalation of confrontation with government on the part of different constituencies beyond the “revolutionary youth activists”. Relatedly, as noted above, it should be kept in mind that the diverse constituencies brought different contests and agendas for change to Tahrir (Ahram Online 2011).

<sup>20</sup> Ryzova (2020, 1–2) underscores that the youth who partook in the Mohammad Mahmoud confrontations had different understanding of ‘politics’ and ‘revolution’ from that of the middle class activists occupying the Square a few hundred meters away. The youth in battle with the police saw themselves as fighters and not protestors.

<sup>21</sup> Members of the Ahly Ultras and their supporters hold the police responsible for the massacre of 72 Ahly club fans at the end of a football match, held on 1 February 2012, between the Ahly club and al-Masry club in the city of Port Said. They charge that the police withheld protection during the assault by al-Masry fans.

revolutionary activists gathered, marched and chanted in Tahrir, while popular-class youth, turned street fighters, battled the police and Central Security Forces.

In the face of widening popular mobilisation, successive transitional governments and dominant social forces deployed counter-mobilisation and demobilisation tactics.<sup>22</sup> This state-centred strategy involved setting citizens against each other. For example, government and dominant elites sought to implicate some urban subaltern actors in their counter-mobilisation campaigns, at times by manipulating and instrumentalising socio-economic and religious divisions. These counter-mobilisation tactics were apparent during the Maspero events of October 2011 in which protestors, mostly Coptic Egyptians, were attacked when they amassed in front of the Radio and Television Building. The government and the media alleged that the attack was perpetrated by youth from the nearby poor neighbourhood of Maspero Triangle, located in the old quarter of Bulaq Abu El-Ila.<sup>23</sup> Neighbourhood residents denied this charge and countered that they were patriots who took part in the Revolution and who defended it. In fact, the Maspero Triangle residents were, at that time, mounting civic campaigns to preserve their right to remain in the area, following the issuance of eviction orders. The residents framed their claims, in part, with reference to their credentials as agents and defenders of the Revolution.

With on-going agitation and challenge to the political authorities, popular forces maintained a confrontational posture towards the police. At the same time, a wide range of activism to advance housing, residential tenure and rights to public services was taking place in informal and old city neighbourhoods. Additionally, efforts intensified to appropriate city spaces from which residents of informal neighbourhoods were previously barred. A multitude of popular-class actors pursued tactics of urban insurgency designed to make use of the cracks that opened in the walls protecting long-entrenched proprietary regimes (see de Certeau, 1984). Thus, in addition to the disjuncture between the modalities of action pursued in the Tahrir-centred mobilisation and those played out in popular-class youth’s street activism and face-offs with the police, other lines of division emerged with a then growing popular movement for reframing and extending urban politics.

In the revolutionary context, the politics of the urban everyday underpinned popular forces’ manoeuvres and strategies to improve their living conditions and secure a livelihood. As such, popular forces’ engagement in the revolutionary Uprising was largely shaped by their claims to the city and to citizenship rights. In some popular and informal quarters, residents sought to advance these claims through the “popular committees” (*lijan sha’biyya*). These committees were originally set up, in the first few days of the Uprising, to oversee the security of the neighbourhoods once the police had withdrawn from the streets. The popular committees then expanded their activities to organise events and protests in pursuit of social and civil rights.<sup>24</sup> In some neighbourhoods, the committees pursued these rights in conjunction with making demands for restitution for the rights of the martyrs who were shot and killed by the police. In a number of neighbourhoods, the popular committees were also the nuclei for the formation of rights-driven groups named “municipalities” (*mahaliyyat*), which drew on the expertise of urban advocacy activists to press for the extension of public services, such as gas lines and paving streets, to their localities. The committees

<sup>22</sup> Counter-mobilisation, in this context, refers to campaigns and action undertaken by pro-regime forces to halt diverse revolutionary actors from advancing their objectives for social and political change. The main forces of counter-mobilisation comprised coteries in the Mubarak regime’s National Democratic Party, business elites and affiliated media. These forces had their allies in state institutions, in particular within the Ministry of the Interior. The term counter-mobilisation, as used in this paper, should not be conflated with the counter-spatial politics of subaltern actors.

<sup>23</sup> For an insightful account of “the Maspero events” see El-Husseiny, (2011).

<sup>24</sup> For more details on the Popular Committees see Bremer, (2011).



worked also to foster activism aimed at holding municipal officials accountable to the citizens (Tadamun, 2015).<sup>25</sup>

The struggle for social justice and citizenship rights was enmeshed with the locally based mobilisation and insurgency. Yet, there was also a disjuncture between this insurgency and the revolutionary activism identified with Tahrir.<sup>26</sup> A few activists and chroniclers of the Uprising observed this disjuncture and admonished the “revolutionaries” (*al-thuwwar*) for being absent from gatherings and conferences organised by popular committees in informal and old city neighbourhoods, and for neglecting struggles for social justice. These few activist critics noted that the “Revolution” was taking place in the neighbourhoods, on all Egyptian streets and not in Tahrir (see Mossallam, 2011, and Abo-El-Gheit, 2011). The local level, as noted by these critics, and by urban advocacy activists, was a primary site of struggle for rights and for radical social transformation. Reporting from a conference organised by the Popular Committee of Imbaba in June 2011, Alia Mossallam (2011) lamented that the revolutionary political activists did not participate in or support the social rights work of the popular committees in popular neighbourhoods such as Imbaba, Shubra and Hada'iq al-Quba.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, Mohamed Abo-El-Gheit (2011) noted the “revolutionaries’” failure to express solidarity with the sit-ins of tent dwellers in Salam City.<sup>28</sup>

Notwithstanding the disjuncture between the political activism of the “revolutionary youth” and the insurgencies taking place in various popular neighbourhoods, residents of these neighbourhoods recast their claims and rights to the city as both citizens and participants in the Revolution. In this context, revolutionary mobilisation provided the framework for citizenship-based claims to rights such as legalisation of residential tenure and access to services. These efforts and manoeuvres are akin to the strategies Holston (2008; 253–267) documents for the insurgent residents of Sao Paulo’s peripheral neighbourhoods. In the Brazilian case, insurgent actors seized on the opportunities opened by nascent projects of political democratisation to convert into citizenship rights gains that they had made through auto-construction. In Cairo, the residents of informal neighbourhoods seized the revolutionary moment to pursue legalisation of residential tenure and put an end to government plans of eviction. In this pursuit, the residents pressed claims for citizenship rights. Notably, the residents framed their claims with reference to their revolutionary agency. Thus, in Ramlet Bulaq, a neighbourhood in the centrally located historic Bulaq Abu El-Ila quarter, residents struggling to protect their homes against eviction orders and defend themselves against a police onslaught on their neighbourhood articulated political positions grounded in their everyday experiences. They asserted their role as revolutionary agents and as protectors of “the Revolution”, a role that they understood as indivisible from their local struggle. In this articulation, the residents took part in the Revolution as “Bulaqi” with a territorial identity, with a sense of historical place and as agents with social rights. In the context of popular mobilisation, they framed their relations with government in terms of rights. For example, a number of women I interviewed stated that they gave their vote to the then sitting president Muhammad Mursi in the 2012 presidential elections for him to deliver on social services. They also tied their social rights with citizenship responsibilities that they willingly assumed: “We

educate our children, send them to schools to rise up. But there are no services (reference to water and electricity)” (Interviews in Ramlet Bulaq in April 2013). This statement made by Nahla, a married woman in her late thirties raising children of school age, underscores that a negligent government was undermining her aspirations for a better life.

Nahla articulated the objective of rising-up or upliftment as part of a broader discourse countering the charge of thuggery made against the neighbourhood and in particular against its youth. At the time I interviewed Nahla in April 2013, the area’s residents and particularly its young men were embroiled in a battle with the police that ensued following the killing of a young male resident by a police officer at the nearby five-star Vermont Hotel. The controversial shooting in August 2012 of Amr al-Bunni occurred when he claimed unpaid wages for security work that he and others from the area performed for the hotel (see Elshahed, 2012). In much of the media coverage, al-Bunni was portrayed as a thug who was extorting money as part of a protection racket. In response, it was important for Nahla and other residents to provide a corrective narrative. Al-Bunni, in Nahla’s narrative, was a fair man who pursued justice (*ragil haqqani*), not for himself, but for his friends. Nahla told me how she makes a point of setting the record straight with regard to al-Bunni and other youth from the area. In her narrative, as in her neighbour Yasmine’s, the youth of the area are its protectors, and police raids on the neighbourhood following the shooting are part of a plot to dispossess the residents and banish them to a far-flung rehousing settlement. For residents of Ramlet Bulaq, like Nahla and Yasmine, it is crucial to counter the defamation (*tashhir*) campaign mounted against the youths. Both women expressed their anger at the raids and the arrest of young men. Importantly, they questioned norms of justice and truth propagated by powerful actors whose objective is to acquire the highly valued neighbourhood real estate. The residents of Ramlet Bulaq assert their claims against stigmatising and criminalising discourses. They are engaged in diverse battles that are not easily rendered in fixed political demands, but require adjusting strategies of action, which range from entering into skirmishes with the police to negotiations with the municipality. In their struggles for social rights, they established alliances with housing activists and adopted the language of political citizenship. In alliance with urban rights activists, they devised “customised” or “bespoke” solutions to counter government decrees of expropriation of their homes, for example taking inventory of occupied lots, taking census of the neighbourhood’s residents, and mounting “fact-based” media campaigns. A guiding principle of these strategies was to “localise the conflict” and “localise the solution” (Interviews, Cairo April 2013).

Illustrative of these alliances are the campaigns led jointly by Bulaq Abu El-Ila residents and urban activists against eviction carried under the rubric of “No to Removal, Yes to Development” (*La lil-Tahgir, Na'm lil-Tatwir*).<sup>29</sup> These campaigns challenged state eviction plans and orders through various means, including court cases, public awareness conferences and workshops, and sit-ins. An equally notable alliance formed in the coming together of housing rights advocates and insurgent squatters in the group named “Alive in Name Only” (*ahya' bil-ism faqat*). Seizing the moment of revolutionary mobilisation and agitation, a collective of residents of informal neighbourhoods who had been subject to eviction and removed to temporary shelters surged on state-owned housing settlements located in the district of Al-Qatamiyya that, until that time, had remained vacant for thirty years. Similar occupations took place in other districts such as Madinat al-Salam and 15 Mayo. Occupying the entirety of residential buildings, making repairs where necessary, and establishing connections to the utilities services, the squatters claimed rights to the settlements, and initiated a confrontation with government to recognise their entitlement to decent housing. For the squatters, their participation in the revolutionary Uprising was

<sup>25</sup> For an overview and assessment of the work of these municipality collectives formed in a number of Cairo neighbourhoods, see Tadamun 2015.

<sup>26</sup> It is relevant to note, here, that the composition of groupings and aims of Tahrir-centred mobilisation changed from time to time, and so did segments of the general public taking part in protests localised in the Square.

<sup>27</sup> Mossallam remarked on the disdainful manner in which some educated revolutionary activists spoke of popular forces. In her account of the Mohammad Mahmoud Battle, Ryzova (2020, 26) points to societal classism as finding expressions in the revolutionary youth’s attitudes towards popular class youth.

<sup>28</sup> This critique of the “revolutionaries” is borne out by the fact that their calls for and organisation of Tahrir-centred mobilisation were primarily undertaken for objectives such as the formation of a constituent assembly, the drafting of a constitution, and the replacement of the SCAF by a civilian government.

<sup>29</sup> The joint activism of urban advocacy groups and residents of informal neighbourhoods has a lineage in modes of urban practice extending back to the period leading up to the 2011 Uprising (see Ibrahim, 2014).

expressed in their seizure of empty public housing, and their being able to make rights claims as citizens. In the words of one housing activist, “the Revolution” meant being able to pursue, in concrete terms, the right to housing by squatting in vacant state-owned residential units and forcing a reckoning with government on housing rights (see the documentary film *Arba’ Hitan*, 2014).

Counter spatial politics and claims to the city continued to motivate and orient action on the part of informal street vendors. Yet, in contrast to informal residents’ engagement in strategic alliances with advocacy groups and organised activists, these vendors did not always align with the “revolutionaries”. This is best evidenced by the antagonism that the revolutionaries exhibited towards informal vendors immediately after the resignation of Mubarak and the clean up of Tahrir. The revolutionaries wanted to keep the Square tidy and clean and preserve a narrow political identity and character (see Winegar, 2012). Hence, they were aggrieved by its occupation by sweet-potato vendors, tea sellers and souvenir hawkers. Their attempt to push the vendors out resulted in clashes. Some of the revolutionary activists charged that the police had planted the vendors in the Square— that is, the vendors were said to be *baltagiyya* and police informants (Stack, 2011). In late February 2011, during an ad hoc discussion that I had with a number of activists in Cairo, one of the prominent Tahrir activists advised his collaborators that they needed to get back to the Square as it had been occupied by the sweet-potato vendors and risked losing its revolutionary credentials.<sup>30</sup> This activist’s injunction to his comrades to return to the Square and counter the presence of the informal vendors draws attention to the divergent spatial claims and norms of urbanity and citizenship orienting organised activists, on one hand, and insurgent subjects, on the other. The aesthetic sensibilities of order that preoccupied youth activists of middle-class backgrounds who embarked on beautifying the Square and city streets reaffirmed dominant governmental discursive tropes on progress and development.<sup>31</sup>

In tandem with squatters who moved to vacant private lots or to state-owned lands, informal vendors seized on the opportunities opened through popular mobilisation to question the existing proprietary regimes. Occupying central squares and city streets, these vendors became agitators against the monopoly of space by the dominant economic elites under the cover of public order. Within campaigns of demobilisation of activists and popular forces, the government and the media cast the expansion of informal vending in downtown Cairo as an illustration of the growing chaos that the Revolution unleashed. Undoubtedly, the vendors were not occupying central city streets and pavements to promote the political agenda of the revolutionaries. Nonetheless, their tactics should be understood as aiming to establish “counter-spaces” and to bring a degree of levelling of opportunities for making a living. For decades, downtown Cairo - an area of prime real estate - had been the preserve of well-off traders, merchants and business elites. The appropriation of its streets and sidewalks to sell merchandise destabilised the long-held monopoly over this commercial space. By virtue of the space being centrally located, this appropriation is also a challenge in the spaces of state power. Thus, it is telling that, both under the short-lived Mursi presidency and then the post-coup military-instituted government, the police objective of regaining “the awe of state” (*haybat al-dawla*) was equated with reinstating police control over the streets and removing the vendors. In turn, the environment of mobilisation

<sup>30</sup> In this respect, the revolutionary youth were advancing a particular conception of Tahrir as a space of revolutionary action. Brecht De Smet (2014) argues that the occupation of Tahrir was a projection of a revolution. In this projection, the revolutionary activists sought to impose certain images and ideas of revolution. Further, De Smet underscores that this projection sublimated other spaces of action and their projects of revolution.

<sup>31</sup> See Winegar (2016) for an insightful analysis of the aesthetic sensibilities cultivated by middle-class activists who engaged in cleaning and beautification work in the Square and city streets.

facilitated greater resistance on the part of the vendors in defence of better opportunities for making a living. In some instances, they took up arms to resist police efforts to remove them by force (drawing on Egyptian press reports, see *al-Watan*, 2012, *al-Yum al-Sabi*, 2012, *Al-Wafd*, 2012). Police use of armoured vehicles in these campaigns, which are commanded by high-ranking officers, is indicative of the high stakes pertaining to the control of space (*Akhbarak Net*, 2014).

The police and media campaigns against vendors were framed in terms of “public order” and as an imperative to combat growing chaos on the streets. Beyond its stigmatising intent, this representation of “the problem of informal vendors” reveals that at the heart of this issue are the efforts of demobilising the public and reinforcing state control of public space. I want to dwell on street vending briefly to tease out the paradoxes of the mobilisation of everyday oppositional subjects. Street vending may be viewed as having little to do with politically oriented revolutionary activism, but it represents an activity that lays claim to a right to the city and to a right of earning a living in it. In some neighbourhoods like al-Matariyya, informal vendors were key participants in the early days of protest and mobilisation, and in the attack on the local police station. As oppositional subjects, the vendors enter into skirmishes, on a daily basis, with various police forces throughout Cairo’s central districts and informal neighbourhoods. In response to the demobilisation campaigns entailing their removal from the streets, some of them were reported to have used knives and other weapons in pushing back the police.<sup>32</sup> To cast this action through the prism of outlawry as the government does, or as counter-revolutionary, as actors operating within civil society frames and focusing on procedural politics do, denies the anti-systemic character of the politics of informal vending occurring within the context of popular mobilisation and counter-revolutionary demobilisation. The government’s attempts to either crush or co-opt the vendors heighten the politicisation of the spaces they claim. On one hand, the government authorities deploy legal tools to constrain and criminalise the vendors’ public presence, and on the other, the police call upon them to counter youth activism. In this vein, during the police and military-led demobilisation campaigns, the police sought to harness the vendors’ presence in central public spaces to state interests by engaging them in containment and dispersal strategies aimed at youth protestors and Muslim Brotherhood supporters. Despite instances of collaboration with the police, the vendors demonstrated resilience in countering police campaigns to oust them from public space. Their occupation of streets continued despite having been subject to police fines for various infractions (estimated to number in the tens of thousands of fines per month). Further, they organised to counter police violence, with demonstrations and marches to protest police brutality and municipality campaigns to remove them. The scale of the vendors’ mobilisation was unprecedented, combining immediate claims to a place in the city with anti-systemic action. However, this mobilisation did not align with the political activism of “revolutionary youth”. In fact, at times the revolutionary activists clashed with these everyday oppositional subjects.

### 3. Conclusion

This article demonstrated the terms in which everyday life in popular neighbourhoods is constitutive of a political domain in its own right. Further, it probed how the politics of everyday life in these neighbourhoods shaped popular forces’ engagement in the revolutionary Uprising in Egypt. In particular, the article underscored that the lived experiences of ordinary citizens in Cairo’s popular neighbourhoods are formative of the oppositional subjectivities enacted in the context of revolutionary mobilisation. In this respect, the discussion identified and illuminated two primary paradoxes in popular forces’ engagement with the Tahrir-

<sup>32</sup> Pro-regime media circulated numerous reports of armed vendors harassing passersby and acting violently towards the police.

localised activism. The two paradoxes arise out of a disjuncture between modalities of action pursued by Tahrir-centred revolutionary youth and those enacted by popular-class youth and insurgent citizens on the city's streets and in popular neighbourhoods.

Popular forces' engagement in the revolutionary mobilisation was characterised by shifting and contingent patterns of alliances. Yet, their tactics and strategies of action are anti-systemic, and they develop from experience and a know-how orienting frames of action. In the context of revolutionary mobilisation, popular forces engaged in counter-spatial practices to derive economic and social spoils. Seizing the revolutionary moment, they occupied streets and built homes, but did not translate their action into a fixed or defined political agenda by aligning with political activists, opposition parties or government. Emboldened by the experience of mass mobilisation, these oppositional subjects asserted their social capacities and rights claims but did not advocate a defined political project. Nonetheless, they were driven to act to promote individual and collective interests guided by shared understandings arising out of a myriad of lived experiences of oppression and exclusion.

The counter-spatial politics that unfolded during the Tahrir mass occupation and its aftermath cannot be attributed a unitary character or reduced to the political programme of the more organised groups that were visible in the Square. A multitude of contests surrounding access to resources, housing rights and the right to the city in general gained momentum with increased agitation. Mobilisation took on plural forms as for example: the organisation of neighbourhood-based popular committees against plans of eviction in central city districts such as Bulaq Abu El-Ila; blocking major roads to protest cuts in water services as occurred in 2012 in Bulaq El-Dakrur; community initiatives to overcome exclusion.<sup>33</sup> In these diverse forms of popular collective action, the most discernible common feature is the effort to remake space in ways that actualise claims to inclusion and equality. The insurgent actions taken across Cairo may not have been coordinated and may not have had a clear locus, as was the case with the mass occupation of the Square. However, through these actions, citizens, who have been marginalised and targeted for dispossession, strove to make the city inhabitable and liveable.

#### Declaration of competing interest

None.

#### Acknowledgements

I thank the two anonymous reviewers for their comments and suggestions. I also thank Brian Aboud for his critical and thoughtful feedback on this article. Thanks are due to Reem Abou-El-Fadl for commenting generously on the article, and to Sarah El-Kazaz and Kevin Mazur for their insightful suggestions on an earlier version of the article. I am grateful to Yahya Shawkat and Kareem Ibrahim for sharing their insights about aspects of ongoing urban reconfigurations in Cairo.

#### References

- al-Ama lil-Isti'lamat, Al-Hay'a (2011). Yawmiyyat Thawrat 25 Yanayir (diary of the 25 January revolution). Available at: <http://www.sis.gov.eg/newwv/arm/25day.pdf>. (Accessed 25 January 2012) Accessed.
- Abaza, M. (2013). Walls, segregating downtown Cairo and the Mohammed Mahmud street graffiti. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 30(1), 122–139.
- Abo-El-Gheit, M. (2011). Al-fuqara' awlan ya awlad al-kalb (The Poor come first, O' progeny of a dog). Blogpost. Gedarea 17 June <http://gedarea.blogspot.co.uk/2011/06/normal-0-false-false-false.html>.
- Adly, A. (2011). Will the Revolution turn right or left? *Egypt Independent*, February 18. <http://www.egyptindependent.com/opinion/will-revolution-turn-right-or-left>. (Accessed 21 October 2012).
- Arapatzis, A. (2017). Contentious spatialities in an era of austerity: Everyday politics and 'struggle communities' in Athens, Greece. *Political Geography*, 60, 47–56.
- Arba' Hitan (Four Walls). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Dmd0L1OKkg>.
- Barbary, C. (2019). *Chabab El-Thawra: Microcosme militant et société politique en Égypte révolutionnaire* (PhD thesis Université Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne).
- Bayat, A. (1998). *Street Politics: Poor people's movement in Iran*. The American University in Cairo Press.
- Benjamin, S. (2008). Occupancy urbanism: Radicalizing politics and economy beyond policy and programs. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 32(3), 710–729.
- Bremer, J. A. (2011). Leadership and collective action in Egypt's Popular Committees: Emergence of authentic civic activism in the absence of the state. *International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law*, 13(4).
- Caldeira, T. (2017). Peripheral urbanization: Autoconstruction, transversal logics, and politics in cities in the Global South. *Environment and Planning: Society and Space*, 35(1), 3–20.
- de Certeau, M. (1984). *The practice of everyday life*, translated by Steven Rendall. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- De Smet, B. (2014). Tahrir: Projection of a revolutionary change. In *Blunden, Andy. Collaborative projects: An interdisciplinary study* (Vol. 2014, pp. 282–307). Brill.
- Dikec, M. (2012). Space as a mode of political thinking. *Geoforum*, 43(4), 669–676.
- Eder, M., & Oz, O. (2017). Spatialities of contentious politics: The case of Istanbul's Beşiktaş neighborhood, ÇAriş football fandom and Gezi. *Political Geography*, 61, 57–66.
- El Chazli, Y. (2018). *Devenir révolutionnaire à Alexandrie: Contribution à une sociologie historique du surgissement révolutionnaire en Égypte* (Vol. 1). Ph.D. thesis, University of Lausanne and Université Paris. Pantheon-Sorbonne.
- El-Husseiny, M. (2011). *The "Maspero Crime": Accounts against the counter-revolution's power, media, and religion*. Jadaliyya 31 October.
- El-Zatmah, S. (2012). From Terso into Ultras: The 2011 Egyptian Revolution and the radicalization of the ultras soccer fans. *Soccer and Society*, 15(5–6), 801–813.
- Elshahed, M. (2012). *A Tale of tower and shacks*. Al-Masry al-Youm. English Edition, August 12. Available at: <http://www.egyptindependent.com/print/1045386>. (Accessed 31 August 2012).
- Enright, T. (2017). The Political topography of urban uprisings. *Urban Geography*, 38(4), 557–577.
- Escobar, A. (2001). Culture sits in places: Reflections on globalism and subaltern strategies of localisation. *Political Geography*, 20(1), 139–174.
- Featherstone, D., & Korf, B. (2012). Introduction: Space, contestation and the political. *Geoforum*, 43, 663–668.
- Foucault, M. (1984). Space, knowledge, and power. In R. Paul (Ed.), *The Foucault reader*. Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (2007a). 20 March 1978. In M. Senellart (Ed.), *Security, Territory and Population: Lectures at the Collège de France*. New York: Palgrave. translated by Graham Burchell.
- Foucault, M. (2007b). 5 April 1978. In M. Senellart (Ed.), *Security, Territory and Population: Lectures at the Collège de France*. New York: Palgrave. translated by Graham Burchell.
- Ghannam, F. (2012). Meanings and feelings: Local interpretations of the use of violence in the Egyptian Revolution. *American Ethnologist*, 29(1), 32–36.
- Gregory, D. (2013). Tahrir: Politics, publics and performances of space. *Middle East Critique*, 22(3), 235–246.
- Haarstad, H., Amen, M., & St Clair, A. L. (2012). Social movements, the poor, and the new politics of the Americas. *Globalizations*, 9(6), 741–752.
- Holston, J. (2008). *Insurgent citizenship: Disjunctions of democracy and modernity in Brazil*. Princeton University Press.
- Holston, J. (2009). Insurgent citizenship in an era of global urban peripheries. *City and Society*, 21(2), 245–267.
- Ibrahim, K. (2014). Post-revolutionary urban Egypt: A new mode of practice? *Egypte Monde Arabe*, 11, 237–266.
- Ismail, S. (2006). *Political life in Cairo's new quarters: Encountering the everyday state*. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press.
- Ismail, S. (2011). Authoritarian government, neoliberalism and everyday Civilities in Egypt. *Third World Quarterly*, 32(5), 845–862.
- Ismail, S. (2012). The Egyptian Revolution against the police. *Social Research*, 74(2), 435–462.
- Ismail, S. (2013). Urban subalterns in the Arab revolutions: Cairo and Damascus in comparative perspective. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 55(4), 865–894.
- Ismail, S. (2014). The Politics of the urban everyday in Cairo: Infrastructures of oppositional action. In S. Oldfield, & S. Parnell (Eds.), *The routledge handbook of cities of the Global South* (pp. 269–280). London and New York: Routledge.
- Kandil, H. (2011). *Revolt in Egypt*. *New Left review*. No. 68 <http://newleftreview.org/?view=2884>.
- Kandil, H. (2012). Why did the Egyptian middle class march on to Tahrir Square. *Mediterranean Politics*, 17(2), 197–215.
- Keith, M., & Pile, S. (1993). Introduction: The politics of space. In *Place and the politics of identity* Michael Keith and Steve pile. Routledge.
- Lefebvre, H. (2001). *The production of space*, translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Leitner, H., Sheppard, E., & Sziarto, K. M. (2008). The spatialities of contentious politics. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 33, 157–172.

<sup>33</sup> Exemplifying community initiatives was the building of exit ramps by the residents of Mi'timidiyya to allow access to the ring road which was built to encircle Greater Cairo to primarily service the established and better-off suburbs and city districts (see Nagati & Sryker, 2013).

- Mossallam, A. (2011). Imbaba is very angry as I am. Blogpost. <http://tinker-thoughts.blogspot.com/2011/06/imaba-is-very-angry-as-am-i.html> 9 June. (Accessed 3 February 2012).
- Nagati, O., & Sryker, B. (2013). *Archiving the City in flux: Cairo's shifting urban landscape since the January 25th revolution (Cairo: Cluster)*.
- Pithouse, R. (2008). Politics of the poor: Shack dwellers' struggle in Durban. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 43(1), 63–94.
- Rabbat, N. (2012). The Arab Revolution takes back the public space. *Critical Inquiry*, 39(1), Article 198–20.
- Rokem, J., et al. (2017). Interventions in urban geopolitics. *Political Geography*, 63, 253–262.
- Ryzova, L. (2020). The Battle of Muhammad Mahmoud Street in Cairo: The politics and poetics of violence in revolutionary times. *Past & Present*, 247(May). <https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtz029>
- Said, A. (2020). The rise and fall of the Tahrir repertoire: Theorizing temporality, trajectory, and failure. *Social Problems*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spaa024>.
- Soja, E. (1989). *Postmodern Geographies: The reassertion of space in critical theory*. Verso.
- Stack, L. (2011). *Cairo vendors and protesters set-off clash in Tahrir square*. *TuscaloosaNews.com* July 4.
- Steinberg, J. (2018). Protecting the capital? On African geographies of protest escalation and repression. *Political Geography*, 61, 12–22.
- Swyndegouw, E. (2014). Where is the political? Insurgent mobilisations and the incipient "return of the political". *Space and Society*, 18(2), 122–136.
- Trew, B., Abdalla, M., & Feteha, A. (2012). Walled in: SCAF's concrete barricades. *Ahram online*, Thursday February 9. <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContentPrint/1/0/33929/Egypt/0/Walled-in-SCAFs-concrete-barricades.aspx>. (Accessed 27 April 2015).
- Trombetta, L. (2013). More than a just a battle ground: Cairo's urban space during the 2011 protests. *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 20, 139–144.
- Winegar, J. (2012). The privilege of revolution: Gender, class, space, and affect in Egypt. *American Anthropologist*, 39(1), 67–70.
- Winegar, J. (2016). A civilized revolution: Aesthetic and political action in Egypt. *American Ethnologist*, 43(4), 609–622.
- Tadamun 2015. Mahaliyyat al-Doqi wal-'Agouza – Ishrak al-muwatinin fi al-manatiq al-muhamasha (Dokki and Agouza municipalities – The Inclusion of citizens in marginalised areas). July 26. [www.tadamun.co/?post\\_type=initiative&p=6232.Xl-m38qnyhA](http://www.tadamun.co/?post_type=initiative&p=6232.Xl-m38qnyhA).

### Press reports

- Akhbaraknet. (2014). *Majmu 'at qitaliyya l-muwajahat rasas al-ba'i'in (Combat divisions to confront vendors' bullets)*. March 12.
- al-Yawmi, Al-A. (2015). *Taghyir am tadmir (2): Al-'unf yahriq al-Matariyya (change or destruction (2): Violence sets Matariyya on fire)*. January 29.
- Ahram Online. (2011). *Who pulled the first punch: Conflicting accounts of the martyrs' day of rage in Tahrir*. June 29 2011. <https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContentP/1/15315/Egypt/Who-pulled-the-first-punch-Conflicting-accounts-of.aspx>. (Accessed 3 April 2021).
- Al-Mugaz. (2014). Al-Matariyya ... huna imarat "Da'ish" al-irhabiyya fi Misr (al-Matariyya ... Here is the terrorist emirate of Da'ish in Egypt). <http://www.elmogaz.com/print/194261>. (Accessed 4 December 2015). December 14.
- Al-Wafd. (2012). *Ghadan masira l-ba'i'i al-Giza tandidan b-maqtal al-shurta l-ahadikum (Tomorrow, Giza Vendors' March to Protest Police Murder of One of theirs)*. October 15.
- Al-Watan. (2012). *Al Qahira wal Giza tashin akbar hamla min nwa'iha l-mutaradat al-ba'i'in al-ja'ilin (Cairo and Giza launch the largest campaign in pursuit of ambulant vendors)*. September 6.
- al-Sabi', Al-Y. (2012). *Bil-suwar: Hamla amniyya l-mutaradat al-ba'i'in al-ja'ilin b-Saft al-Laban (in pictures: A security campaign in pursuit of ambulant vendors in Saft al-Laban)*. September 2.