RISK-TAKING ACTIVISM: COUNTER-SPACES AGAINST

PUBLIC SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN POST-JANUARY 25 EGYPT

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Risk-Taking Activism: Counter-Spaces Against Public

Sexual Violence in Post-January 25 Egypt

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The dissertation examines the proliferation of activist initiatives in response to the

multiplication and exacerbation of public sexual violence in Egypt following the January

25 Revolution. Drawing on feminist geography, social movement scholarship, affect

theory, and critical urban studies, this work revises and complicates feminist scholarship

on sexual violence against women in two important ways. First, it decenters the

experience of white, middle-class, US/Western European women to examine the

embodied and spatial effects of actual and potential sexual violence in Egyptian women's

urban practices. The research pays particular attention to the nexus of gender and class in

women's exposure to a wide range of risks, including—but not limited to—public sexual

violence. Second, it analyzes public sexual violence in its specificity, not as a universal or

timeless phenomenon but as a form of social action that emerges as a consequence of,

and is shaped by, historical processes. Filling a gap in the literature, the project traces the

occurrence of public sexual harassment in Cairo back to the late 19th century and situates

the appearance of this phenomenon in relation to processes of rural-urban migration, urbanization, modern state formation, and nation building. The dissertation draws upon a number of methods, including (auto)ethnographic observations and in-depth qualitative interviews with members of activist groups and non-activist women conducted in Cairo between 2012 and 2015, as well as content analysis of diverse materials. Through the case study of OpAntiSH and HarassMap, the research examines how these projects of direct action and community intervention promoted horizontal expressions of care and solidarity and forms of collective risk-taking that challenged the logic of sexual governmentality that positions women in public space as simultaneously *at risk* and *a risk*. Through the case study of The BuSSy Project and WenDo Egypy, it examines how these initiatives opened up avenues for testifying to the experience of sexual harassment and assault while encouraging alternative performances of femininity in public space. The dissertation discusses the transformative and generative potential of these interventions to produce spaces for intentional acts of risk-taking against the backdrop of the increased securitization and militarization of public space, notably following the 2013 military coup in Egypt.

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Introduction

What is Left of the January 25 Revolution?

> I do not know what political future Egypt will create for itself. Continued violence between the Muslim Brotherhood and those who oppose it, military intervention, a coup, who knows. I am only certain that the fight against sexual violence and misogyny must be in the heart of the larger struggle for freedom. It cannot be tabled for later, it cannot be hushed up and ignored. We certainly will not allow it.
>
> – Yasmin el-Rifae, "No apologies," July 1, 2013.[1]

The Night the Military Took Back the Square

I arrived in Cairo on July 3, 2013, a few hours before the end of the forty-eight-hour ultimatum issued by the military to impel President Mohamed Morsi and all other Egyptian political forces to "respond to the people's demands."[2] Protests against Morsi had erupted across Egypt on June 30 spearheaded by Tamarod (Rebellion, in Arabic), a newly created and largely unknown group that reached national prominence with the organization of a massive campaign to collect signatures against the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood-backed president.[3] Almost two and a half years after the January 25

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[1]   See El-Rifae (2013).

[2]   In a statement delivered on July 1, 2013, the chief of the military announced: "The armed forces repeat their call to respond to the people's demands and gives everyone a 48-hour deadline to carry the burden of these historic circumstances that the nation is going through. It will not forgive or tolerate any shortcomings in bearing their responsibilities. The armed forces warns everyone that if the demands of the people are not met during this set time period, it will be obliged, due to its national and historic duties, out of respect for the demands of the great Egyptian people, to announce a roadmap and measures for the future, which it would oversee in collaboration with all the loyal national factions and movements, including the youth who were and remain the spark of the glorious revolution." See Weaver, Owen & McCarthy (2013) for the full transcript.

[3]   Tamarod was launched in April of 2013 to call for Morsi's resignation and the convocation of early presidential elections (Halawa, 2015). Before June 30, 2013, the group claimed to have gathered twenty-two million signatures in support of their demands, but these numbers were later contested

Revolution that led to Hosni Mubarak's ouster after three decades of authoritarian rule,

this platform channeled widespread popular discontent over worsening political,

economic, and social conditions under the Islamist presidency. In my fieldnotes of that

day, I wrote: "I arrived in Cairo in a plane without foreigners, it was supposed to be fully

booked but there was plenty of space, I guess people have canceled their traveling plans

because of the political situation. There were a lot of families and a sensation of

normality, despite some references to Morsi and the protests." Upon my arrival, I found a

city that waited in tense calm, filled with the expectation of what was about to happen.

The roads were taken by large groups of people that were already heading towards the

city center. Trying to document my first movements, I wrote: "The drive from the airport

was quite eventful. We almost got caught in a protest, but luckily the driver found a way

out of it. The streets were full of national flags and people in cars waving them. As I got

in the apartment, the deadline of the army arrived and the protests started. I could find a

small shop open and bought vegetables as well as water and rice. At that time, the streets

were almost empty, with the exception of small groups going to Tahrir, and there were

army helicopters around." The protests were already in their apogee when, at nine o'clock

in the evening, the chief of the Egyptian armed forces, General Abdel Fattah El-Sisi,

announced on national television the end of the ultimatum, the suspension of the

Constitution and Morsi's ouster.[4] From my apartment, a mere seven hundred meters away

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(Blumenthal, 2013). After Morsi's ouster, internal conflicts between its members regarding support of the military and the transformation of the movement into a political party led to collective resignations within the group across Egypt (Rizk, 2013). In January of 2015, the Supreme Administrative Court rejected the group's appeal to form a political party (Mada Masr, 2015b).

[4] In his appearance on national television, El-Sisi was flanked by top figures of the religious and political establishment, including Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmed El-Tayyeb, Coptic Orthodox Patriarch Tawadros II, and general coordinator of the National Salvation Front (NSF) and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Mohamed ElBaradei, all of whom spoke on behalf of the army's decision. For their address, see Haddon et al. (2013). For the full statement of the Egyptian armed forces, see Al Jazeera (2013b).

from Tahrir Square, I could very clearly hear the jubilant cries of celebration that followed the army statement. However, I resisted the urge to bridge the short distance and go to see the protests. It was dark, I was alone, and the pervasiveness of collective sexual assaults in the square since the January 25 Revolution weighed heavily on my mind. Just two days ago, forty-six of these attacks had been reported in the massive anti-Morsi protests.[5] Ruefully, I decided not to take the risk. For the rest of the night, I watched the protests on Al Jazeera and heard them live on the balcony, trying to picture the crowds while looking up at the military helicopters covered in green dots by the hundreds of laser pointers held by those on the square.[6]

I ended up going to Tahrir Square the following night. My partner arrived in Cairo and managed to join me in the apartment, despite the increasing military presence on the streets. Too excited to stay at home while the celebrations continued just a short distance away, we decided to venture into the city. Yet reaching our destination proved more challenging than expected. Over the course of 2012, the military had erected an architecture of road blockades that hindered protesters' access to politically-sensitive sites. The street that connected our apartment to Tahrir Square, Qasr al-Aini, passed along the Parliament, the Shura Council (the then-upper house of the Egyptian Parliament, dissolved on July 5, 2013 and abolished in 2014) and the Cabinet, and had thus been cut off a few meters after our building with a wall made of concrete blocks. In my visual explorations of the previous night I had observed groups with Egyptian flags entering a small grocery shop on the corner of the wall and never coming back, and I guessed that

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The army's announcement was also celebrated by the leftist April 6th Movement with a note emphasizing that "the statement of the armed forces coincided with the demands of the people, and the proposal of the political forces and that of April 6" (Haddon et al. 2013).

[5]   Ahram Online (2013).

[6]   For a glimpse of the affective dimensions of that night, see Malmström (2014, p. 23).

was the way to the square (see Map 1). Following a couple of people, we entered the tiny

shop and exited it from another door right next to it, gaining access to a large patch of no-

man's land under military control. For several minutes that seemed to last much longer

we walked on the unlit deserted street, past military convoys and figures of soldiers

sitting and hanging around in the dark. When we finally reached the square, the

atmosphere dramatically changed. Multitudinous crowds made up of women, men and

children celebrated Morsi's removal, fireworks illuminated the sky and a laser projector

displayed in bright green "*Irḥal*" (Leave) and "Morsi Game Over" on the walls of the

imposing administrative Mogamma building. Despite the festive mood, I did not feel safe

in that space, perhaps due to the intimate knowledge I had acquired about the prevalence

of sexual violence in that same spot or because we looked visibly foreign and I was afraid

to stand out in a moment of heightened anti-foreign sentiment.[7] After a few moments, we

decided to leave. On our way back through the dark street, I could feel the gaze of the

soldiers silently observing us, by then the only people in sight, as we walked past them

and until we disappeared inside the grocery shop. When we reached the apartment, I felt a

sense of relief. We decided never to take that route at night again.

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[7] On June 29, 2013, a US citizen was stabbed in Alexandria while he was taking pictures of a protest (Somaiya & Banco, 2013). A month before, on May 9, another US citizen was stabbed in front of the US embassy in Cairo (Hubbard, 2013). Since June of 2012, the Egyptian government had been inciting suspicion against foreigners with a series of public service announcements aired in state television that portrayed foreigners as spies and warned Egyptians against talking to them (Galey, 2012; one of these advertisements can be watched at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GucIyK94RwI).
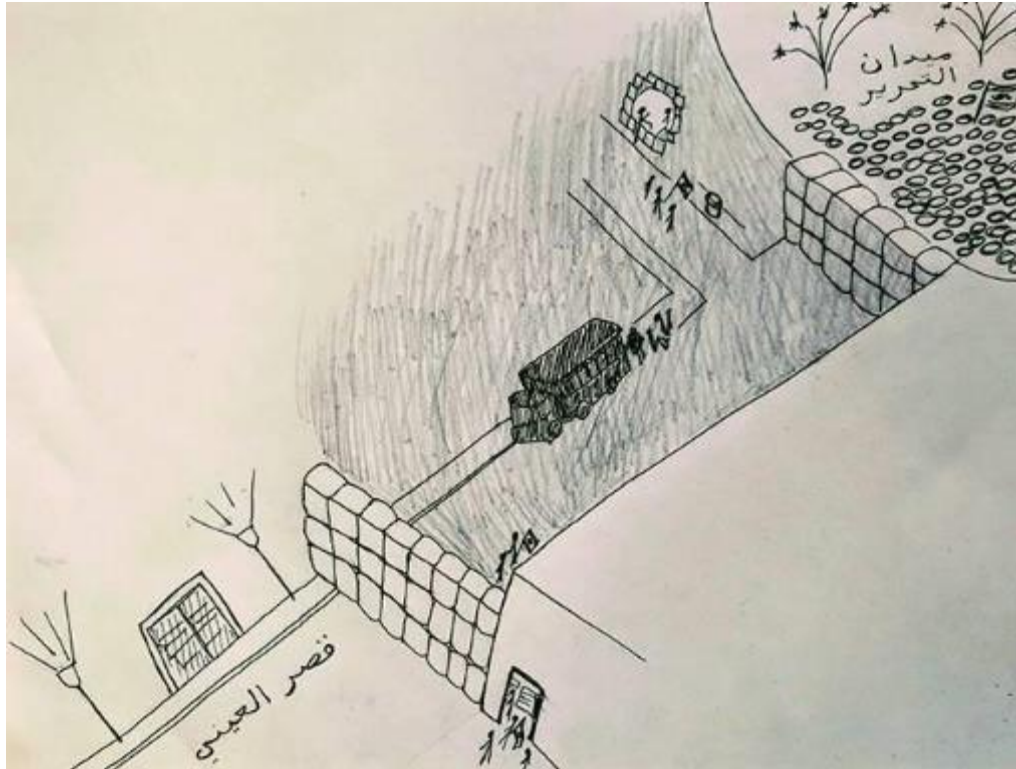
Map 1: Mental map. Drawn by the author.

Affective Spatio-Temporalities

My dissertation centers around Cairo in the period following the January 25 Revolution. Post-Revolution Cairo is not just a spatio-temporal reference but a central element in my analysis of what I call *risk-taking activism* against public sexual violence. The forms of activism that are at the center of my research should be understood and interpreted in relation to the time and the space of the Revolution, as they developed in response to the multiplication of instances of sexual harassment and assault in Tahrir square, the epicenter of the uprisings, and could only gain ground in a context in which the police were conspicuously absent from the streets, leaving room for all kinds of spontaneous and organized encroachment of public space. My dissertation documents the

changing character of urban space in the post-Revolution period, from 2012 when Tahrir

square was still dotted with revolutionaries' tents and graffiti in Mohamed Mahmoud

street called for the end of military rule and celebrated Samira Ibrahim, the protester who

sued the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, the SCAF, for sexual assault, through

2013, when the military deposed President Morsi and initiated a campaign to regain

control over public space, until 2015 when that campaign culminated, and examines the

impact of these transformations on activism against public sexual violence following the

increased securitization and militarization of urban space.

Living in Cairo is an intense experience. According to the 2006 census, the

Greater Cairo region has a population of 16.2 million inhabitants.[8] Data released by

CAPMAS, the Egyptian statistical authority, estimated a population of 20.5 million

people in 2012 (Cox, 2012). However, experts warn that these numbers are overtly

underestimated, especially with regard to the population of the informal settlements,

popularly referred to as *ʿashwāʾiyyāt* (plural of *ʿashwāʾiyya,* literally "random" or

"haphazard").[9] Greater Cairo is one of the most densely inhabited metropolitan areas in

the world with density estimates of between 257 and 350 persons per hectare (Sims,

2010, p. 228). Mobility is facilitated by a system of flyovers and elevated roads that

crisscross the crowded city, while a metro network traverses the central neighborhoods

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[8] The Greater Cairo region includes three sub-areas: Greater Cairo proper includes the Cairo Governorate, Giza City and Shubra al-Khayma City and has 11.7 million inhabitants; peri-urban Greater Cairo includes the nine—mostly rural—administrative districts of the Giza and Qalyubiya governorates and has 3.9 million inhabitants; Greater Cairo's desert includes eight desert new cities built around Cairo (Sixth of October, Fifteenth of May, al-ʿUbur, al-Shuruq, Sheikh Zayed, New Cairo, al-Badr, and Tenth of Ramadan) and has 602,000 inhabitants (Sims, 2010, p. 6-7). For an overview of the area, see Map 2.

[9] For example, Sarah Sabry (2009) contradicts CAPMAS' estimates that 5.7 million people lived in informal settlements all over Egypt in 2011 with data from an independent study conducted by the German Technical Cooperation, according to which informal settlements just in the area of Great Cairo had already reached 8.3 million residents in 2000 (p. 29).

under the ground. Cairo residents cover short distances on foot and go to farther places by metro, bus, taxi, microbus, tuk tuk or using their private vehicle. Decisions regarding how to move from one place to another are, however, not adopted solely on the basis of practical considerations such as availability and calculations of cost, time, and comfort. Gender and class predominantly, but also other factors such as age and ability, shape the way Cairo inhabitants navigate the city. Buses and microbuses are known as hotspots of sexual harassment, and are often avoided by women who have an alternative means of transportation; those who do not, recurrently resort to a number of tactics to reduce their exposure, such as sitting next to another woman (if the space allows) or paying for an extra seat in the microbus.[10] In contrast, the metro is a favored option, as rides cost one Egyptian pound (about 0.11 dollars at the time of my fieldwork) regardless of distance and it features women-only carriages.[11] For women, walking on the street involves the prospect of being subjected to ogling, catcalling, wolf-whistling and at times grabs and gropes. Pedestrians rarely use the sidewalks—dilapidated and punctuated by innumerable obstacles, if at all existent—and usually walk on the road despite the heavy traffic. Older people and those with reduced mobility are among the most affected by the state of the built environment. On the other hand, rides in the (unmetered) black-and-white and the (usually metered) white cabs that fill Cairene roads are relatively economical, albeit their drivers have a reputation for sexually harassing women passengers, an ill fame that has only worsened after the January 25 Revolution. Alongside these, private cars are a luxury that only a minority of Egyptians can afford, and the same can be said of the private taxi

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[10] The prevalence of public sexual harassment in buses and other forms of urban transportation is precisely at the center of the Egyptian movie *678* by Mohamed Diab (2010).

[11] The Cairo metro has two women-only carriages in each of its convoys, one of which becomes of mixed use after nine o'clock in the evening (Cowell, 1990).

networks Uber and Careem, only accessible to those who have a smart phone to download the app and a mobile Internet connection.[12] Such considerations inform the everyday decisions that Cairo inhabitants commonly make regarding urban mobility. Translated into millions of intersecting paths, they make up the daily rhythms of the city.[13]

Within these configurations, individual bodies—themselves a "bundle of rhythms" (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 20)—interact with each other and with the materiality of the city to produce the urban as a field of relations characterized by repetition and difference, continuity and change (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 131).[14] It is through innumerable practices of negotiation and contestation in the quotidian that space and place are constructed and, in turn, contribute to the construction of gender relations (Massey, 1994, p. 179; Massey, 2005, p. 154).[15] A case in point is the limitation of women's mobility in urban space,

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[12] The San Francisco-based company Uber has been operating in Cairo since November of 2014 (Esterman, 2014). The Dubai-based Careem entered the market in early 2015 (Charbel, 2016).

[13] Similar dynamics are at play in Cairenes' choice of their place of residence, leisure and consumption, where gender and class as well as other axes of difference, govern and limit the range of preferences.

[14] Henri Lefebvre's (2004) conceptualization of rhythms as resulting from the "interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy" called attention to the dynamic relationship between time and space in the formation and the transformation of the everyday (*le quotidian*) (p. 15). At the center of this interconnection is the body, understood as "the site and place of interaction between the biological, the physiological (nature) and the social" (Lefebvre & Régulier, 2004, p. 81). In particular, he devised the everyday as the interweaving of cyclical (related to nature, including days, nights, seasons, etc.) and linear rhythms (derived from social practice, i.e. work and consumption) (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 8). Through the inscription of rhythms in space by means of everyday actions, Lefebvre (1991 [1974]) argued, the body was able to produce the new out of differences in repetition (p. 203). While the French philosopher devoted his later work to the analysis of rhythms (*rythmanalyse*), the study of the city and urban reality was the object of his 1968 book, *Le droit à la ville.* In this work, partially published in English in *Writings on cities,* he differentiated between the *city,* "a present and immediate reality, a practico-material and architectural fact," and the *urban,* "a social reality made up of relations which are to be conceived of, constructed or reconstructed by thought" (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 103).

[15] Doreen Massey (1994), like Lefebvre, emphasizes in her work the importance of conceptualizing space alongside time, of thinking in terms of *space-time* as "a configuration of social relations within which the specifically spatial may be conceived of as an inherently dynamic simultaneity" (p. 3). It is at this intersection that Massey situates the difference between space and place. Countering notions of space as abstract and disembodied vs. place as concrete, grounded and real (Massey, 2004, p. 7), she describes *space* as "the articulation of social relations which necessarily have a spatial form in their interactions with one another" and *place* as "particular moments in such intersecting social relations" (Massey, 1994, p. 120). Unlike Lefebvre, whose work only tangentially touched upon gender and

among others, through the threat of violence (Massey, 1994, p. 180). While perceptions of safety and danger play a role in women's everyday decisions about when and where to go in the city, it would be mistaken to reduce these arrangements to a factual assessment of risk undertaken by a free individual within a rational choice model (Koskela, 1999, p. 112). Urban places are not neutral landscapes of streets, sidewalks, buildings, squares and landmarks but are gendered—by means, for example, of conventions and discourses, as well as through spatial organization and practice—while they also reflect and transform how gender is constructed (Massey, 1994, p. 179). Spaces and places, as Frances Hasso and Zakia Salime (2016) remark, are "patterned by institutionalized inequalities, ideology, and behavioral scripts" while they are—once and again—defined and redefined through repeated use, memory, and representation (p. 6). In this regard, places are imbued with affect (Thrift, 2004). Moving through the city is an embodied experience that registers on the skin, the "border that feels" (Ahmed, 2000, p. 43), a fragile and sensitive boundary at the intersection between individual and shared space (Acarón, 2016, p. 143-144). Traversing urban space means visually apprehending the built environment and those that occupy it, touching and being touched—at times literally—by bodily encounters with others. Bodies and cities, Elizabeth Grosz (1992) argues, are linked through a "constitutive and mutually defining relation" (p. 242). And thus, while particular cities "actively produce" particular corporealities within distinct (family, sexual and social) spatial orderings, bodies also participate in the production and transformation of cities through their enactment of different forms of lived spatiality in connection with

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sexuality (Purcell, 2002, p. 106; Simonsen, 2005, p. 10), the British feminist geographer has extensively explored the interrelation between space, place and gender.

other bodies (Grosz, 1992, p. 248-250).[16] In the context of the January 25 Revolution, these intensified urban encounters "generated new sensibilities and alliances" across difference while producing conflicts that foregrounded old and new divisions (Hasso & Salime, 2016, p. 4).

In my first visit to Cairo, in January of 2005, I experienced the city as hostile. Moving through the bustle of downtown Cairo, crossing roads of never-stopping traffic, and reacting to the occasional grope was a struggle that left me exhausted at the end of the day. As I became more familiar with the urban environment, this sensation diminished but I could not get rid of the impression that Cairo was a difficult city, whatever that meant, especially for women. These affective intensities—elicited by personal experience but also through reports from the media or social contact—stick to certain places, times and people (Valentine, 1992, p. 26; Ahmed, 2000, p. 22), and contribute to create what Gill Valentine (1989) has called "mental maps of feared environments" (p. 386) and Dora Epstein (1997) has labeled "cartographies of avoidance" (p. 135). These cityscapes of fear are not individually created and maintained but they feed into and are fed by "general social understandings about who and what is dangerous" (Merry, 1981, p. 12; see also Day, 1999, p. 307). The notion that the home is a safe space and the stranger is the one to be feared is perhaps one of the most pervasive—and, at the same time, one of the most dangerous for women's survival—of these collectively shared ideas of danger

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[16] Grosz's essay "Bodies-cities," published in 1992, examines the crucial role that the city plays in the social production of (sexed) corporeality. Understanding the body as "sociocultural artifact," the Australian philosopher aimed at debunking what she described as two pervasive models to explain the interrelation between bodies and cities: a humanist ideal that reduces the city to a mere product or projection of the body (the idea that "humans *make* cities") and a naturalized notion that establishes a parallelism or isomorphism between cities and bodies (notably, through the metaphor of the body-politic) (Grosz, 1992, p. 241). In a move to complicate this relationship, she conceptualizes bodies and cities as "assemblages or collections of parts, capable of crossing the thresholds between substances to form linkages, machines, provisional and often temporary sub- or microgroupings" (Grosz, 1992, p. 248).

and safety (Probyn, 1993, p. 270-271; Massey, 1994, p. 180; Epstein, 1997, p. 135; Phadke, Khan & Ranade, 2011, p. 51).[17] These *common knowledges* do not spontaneously emerge and consolidate themselves but are the product of power dynamics that dynamically (re)draw the contours of order and disorder, normality and deviance, belonging and otherness in the social fabric (England & Simon, 2010, p. 204).

Affect can be created and manipulated, even "actively engineered" for political ends, as Nigel Thrift (2004) remarks (p. 58). In Egypt, for example, state and media discourses in the 1990s mobilized a rhetoric of national security to mark ʿashwāʾiyyāt as "centers of lawlessness, extremism, crime and poverty" following the infiltration of the informal community of Imbaba by the militant Islamist group *al-Gamāʿa al-Islāmiyya* (Bayat & Denis, 2000, p. 197). The threat of the poor masses rising from the informal settlements and disturbing the "peace of the middle class neighborhoods" was similarly exploited in the mid-2000s by movies like Khaled Youssef's "Till Things Get Better" and other cultural productions (Karawya, 2009, p. 100).[18] Capitalizing on these anxieties, the private developers that invested in suburban developments during the real-estate explosion of the late 1990s tapped into these fears to market the newly constructed gated

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[17]   The paradox that women fear public space and strangers despite the fact that most cases of violence take place in the home and at the hand of known people has been extensively discussed by feminist scholars in general, and feminist geographers in particular (for the first, see for example Hanmer, 1978, p. 229; Hanmer & Saunders, 1984, p. 65; Radford, 1987, p. 32; for the second, see Valentine, 1989, p. 386; Pain, 1997, p. 233).

[18]   "Till things get better" (2007) is one of the many *aflām ʿashwāʾiyyāt* (movies whose 'heroes' are dwellers in the informal settlements) that proliferated in Egypt during the mid-2000s. Director Youssef presented the film as a "warning message for the whole society, government and people, that the ʿashwāʾī quarters surrounding Cairo are occult bombs that may explode anytime" (cited in Karawya, 2009, p. 60). Echoing these fears, between 2007 and 2008 newspapers commonly reported about riots organized by residents of the informal settlements (Karawya, 2009, p. 53). In this same period, state authorities started to consider these communities as an "urban pathology" and a security threat (Ismail, 2006, p. 66).

communities in the desert (Kuppinger, 2004, p. 47; see also Mitchell, 1999).[19] Decades of

what urban planner Sherief Gaber (2015) has described as an "active politics of

abandonment of the city" in favor of the new projects in the desert promoted by the

Mubarak regime contributed to the increase of perceptions of danger in the city core,

while allowing behaviors such as public sexual harassment to proliferate unchallenged.

As a result, upper- and upper-middle-class women increasingly left downtown Cairo,

embracing the privatized residential, leisure and consumption spaces that mushroomed in

upscale neighborhoods and in the desert as "safe spaces" free from urban nuisances (De

Koning, 2009, p. 128).

Affective configurations, however, are not static, as the advent of the January 25

Revolution demonstrates. During the eighteen days that the uprisings lasted, the

occupation of Tahrir Square by Egyptians of all walks of life transformed the affective

register of the space. Overcoming entrenched fears of police repression, systematically

instilled by decades of authoritarian rule and police brutality, hundreds of thousands of

women and men poured onto the streets and took over the square. For many women it

was the first time they attended a political gathering, and they often did it overtly or

covertly challenging their families' opposition. Women's personal blogs during that

period attest to the affective intensities that visiting the epicenter of the protests elicited.[20]

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[19] In her analysis of gated communities' discursive and visual representations in advertisements and promotional materials, Kuppinger (2004) identifies the emergence of a language of security in the mid-2000s as a response to "vague fears that individuals might harbor with regard to crime (albeit not a very dominant concern in Cairo), militant activism (highly unpredictable and clearly not ever-present) and unnamed general fears or the wish to distance oneself from the poor masses" (p. 45). In brochures, this was often highlighted by means of explicit references to and images of the security features offered by the compound (Almatarneh & Mansour, 2013, p. 519). These processes are not particular to Egypt; on the contrary, similar dynamics are at work at a global level (Crawford, 1992, p. 27).

[20] For a broader exploration of these narratives in Egyptian women's personal blogs, see Galán (2012). For an examination of Egyptian women's personal blogs as "a site for the practice of virtual and

"Despite the ruins, and the massive injuries, I had a very soothing sense that I was in heaven," wrote blogger *Insomniac* after a visit to Tahrir Square on February 3, 2011. She continued:

> I was among ANGELS, not human beings … One of them asked me and my friend as his face beamed with a smile 'why did you come?'... my friend said 'because this is our country...', I looked at him in the eye and resisted hugging him as I answered 'because YOU are my country'... and they are, Oh God, they are the country I have been looking for my entire life and I finally found it.

In the almost mythical depictions of Tahrir Square that proliferated during the revolutionary days, women attending the protests described a climate of social conviviality and religious tolerance where, as many emphasized, sexual harassment had no place. As blogger *Sina* evoked after a visit to the square on February 6, 2011, "Tahrir has become a miniature Egyptian republic, offering a brighter outlook on a possible way of life for the whole of Egypt." The affective consensus that imagined Tahrir Square as the genesis of a better Egypt, however, also silenced individual experiences of sexual violence, as journalist Yasmin el-Rifae (2015) recognized in an interview:

> As a woman myself I was grabbed in the square in the eighteen days, and this is something that definitely happened, I think people for a while didn't want to admit that this was a problem … because everyone was so euphoric and happy with what was happening.

The collective sexual assault against CBS journalist Lara Logan on February 11, 2011—the night of Mubarak's ouster—marked the end of this utopian affective regime (CBS News, 2011). In the months and years that followed, the multiplication of instances

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potentially transformative social roles" in the context of the January 25 Revolution, see Pahwa (2016, p. 46).

of sexualized violence against women protesters forcefully dispelled the revolutionary idea that Tahrir Square was a safe space for women.[21]

The continuation of the protests after the January 25 Revolution—first against the interim military rule and, after Morsi's election as president in June of 2012, against the growing influence of the Muslim Brotherhood—consolidated the affective identification of downtown Cairo with political turmoil, tear gas, and sexual violence. In Tahrir Square, collective sexual assaults against women protesters adopted a more organized form, later described by activists as "circles of hell," and became more numerous and systematic in late 2012 and early 2013. During that period, according to El-Rifae (2015), a sense of impending danger saturated the space: "On some days you could feel very instinctively and very clearly that this was a place that was not safe for women." This affect came to dominate the way Cairenes thought of the square and its environs, conditioning their circulation through this central part of the city. The withdrawal of the police from the streets following the overthrow of Mubarak contributed to increase perceptions of insecurity among urban residents.[22] Fear of crime and violence or the desire for a healthier and safer environment for them and their families motivated some—who could afford it—to move far from the urban core, in the new cities that continued to grow in the

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[21]   In a personal communication, scholar and advocate for children's rights Nelly Ali (2014b) noted that, prior to the January 25 Revolution, Tahrir square was well known as a space where street children were commonly sexually assaulted at night (for a broader discussion of street children's vulnerability in Cairo, see Ali (2014a).

[22]   In the weeks and months following the January 25 Revolution, the police were notably absent from Cairo's public space. Though the exact reasons for their withdrawal remain unclear, it has been suggested that this move was an attempt to instill fear of chaos and disorder among the middle classes (Saleh, 2011; Abdelrahman, 2017, p. 192-193).

desert.[23] Those who stayed in Cairo adopted more stringent protective measures, often

further limiting their mobility in public.

The redeployment of the security forces after the military coup of July of 2013

has once again altered the affective register of the city. The intensification of a "military

urbanism" (Graham, 2012, p. 137)—through the stationing of military personnel and

vehicles in the main squares and in front of government buildings and the construction of

new physical barriers to restrict access to sensitive sites—and the approval of a law

placing broad restrictions on protests maintain the city in a *de facto* state of emergency.[24]

The military regime's attempt to "exert direct control over the streets" (Gaber, 2015) after

what is perceived as years of political disorder has taken manifold forms, including the

clearing of street vendors from downtown Cairo and the closure of street cafés in the

Borsa district, a popular gathering point for activists and revolutionaries (Abaza, 2017, p.

182-183).[25] After less than two years of military rule, a new affect set in. "If you go

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[23]   Government efforts to build towns and settlements in the desert to alleviate Cairo's crowded
       metropolitan area date back from Gamal Abdel Nasser's time—with the construction of Madinat Nasr
       in 1958—but became particularly intense under Anwar Sadat—with the creation of Tenth of Ramadan,
       Madinat al-Sadat, Fifteenth of May, and Sixth of October between 1976 and 1979, among other new
       towns—and, especially, under Mubarak (Sims, 2015, p. 121). The first new towns were mainly built to
       house working-class and professional Egyptians in state-subsidized housing blocks (Sims, 2015, p.
       128). The early 1990s marked a shift in this approach, as "[h]uge tracts of land began to be sold at
       giveaway or below-market prices to an emerging new breed in Egypt, the corporate real-state
       developer," who used the land to build residential compounds and gated communities (Sims, 2015, p.
       128).

[24]   Historically, the 1958 Emergency Law has allowed the Egyptian president to declare the state of
       emergency in response to threats to public security or order, and to restrict civil liberties and rights
       (Reza, 2007, p. 537). In Egypt, the state of emergency was in force, continuously, since the
       assassination of President Sadat in 1981 and until 2012, when it expired (Al Jazeera, 2012). Following
       the July 3, 2013 coup and the violent repression of Morsi's supporters in Rabaa al-Adawiya square, the
       military declared a new state of emergency and night-time curfew in August of 2013 (Al Jazeera,
       2013a). Right after the lifting of these measures in November of 2013, the government promulgated a
       law criminalizing free assembly and public expression (Kirkpatrick, 2013).

[25]   In August of 2014, the security forces launched a campaign to expel street vendors from downtown
       Cairo (Rios, 2015). This strategy has been interpreted as part of the authorities' attempt to cleanse the
       city core from any remnants of the revolutionary period, including its unregulated markets (Malsin,
       2015). In November of 2014, the police shut down the street cafés of the Borsa pedestrian area in
       downtown Cairo (Magid, 2014).

downtown after they kicked out the street vendors, it feels a lot less safe … the street

vendors at the very least were lighting the streets … and now it feels empty and darker,"

noted Gaber in an interview. The silence produced by the absence of the vendors has also

introduced an "altered rhythm" to the urban soundscape (Malmström, 2014, p. 31). When

I left Egypt in June of 2015, at the end of my dissertation fieldwork, the government had

just banned parking in the urban core, a decision that ostensibly reduced the number of

visitors to downtown Cairo.[26] As a result, the streets felt silent and deserted, a haunting

sensation for anybody who has spent some time in the city.

(Hi-)Stories of Public Sexual Violence

My project has three main goals: First, it aims to correct widely-held narratives

about sexual harassment and assault in Egypt. Early examinations of the collective sexual

assaults that proliferated in Tahrir Square in the aftermath of the January 25 Revolution

attributed these attacks to state-sponsored thugs. They linked them to Black Wednesday,

when men affiliated with the Mubarak regime sexually harassed women activists in

2005.[27] Hence, scholarly engagements with sexual harassment have established a

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[26]   In February of 2015, the Cairo governor issued a ban on parking in downtown Cairo with the aim of improving traffic in the urban core (Samih, 2015). Visitors are encouraged to park their vehicles in a newly inaugurated underground garage underneath Tahrir square for a fee and take one of the facilities' air-conditioned minibuses to move around the area (Ayyad, 2015). The price of the parking fees—four Egyptian pounds per hour and five hundred Egyptian pounds per month (0.44 and fifty-five dollars, respectively, at the time of my fieldwork)—has discouraged many from spending long periods of time in downtown Cairo.

[27]   In May 25, 2005, Mubarak called for a referendum to amend article 76 of the Egyptian Constitution in order to allow a multi-candidate, direct election of the president (Stacher, 2005). Oppositional groups, among them the *Kefaya* movement, boycotted the vote because of the strict requirements that the amended text imposed on potential presidential candidates, and organized a protest in front of the Press Syndicate that was attacked by thugs. The public sexual assaults suffered by women protesters were denounced in activists' blogs. See, for example, http://wa7damasrya.blogspot.com/2005/05/blog-post_25.html (in Arabic) and http://tinker-thoughts.blogspot.com/2005/05/el-nas-el-soghayara.html.

difference between the type of sexual assault that takes place in the extraordinary context of political protests, and more prevalent forms of sexual harassment that women experience on a daily basis on the streets. I argue that this artificial dichotomy between a "political" vs. a "social" sexual violence obscures the ways in which women, activist and non-activist alike, experience these two forms of violence as deeply interconnected. In my dissertation, I use the concept "public sexual violence" to account for all forms of violence that take place in public and in the presence of publics. My focus on public space is not meant to reify the gendered binary between a masculine public and a feminine private space. Instead I want to emphasize the social dimension of these sexual intrusions by highlighting the impact of publicly performed forms of sexual violence on women, their families, and the communities they are part of.

I draw upon affect theory to examine the embodied and spatial dynamics of fear and shame in women's inhabitation of and engagement with urban space. Michael Foucault uses *governmentality* to examine the processes and techniques used to govern conduct. Building upon this scholarship, I have coined the phrase "sexual governmentality" to analyze a wide array of modes of regulation and control deployed to *conduct women's conduct* in public. I contend that mechanisms of sexual governmentality have been central to the maintenance of social order long before the formation of the modern Egyptian state, and remain pivotal to the governance of women's bodies and their visibility in public. The technologies and practices that regulate gender interactions, define proper behavior and delineate the limits of the socially acceptable concentrate disproportionately on women's bodies. At its extreme, the figure of the prostitute—the

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For more information and an update on this case, see El-Nadeem (2007), EIPR (2013), and EIPR (2016).

epitome of sexual transgression—has been the exemplary target of an array of interventions aimed at disciplining her body and limiting her presence in public. The blurring of the boundaries between "prostitution" and other behaviors deemed morally questionable in popular discourse has facilitated the extension of this supervision to all women in public space.

I adopt a historical approach to trace the origin of public sexual harassment in Cairo not to the Sadat or the Mubarak regime, as other scholars have done (Amar, 2011b; Tadros, 2013a & 2013b), but back to the late 19th century, and examine its appearance as a conservative reaction to women's increasing visibility in public space following the decline of seclusion and full veiling and the development of the modern, unregulated city. In relation to this, I regard the use of public sexual aggression against politically-active women not solely as a repressive measure aimed at discouraging their participation in oppositional activism but, more importantly, as a punishment for their challenge of normative ideas of women's role and place in society.

Drawing on anthropological perspectives on violence, I regard public sexual violence not as a universal, natural, irrational, inevitable, immutable, aberrant or asocial phenomenon but as contingent and context-dependent, intended actions central to quotidian social relations and embedded in social norms (Riches, 1986; Aijmer & Abbink, 2000; Schmidt & Schröder, 2001; Stewart & Strathern, 2002; Stanko, 2003). I argue that the "circles of hell" that proliferated in Tahrir Square after the January 25 Revolution did not emerge in a void, but are rooted in and reinforced by legal, political, religious, and media discourses and practices that minimize, explain, and legitimize the use of public sexual violence against women. In my dissertation, I examine the processes

through which public sexual harassment and assault in Cairo have been collectively justified, while rendered inevitable, on the basis of naturalized notions of femininity and masculinity, men's and women's sexuality, and gendered constructions of risk in public space.

Central to these rationales is a conceptualization of women in public space as being both *at risk* and *a risk,* both in need of protection and a liability to family's honor, both targets and agents of fear, both subject to violations and violators of social order. Building upon Fatima Mernissi's (1987 [1975]) work, I examine this paradoxical position with regard to women in Egypt. On the one hand, they are discursively produced as vulnerable and in need of protection when outside of the home. Their bodies are imagined as continuously exposed to a wide range of dangers, an argument used by family members and intimates to justify the curtailment of women's freedom of movement *for their own sake.* In addition, norms of respectable femininity enhance this vulnerability, as respectable women are supposed to avert eye contact, keep their voice low, walk fast, and show modesty when in public (Singerman, 1995, p. 82; Ghannam, 2002, p. 100; Nassif, 2010, p. 106; Van Dalen, 2013, p. 25). If sexually harassed, they are expected to ignore these intrusions and are discouraged from responding to unwelcome sexual advances, as verbal and physical retaliation are presumed to escalate the level of violence. The active assessment and avoidance of risk is one of the ways through which women perform respectable femininity (Stanko, 1997, p. 489; Phadke, 2007, p. 1512). The always-present danger of sexual defilement that women face in public space figures them as a liability, constantly threatening to jeopardize their family's honor. In this context, women's presence in public is not restricted out of concern for their safety but rather in an attempt

to safeguard the family's assets, particularly with regard to unmarried women, whose virginity has a social and economic value (Wynn & Hassanein, 2017, p. 899). On the other hand, the identification of family honor with women's sexuality—a notion enshrined in the Egyptian penal code that pervades political and popular discourses on sexual violence—constitutes women as a risk to their family's social standing (Singerman, 1995, p. 53; Baron, 2006, p. 1). Underscoring these notions is an understanding—central to Islamic doctrine, theology, and jurisprudence—of women's sexuality as active and potentially disruptive, a powerful force that can lead to *fitna* or chaos if not constrained by the social and legal institutions designed to restrict women's freedoms (Mernissi, 1987 [1975], p. 30-31). The underlying idea that women in public (and public women, in particular) pose a risk to social order pervades justifications of public sexual violence.

The city is the arena where quotidian micro-aggressions and full-fledged assaults are played out, sometimes challenged, other times downplayed or deliberately ignored by those who suffer them, as well as those who witness them. Public sexual harassment and assault are forms of social communication that contribute to shaping women's bodies, social relations, and urban space. Tolerance towards public sexual violence thus symbolically marks streets, squares, subways and buses as spaces where women have no place, investing the city with an "affective charge" that conveys the inappropriateness of their presence in public (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 141). By virtue of their publicity, instances of public sexual harassment and assault are not circumscribed to the scope of interpersonal social relations, but inevitably become subject to collective negotiations whereby bystanders make sense of the incident, take sides, and distribute blame. The space where

the act of violence takes place is the space where the use of sexual violence against women is—through silence and inaction—regularly condoned, but it can also be the locus of contest. Urban spaces are, as Lefebvre (1991) remarks, "over-inscribed" with discourses of power that prescribe and proscribe certain distributions of bodies (p. 142). And yet, at the same time, it is through the body that space is not only perceived but also lived and produced, thus enabling its re-inscription (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 160). As "a material space of multiple dimensions that irrupts and interrupts normative orders" (Hasso & Salime, 2016, p. 4), the body has the potential to create new orders through the enactment of novel practices. The bodily engagements between perpetrators, survivors and witnesses are one of the ways through which notions of risk and ideas of women's place in public space are collectively negotiated and reframed.

The second goal of my dissertation is to explore a number of legal and policy reforms adopted by the Egyptian government since 2013. They include the activation of a unit responsible for monitoring violence against women in the Ministry of Interior, the amendment of the penal code to criminalize sexual harassment, and the creation of an anti-harassment police force integrated with female officers. I argue that these reforms have done little to transform the *at risk/as risk* construct. Instead, they represent a return to a politics of security that intensifies the criminalization of certain populations and the policing of public space in the name of women's safety.[28] Building upon the age-old distinction between "good women," who behave and are therefore worthy of protection, and "bad" or "fallen" women, who refuse to behave and therefore deserve to be publicly

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[28] On June 5, 2014, interim president Adly Mansour issued Decree 50 to amend article 306 of the penal code ("the scandalous breach of modesty"). The amendment establishes that verbal, behavioral, phone and online sexual harassment will carry prison sentences of between six months and five years and fines of up to 50,000 Egyptian pounds (Ahram Online, 2014a). I discuss these changes more in depth in the concluding chapter.

disciplined by means of sexual harassment or rape (Griffin, 1971, p. 30; Peterson, 1977, p. 361), the regime proclaims itself as the protector of women while it intensifies the practice of sexual violence and torture against both male and female detainees in police stations (FIDH, 2015). In what sounds like a repetition of the discourse articulated by El-Sisi in 2011—when he argued that the military forced women protesters to undergo virginity checks "in self-defense against potential rape allegations" (Borkan, 2011)—the now Egyptian president deploys a *selective form of accountability* that reinforces the figures of the *woman at risk* and the *woman as risk* by singling out some bodies as worthy of protection and redress while marking all other bodies as undeserving of care and justice, when not in need of discipline. These developments have taken place against the backdrop of the consolidation of authoritarian rule, the securitization of public space, the *de facto* ban on political protests, the tightening of the legal framework for non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the detention and disappearance of activists, and the harassment of the independent initiatives that mobilized against public sexual violence in the aftermath of the January 25 Revolution.

Spaces of Intervention and Testimony

Activism against sexual violence against women existed in Egypt prior to 2011. The Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR) was the first organization that addressed the problem of sexual harassment in Egypt with the campaign "Making Our Streets Safer for Everyone," launched in 2005. Through awareness-raising, advocacy, research and lobbying, ECWR aimed at enacting cultural, policy, and legal changes, an

approach that enabled its members to safely operate within the confines of the restrictive

legislation that regulated the activities of NGOs and the Emergency Law in place (Rizzo,

Price & Meyer, 2012, p. 464). In their analyses and activities, the association

purposefully suspended any judgment of state practices—including the use of sexual

violence against women protesters in May of 2005—and pragmatically sought

government support by highlighting the negative impact that public sexual harassment

had on tourism in particular and on economic growth more generally (Azargoshasb,

2009, p. 87). In addition, ECWR adopted a security discourse in its documents that

favored a heightened securitization of public space through the installation of

surveillance cameras and a larger deployment of police officers on the streets (ECWR,

2009b, p. 36-39). This approach contributed to further criminalizing working-class young

men, commonly perceived as harassers (Amar, 2011b), and undermined activists' claims

on public space.

In 2005, the initiative Al-Shāriʿ Linā (The Street Is Ours) emerged from the ranks

of the opposition movement *Kefaya* in response to Black Wednesday (see footnote 27).

This "women-for-democracy movement," spearheaded by activist and blogger Nora

Younis, connected for the first time state-sponsored sexual violence and everyday forms

of sexual harassment on the streets, in public transportation, and in the workplace.[29] As

cultural historian and member of the group Alia Mossallam (2015) explained to me, "the

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[29] This connection is evidenced in the declaration from their preparatory committee: "We were met with the same police violence which meets all democracy fighters. But we are also subject to a violence that targeted us as women … The message of the ministry of interior to us, our families, friends and colleagues was clear: Women have to stay at home. They thought that sexual harassment is the tool that will terrorize women … Wednesday was not the first time that sexual harassment was used to terrorize women and limit their participation in public life. They harass us in public buses and when we protest they tell us to stay at home. They harass us at the workplace and when we protest they tell us to stay at home. They harass us in demonstrations and when we protest they tell us to stay at home" (cited in Hassan & Abd El-Fattah, 2005).

idea was to make the streets a safe space for women to protest and … to exist on the street, to be seen, to move without feeling being at risk." Al-Shāriʿ Linā organized a number of marches where women dressed in black as well as an international conference, but its impact remained limited to a small circle of political and human rights activists. Looking back at anti-sexual violence activism prior to 2011, Dalia Abd El-Hameed (2015), Gender and Women's Rights Officer at the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), noted in an interview: "Before the revolution, most of the efforts were NGO-ized, these efforts were workshops, reports, documentation … it was really small-scaled and it didn't really reach the public." The aftermath of the January 25 Revolution saw a multiplication in the number and a widening of the scope of groups organizing against sexual harassment and assault. In my dissertation, I focus on those that worked to transform public space into a safe space for women or that produced spaces where women and men felt comfortable to share their experiences of sexual violence. In particular, I examine the work of four activist initiatives that in some cases emerged and in other cases substantially transformed their activities following—and in relation to—the January 25 Revolution as an alternative to top-down approaches to public sexual violence.

When I visited Cairo in July of 2012, on what became the first of two pre-dissertation trips, the cultural center Darb 1718 had just opened an exhibition that, under the title "Kefaya: Enough Harassment," addressed sexual violence in all its manifestations: in public and private spaces, at the hand of intimates, acquaintances, strangers, and agents of the state.[30] By means of photography, video and installations, the artwork made connections between everyday public sexual harassment and the Supreme

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[30] See http://www.darb1718.com/activities/exhibitions/exhibitions-2012-2/harassment.

Council of the Armed Forces' (SCAF) use of virginity checks and sexualized violence

against women protesters, linking these acts to Egyptian society's obsession with

virginity and the tendency to blame the victim in cases of sexual violence. As part of the

exhibition, the volunteer-based initiative HarassMap organized an event that featured

monologues of stories collected and performed by the independent theater group The

BuSSy Project, and an open mic organized by the initiative Mashrouʿ El Mareekh where

attendees were encouraged to express their views and opinions on sexual violence.[31] An

audience made up of young women and men, comfortably sitting in beanbag chairs or

standing next to the seats, filled Darb 1718's courtyard. In the climate of trust and

confidence created in the open space of the cultural center, participants talked about their

experiences of sexual harassment and assault on the streets and at home, some as

survivors and others as former perpetrators. The candid discussion that ensued around

this highly sensitive topic was, as many attendees shared with me, something unthinkable

of before 2011. As The BuSSy Project's coordinator Nahla Soliman (2015) remarked in

an interview, after the January 25 Revolution Egyptians were "thirsty to talk" and found

in initiatives like this a "safe space with people that just listen to you without any

judgment," something that was "not common in Egyptian society." The proliferation of

spaces—both gender-integrated and -segregated—where Egyptians felt safe to give

testimony about and bear witness to silenced stories of sexual violence and share their

experiences without fear of social disapproval was one of the images that left a more

lasting impression during my first stay in Egypt.

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[31] The BuSSy Project, founded in 2006 by students of the American University in Cairo (AUC), performs monologues based on stories of women in Egypt. I discuss this group more in depth in chapter four. Mashrouʿ El Mareekh was launched in 2009 and organizes open mic sessions for self-expression across Egypt (for more information, see http://mashrou3almareekh.com).

The organization in November of 2012 of activist-led intervention groups aimed at preventing and stopping the infamous "circles of hell" in Tahrir Square caught my attention as I was starting to write my dissertation proposal. Among them, I grew particularly interested in those that questioned notions of female vulnerability and that, unlike other initiatives that patrolled the square, included women in the teams responsible for 'rescuing' the women under assault. In the absence of security forces or medical operatives in the square, these groups developed a sophisticated system to combat violence against women in protests. Outside of Tahrir Square, other initiatives organized teams to intervene in cases of sexual harassment and assault on the streets and in public transportation. As Amal ElMohandes (2015), director of the Women Human Rights Defenders Program at Nazra for Feminist Studies, remarked in an interview, the multiplication of these initiatives was a direct result of the changing character of public space during the January 25 Revolution: "Public space was very open, and it was very promising at the time, everyone felt that they own the streets, they want to do something, for the country, they want to help." Paradoxically, the retreat of the police from the streets after Mubarak's ouster provided these groups with an arena where they could enact autonomous forms of organization. The reestablishment of 'order' after El-Sisi's seizure of power meant the closure of these spaces of social and political experimentation as a result of the regime's tightening of control over public space and its crackdown on human right defenders and NGOs (El Sirgany, 2016). Despite the short-lived existence of many of these initiatives, their practices constituted an early attempt to approach public sexual violence from perspectives that departed from sexual governmentality frameworks.

Research Questions and Overview of the Dissertation

My dissertation is animated by the overarching question "what is left of the

January 25 Revolution?," certainly one of the most frequent queries posed by Egyptian

and international commentators alike for at least the past six years. Seven years after

Egyptian women and men occupied Tahrir Square for eighteen days and forced Mubarak

to resign after thirty years in power, there seems to be a consensus among scholars and

experts that the 2011 Egyptian Revolution failed, or died.[32] In Egypt, too, despite the

attempts of El-Sisi's regime to present the July 3, 2013, military coup as a "Second

Revolution" that should correct the country's Islamist detour, nobody disputes the fact

that Egyptians' demands for "bread, freedom, and human dignity" have not been

fulfilled.[33] My dissertation departs from these analyses by arguing that the experience of

the January 25 Revolution brought about a radical transformation that has been

overlooked by political scientists and analysts: it changed the way Egyptian women and

men experienced, and related to each other in public space. I contend that the forms of

mixed-gender sociability and solidarity that emerged in Tahrir Square during the eighteen

revolutionary days did not disappear after Mubarak's ouster but continued to be practiced

by many of the activist initiatives that organized against public sexual violence in the

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[32] The metaphor of the "Arab Winter" has been recurrently mobilized to symbolize the end, and failure, of the revolutionary processes that took place in North Africa, the Middle East and the Gulf region between 2010 and 2011. For some examples of such scholarly analyses, see Totten, Schenker & Abdul-Hussain (2012) or the special issue "From Arab Spring to Arab Winter: Explaining the Limits of Post-Uprising Democratisation," edited by Raymond Hinnebusch (2015) in *Democratization*; for a sample of media analyses, see Wagner (2013) , Feldman (2015), The Economist (2016).

[33] Egyptians' economic situation has greatly deteriorated in the years following the January 25 Revolution as a result of high unemployment, double-digit inflation and, most recently, food shortages and the collapse of the Egyptian pound (Cook, 2016; Michaelson, 2016; Raghavan & Mahfouz, 2016). State repression has reached historical highs, leading to the imprisonment and disappearance of thousands of activists, while torture in detention thrives (FIDH, 2015; Shenker, 2016).

years that followed. I will show how these groups created spaces where modes of intervention and forms of collective testimony against public sexual violence have proliferated, sparking a public debate about women's bodies and their place that contest entrenched notions of women as *both a risk and at risk.* Moreover, I suggest that, through their actions, these collectives challenged the regime of sexual governmentality that regulates Egyptian women's lives in the name of social order, while enacting an "experimental utopia" (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 15) that allowed for other ways of being and relating to be imagined and practiced in Egypt.

In relation to these elements, the question "what is left" refers not only to *what remains or prevails* from the January 25 Revolution's ideals but is also meant to inquire—taking "left" in its sense of "politically radical"—about the practices that, inspired by those ideals, have *gone beyond* the revolutionary goals, in a way pushing the boundaries of the imaginable within the revolutionary process. The January 25 Revolution, as feminist scholars have remarked, did not include demands for gender justice (Taher, 2012; Mohamed, 2013). After Mubarak's ouster, the attempts at influencing the transitional period articulated by women's and feminist groups were met with hostility on the streets and ignored by the interim government.[34] It soon became clear that the January 25 Revolution's slogan "*Al-shaʿb yurīd isqāṭ al-niẓām*" ("the people want the fall of the regime") was limited to the toppling of the *regime* and did not include the disruption of the gender *order*—both notions encompassed by the Arabic term

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[34] On March 8, 2011, less than a month after Mubarak's ouster, the women participants in a march held on the occasion of International Women's Day were verbally and physically harassed in Tahrir square (Al-Shalchi, 2011; Sholkamy, 2011). At the institutional level, no women were appointed to the committee charged with drafting the Constitutional amendments to regulate the upcoming elections, nor did women participate in the negotiations over the transitional process with the SCAF (Hafez, 2012, p. 40; Taher, 2012; Mohamed, 2013).

niẓām, as Hasso and Salime (2016) observe (p. 1)—by means of a collective project aimed at revising the gendered assumptions that structure Egyptian society. And yet, the eruption of collective sexual assaults in Tahrir Square forced these questions onto the revolutionaries' agenda. The proliferation and exacerbation of sexual harassment and assault in the aftermath of the uprisings laid bare the gendered and sexualized constitution of public space in repressive as well as emancipatory ways. My research focuses on the forms of politico-social organizing that responded to this violence and examines them less in terms of their *effectiveness*—their ability to eradicate public sexual violence—than in terms of their *affectiveness* (Shukaitis, 2011, p. 33), recognizing the possibility that social movements can be "at once a political failure and yet profoundly transformative" (Arenas, 2015, p. 1122).

My dissertation weaves three conceptual themes together: *affective spatio-temporalities*, *public sexual violence*, and the *novel forms of activism* that emerged after the January 25 Revolution to respond to this violence, and explores their connections through three research questions:

- How do experiences, discourses, and perceptions of public sexual violence shape women's inhabitation of public space?

- How do activist practices of direct action and community intervention against public sexual violence challenge normative constructions of femininity and masculinity?

- How does the creation of spaces where women and men can give testimony about and bear witness to experiences of sexual violence unsettle and reorder the distribution of blame and shame?

I adopt an ethnographic approach to respond to these questions. First, I examine how women living in Cairo experience public space in relation to given and potential public sexual violence. Relying on interviews and testimonies of women who have been subjected to public sexual harassment and assault as well as activists working on this issue, I explore the affective dimensions of direct and indirect experiences of public sexual violence, and analyze how perceptions of safety and danger are mediated by expectations about bystanders' reactions to these forms of violence. My analysis counters feminist explorations of sexual violence as an interpersonal—and often unidirectional— interaction between a male perpetrator and a female survivor, and instead regards bystanders as active participants in instances of public sexual harassment and assault through their actions or lack thereof. Building upon anthropological discussions of violence, I investigate how the ritualized character of certain forms of public sexual violence—such as the "circles of hell" and the collective sexual harassment during Eid al-Fitr, the holiday marking the end of the month of Ramadan, and Eid al-Adha—marks some spaces and times as dangerous for women, while categorizing women's presence in these spaces at particular times as risky—when not reckless—behavior. In relation to this, I examine the prevalence of a discourse—central to the construction of respectable femininity—that blames survivors of public sexual violence for putting themselves at risk, and situate this argument within a sexual governmentality logic that positions women's bodies as simultaneously *at risk* and *a risk* for society. Drawing on a variety of scholarly and journalist sources, I provide a historical overview of these processes in Egypt's modern history.

Second, I examine the projects of direct action and community intervention against public sexual violence that emerged in Cairo in the aftermath of the January 25 Revolution. By means of interviews with members of these initiatives and participant observation of some of their activities, I analyze their strategies to prevent and stop the perpetration of sexual violence in two contexts: the space of protest and the space of the neighborhood. Focusing on the work of Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment/Assault (OpAntiSH) and HarassMap's Safe Areas program, I explore how these groups challenged notions of vulnerable femininity and protective masculinity, and developed autonomous ways of organizing that did not resort to traditional forms of community control and state enforcement. Instead, I discuss how these direct action and community intervention projects promoted horizontal expressions of care and solidarity and forms of collective risk-taking that countered top-down approaches to public sexual violence centered around criminalization and policing of public space. In my dissertation, I characterize the different initiatives organizing against public sexual harassment and assault in the post-Revolution period as participating in the creation of an emerging social movement that reclaims women's "right to the city" (Lefebvre, 1996), and discuss activists' views on the impact that these forms of organizing had on their lives and on Egyptian society more generally.

Third, I analyze the creation of a multiplicity of—physical and virtual, gender-aggregated and segregated—spaces where survivors of public sexual violence could share their experiences of harassment and assault in an environment that was perceived as safe. I draw on interviews with organizers and participant observation to explore how these initiatives—similar to practices of giving testimony and bearing witness elsewhere—

were invested in publicizing stories of sexual violence that, despite taking place in public and in the presence of many, were systematically silenced and negated. I study how these spaces allowed for the collective reframing of narratives of victim blaming and shaming commonly voiced in political and social parlance, and enabled the articulation of an accountability discourse that shifted blame from survivors to perpetrators and those who failed to intervene to stop public sexual violence. To examine these questions, I focus on The BuSSy Project's work to document and perform stories of women in Egypt and on the self-defense courses organized by the collective WenDo Egypt, and examine how they created what I call "safe spaces of risk" where survivors of sexual harassment and assault could safely reenact these traumatic experiences and collectively rework them in conversation with others. These and other initiatives that involved testimony concerning sexual aggressions opened up avenues for testifying to the experience of sexual harassment while encouraging alternative performances of femininity in public space. I regard these groups—The BuSSy Project and WenDo Egypt as well as OpAntiSH and Harassmap—as examples of what I call *risk-taking activism,* a form of social action that represents an attack to the regime of sexual governmentality that, after El-Sisi's arrival to power, has returned in full force.

A (Non-Western) Feminist Spatial Analysis of Sexual Violence

In this dissertation I build upon and extend feminist scholarship on sexual violence against women as well as literature on sexual harassment and assault in Egypt in a multiplicity of ways. First, I adopt a feminist approach to understand sexual violence as

encompassing the whole range of interactions that women experience as intrusive,

threatening, or abusive, regardless of whether legal codes or social understandings

consider these a form of violence or not (Kelly, 1988, p. 39; MacKinnon, 1989, p. 172).

Through an examination of women's narratives of violence, I debunk the academic

division between "social" and "political" sexual violence that pervades most of the

literature published on Egypt since 2011, illuminating the overlaps between practices of

sexual harassment and assault that take place in the spaces of protest and those that occur

on the streets and in public transportation. In relation to this scholarship, my analysis also

shows that women's perceptions of safety and danger in public space are shaped by

manifold stories of sexual violence, many of which predate the January 25 Revolution.

Second, I decenter the focus of feminist studies of sexual harassment and rape,

disproportionately located in US/Western contexts, by offering a nuanced analysis of

public sexual violence in a North African country, thereby contributing to the

displacement of the experiences of white, middle-class, Western women as representative

of every woman's reality.[35] My dissertation adopts an intersectional approach to attend to

the nexus of class and gender in women's exposure to a wide range of risks—including,

but not limited to, sexual intrusions in urban space. In addition, my approach revises and

complicates this scholarship by looking at public sexual violence in its specificity, not as

a universal or timeless phenomenon but as a contingent form of social action that

develops as a result of and is shaped by historical processes (Al-Ali, 2016, p. 8). Filling a

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[35] With exceptions, feminist scholarship on sexual harassment and assault continues to concentrate predominantly on the Global North, while studies of sexual violence in the Global South are largely reduced to analyses of rape and sexual torture in contexts of war and conflict (see, for example, Jacobs, Jacobson & Marchbank, 2000; Moser & Clark, 2001; Leatherman, 2011). Among the exceptions are studies of eve-teasing and public sexual assault in India (Anagol-McGinn, 1994; Bagilhole, 1997; Kokila, 2002; Bhattacharyya, 2005) and public sexual harassment in Iran (Ghandehari, 2006; Lahsaeizadeh & Yousefinejad, 2012; Chubin, 2014).

gap in the literature on sexual violence against women in Egypt, my dissertation traces the occurrence of public sexual harassment in Cairo back to the second half of the 19th century and situates its emergence in relation to processes of state formation, rural-urban migration, urbanization, and nation building.

My research draws on feminist geography and critical urban studies scholarship, and contributes to these fields in important ways. On the one hand, it expands feminist geographers' concern with women's occupation of urban spaces and the impact of fear on their inhabitation of public space (Valentine, 1989; Pain, 1997; Day, 1999; Koskela, 1999; Sandberg & Tollefsen, 2010; Dunckel Graglia, 2016). It does this by historicizing Egyptian women's public participation and locating their increased visibility in the mid-19th century, in connection with a nationalist movement that placed women's bodies at the center of the nation-building project while remaining wary of their actual presence in public space. In this regard, my conceptualization of Egyptian women as simultaneously *at risk* and *a risk* in public space complicates discussions about urban fear and fear of rape in feminist geography scholarship. On the other hand, my dissertation builds upon the rich literature on suburbanization, privatization and securitization of urban spaces that has proliferated globally in the last decades and, in particular, upon the work of scholars reflecting on these changes in Cairo since the 2000s.[36] It examines women's increased perceptions of danger in public space in relation to the mushrooming of privatized urban projects but does not regard this process as a linear or stable development. Instead, drawing on human geographers' engagements with affect, it focuses on the shifting affective registers in urban spaces and calls attention to how political, economic, social

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[36]   For general approaches to this question, see for example Crawford (1992), Blakely and Snyder (1997), and Caldeira (1996), among others. For scholarship on Egypt, see Mitchell (1999), Kuppinger (2004), and Abaza (2006), among others.

and urban changes modulate these affects (Thrift, 2004). In particular, it identifies the January 25 Revolution as a turning point that radically transformed Egyptian women's and men's relation to public space and to each other within this space, inspiring new forms of activism that inscribed the fight against public sexual violence within the revolutionary process. Following this line, I understand the military coup of July 3, 2013 as the moment that marked the forceful imposition of a new affective register, aimed at reinstating a pre-revolutionary order characterized, among other things, by women's uneasy occupation of public space.

Finally, my dissertation also contributes to the literature on activism and social movements, as well as to scholarly and activist discussions on forms of intervention against sexual harassment and rape. Sexual violence—in the form of campus rape, pervasive sexual harassment, femicide, collective sexual assaults, etc.—affects women worldwide, limiting their freedom of movement and curtailing their participation in public life. In response to this situation, women mobilize around the globe and take the streets demanding safe cities free of sexual violence.[37] Despite the multiplication of these initiatives, academic literature on urban social movements and discussions about the right to the city have overlooked the transformative potential of actions that, by reclaiming women's right to occupy public spaces without fear, implicitly call for a reformulation of the existing gender order (see Purcell, 2002, p. 106-107; Simonsen, 2005, p. 10 for a critique of Lefebvre's work; also Soja, 1996; Harvey, 2008). My dissertation corrects this omission by examining the political and social implications of the initiatives against

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[37] Examples of women's mobilizations against public sexual violence include Take Back the Night marches (Hubbard & Colosi, 2015), Slutwalks (Borah & Nandi, 2012; Kapur, 2012; Reger, 2014), and the demonstrations of the movement Ni Putes ni Soumises in France (Amara & Zappi, 2003), to cite but just a few.

public sexual violence that emerged in Egypt after the January 25 Revolution in relation to feminist scholarship on space/place and embodiment (Grosz, 1992; Massey, 1994 & 2005; Hasso & Salime, 2016). With regard to this activism, my approach opposes a tendency in feminist scholarship to focus solely on prevention and/or redress, a perspective that presents sexual violence as either impending or already perpetrated, and obscures the fact that any form of sexual harassment or assault consists of a series of verbal and physical gestures that may be individually or collectively resisted and, potentially, countered. In contrast, I situate the act of violence at the center of my analysis and explore its processual character in a way that transcends the binary male assailant/female survivor and sheds light onto the collective negotiations that commonly surround instances of sexual violence in public. In addition, my research reveals the limitation of solutions based on state-sponsored legal and policy reform and instead examines the potential of autonomous forms of organizing for the subversion of the gender order and the conception of alternative futures.

The third goal of my dissertation is to show how these initiatives could shape activism against sexual violence in other contexts. In this project, I have opted for examining the Egyptian case in its specificity and have purposefully avoided adopting a comparative lens that connects my case study to discussions about sexual violence and urban space elsewhere. However, I see continuities between the processes of privatization, securitization, and gentrification that are taking place in Cairo and those that proliferate in cities like Beirut, New York or Mexico City, often under the pretext of enhancing women's safety. In this regard, Cairo is a particularly interesting example because the January 25 Revolution and its aftermath facilitated the experimentation with

new forms of intervention and the creation of counter-spaces to respond to public sexual violence. The examination of these connections and reverberations from a transnational perspective is one direction I would like to pursue in future research.

A Foreign Body in the Streets of Cairo

This project has been challenging in many ways: My first two visits to Cairo, in the summer of 2012 and 2013, were marked by constant protests, street blockades, and an intensification of public sexual violence, which rendered my ethnographic work particularly difficult and emotionally intense. Within this context, my dissertation is not born from intellectual curiosity or a theoretical urge to examine issues that have been at the core of feminist scholarship for decades, but emerges from a personal need to grapple with questions that became central to my everyday life during my first pre-dissertation trip to Egypt, in July of 2012. At that time my research concerned itself with Egyptian women's use of online spaces to create alternative discourses about themselves and their place in society, a topic that I had explored in my MA thesis through an analysis of Egyptian women's personal blogs after the January 25 Revolution. With the financial support of a Special Study award from Rutgers' Graduate School-New Brunswick, I planned on spending a month learning Egyptian Arabic in Cairo in order to acquire the necessary skills to analyze Egyptian blogs and conduct interviews with Egyptian women bloggers. What I did not know is that my stay would be marked by the multiplication of collective sexual assaults in Tahrir Square and by the publication of the first testimonies

of these attacks several weeks before my arrival.[38] These stories of extreme violence haunted me and came to influence all my movements, from the moment I set foot in Cairo International Airport—it was 2:00 am and I decided to wait in the empty terminal until the sunrise because I was afraid to take a cab while it was dark outside—to the day I returned home.

Fear, mixed with the excitement of being finally in Cairo, a city that still bore the traces of the January 25 Revolution, accompanied me every day: on my morning walks through downtown Cairo to my language course and on my afternoon rides to explore other areas of the city, but especially when I crossed Tahrir Square at night followed by catcalls and the echo of some steps that always seemed to get threateningly close. Observing how the possibility of sexual assault occupied my thoughts and took hold of my body—surfacing in the form of cold sweat, cramped muscles and interrupted breathing while walking on the street or waiting for the metro in a crowded platform—became a frightening and fascinating experience. And yet, at the same time, it was an uncannily familiar one. As I came to realize, being conscious of myself and my surroundings and remaining vigilant when traversing public space has been part of my life for as long as I can remember. These observations led me to critically examine the relationship between bodies, space and affect, and prompted me to shift the focus of my dissertation from the virtual to the physical spaces of the Egyptian capital, where affect circulated among and stuck to bodies amid the promises and perils of the post-Revolution period.

What was exceptional about Cairo in July of 2012 was not so much the frequency or severity of public sexual violence—a violence that, as I later learned, was anything but

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[38]   See Nazra for Feminist Studies (2012) and Smith (2012).

exceptional—but the way experiences of public sexual harassment and assault were starting to be shared, discussed and collectivized among activists and revolutionaries. When I returned to the city in July of 2013 for a second pre-dissertation trip, activist initiatives against public sexual violence had become more proactive in response to the multiplication of collective sexual assaults in Tahrir Square, but these autonomous forms of organizing came soon under attack after the July 3, 2013 coup. Once again, security concerns dominated, and at times severely limited, my ability to conduct research. Arranging interviews in such an uncertain political moment proved as challenging as avoiding getting caught in the pro-Morsi and pro-Sisi protests that filled the city. When big demonstrations were called for, I preferred to stay home. These (self-imposed) restrictions, while extremely frustrating, proved to be a productive site from which to reflect on how perceptions of safety and danger shaped my movements through the city, an aspect that became central to my dissertation proposal.

My research between September of 2014 and June of 2015 was further complicated by the state's increasing repression of activists and crackdown on non-governmental organizations. When I arrived in Egypt, some of the groups I was interested in did not exist anymore. Others had reduced their activities and adopted a low profile after the military tightened its grip on public space and launched a repressive campaign against activists and revolutionaries. Documenting the work of activist initiatives against public sexual harassment and assault in that context was not always easy. At times, interviews were canceled or postponed following rumors of an imminent police raid in their premises. Other times, activists were willing to meet and share information about their functioning under the military regime but asked me to keep this information off the

record to avoid state reprisals. Concerns over my informants' safety and well-being have led me to anonymize their responses in my discussion of these organizations' strategies to circumvent state intervention. Despite these limitations, my dissertation endeavors to reconstruct the work, approaches and analyses of these initiatives from their creation in the aftermath of the January 25 Revolution until June of 2015, when I left Cairo at the end of my fieldwork research.

At a more personal level, concerns over my own safety added to a more general academic anxiety regarding the depth and breadth of my fieldwork. This sense of impending danger grew stronger during my last months in Cairo, particularly after my partner—who had held several interviews with Egyptian revolutionaries at home—noticed a newly installed surveillance camera on our building's floor, its angular field of view covering our apartment's door. But it was the state torture and murder of Giulio Regeni—an Italian PhD student who was researching Egyptian labor unions—, six months after my departure, that painfully revealed the risks of conducting fieldwork in Cairo today. Therefore, the ultimate goal of my dissertation is to denounce the current state of affairs in Egypt and to reclaim the work of activists—many of whom are now under investigation, some of whom have left the country—who tried to develop alternative ways of addressing public sexual violence and in the process collectively imagined and enacted new ways of being and being together. Despite the difficulties, I regard the possibility of documenting the radical transformations that took place in public space in the aftermath of the January 25 Revolution, amid political upheavals and regime change, as a privilege. This dissertation is meant to honor the work of those who continue to organize against public sexual violence in Egypt despite the mounting threats to their

freedoms and lives, and to call attention to the everyday practices that persist in reclaiming public space and give duration to the memory of the Revolution.

During my fieldwork, I was a Research Fellow at the Cynthia Nelson Institute for Gender and Women's Studies (IGWS) of the American University in Cairo (AUC). My research proposal received expedited IRB approval from both AUC and Rutgers University. My research draws on three types of data: (auto)ethnographic observations, in-depth qualitative interviews, and content analysis of diverse materials. During my pre-dissertation trips (July of 2012 and July of 2013) and my fieldwork (September of 2014-May of 2015), I participated in art, cultural, and activist events against public sexual violence in Cairo. My discussion of these activities aims to provide a "fresh, tri-dimensional, grounded" portrayal of the forms of organizing that congealed around this issue in the aftermath of the January 25 Revolution (Singerman & Amar, 2006, p. xv). In the Winter of 2014 and the Spring of 2015, I accompanied a member of HarassMap's Safe Areas team in her first and follow-up visits to kiosks, cafés and restaurants in downtown Cairo and the neighborhood of Zamalek, and attended three basic self-defense courses organized by WenDo Egypt, "actively engag[ing] in their activities while simultaneously observing the details about the social dynamics and patterns" encountered (Buch & Staller, 2007, p. 208). In the course of my stay, I regularly walked through the city, took public transportation and taxis, and spent time in different parts of town at different times of the day and night as "a means and a method" to familiarize myself with urban space and gather qualitative data (Moles, 2008, p. 1). Walking, in this regard, functioned as a "mode of embodied ethnography" by means of which, following Cheng Yi'En (2014), I could become "attuned to a host of affects and mundane vignettes of the

city, in the process [being] sensitiz[ed] to the networks of rhythms weaving urban life

into form" (p. 211). My dissertation weaves observations and personal reflections about

my embodied encounters—using my "own life experiences as data for theoretical

analysis" (Crawley, 2012, p. 146)—in the course of multiple engagements with the city.[39]

During my fieldwork, I conducted nineteen interviews with members of the

following groups: HarassMap, WenDo Egypt, OpAntiSH, EIPR, Nazra for Feminist

Studies, Harakat Bassma, Tahrir Bodyguard, Shoft Ta7arosh, Dedd Eltaharrosh, the Girls'

Revolution, El-Nadeem Center and The BuSSy Project. I complement these interviews

with material drawn from a one-day workshop I co-organized with Marta Agosti (SOAS

University of London) and Dalia Abdel Hameed (EIPR, Cairo) to reflect on four years of

activism against public sexual violence in Cairo. The workshop was held in May of 2015

with the participation of fourteen representatives of eleven initiatives and groups. For this

research, I also interviewed eight women living in the suburbs of Sixth of October City

and New Cairo, among them six residents in gated communities, to explore questions of

fear and public space. Moreover, I interviewed cultural historian Alia Mossallam and

architect and urban planner Kareem Ibrahim to discuss several aspects of Egypt's recent

history and Cairo's urban development.

Finally, in the dissertation I analyze a diversity of materials, including

testimonials from survivors and witnesses of public sexual violence collected by human

and women's rights organizations, reports on the increase and escalation of public sexual

harassment and assault in Cairo, as well as promotional material and Facebook and

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[39] On the use of this method, Sara L. Crawley (2012) remarks that "autoethnography written by academics about their experiences as everyday members of social life can provide interesting insights into experiences, especially of the body, perhaps otherwise impeded by epistemological and methodological hard-lining" (p. 145).

Twitter feeds of activist groups. I regard the narratives that emerge from these materials

not as "untrammelled, unmediated representations of social realities" but rather as "a

form of social action, with its indigenous, socially shared, forms of organization"

(Atkinson & Delamont, 2006, p. 170). I examine these materials using content analysis as

a "starting point to understanding social processes and generating theories about social

life" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 280).

Through the use of ethnographic data and narratives, my dissertation contributes

to feminist scholarship's efforts to "write in" affect, both as it impinges on research

subjects as well as on the researcher herself (MacKenzie, 2011, p. 691; see also Sylvester,

2011). Recent engagements with affect and emotions in human geography have

emphasized the importance of taking seriously the "multiple processes, and modalities,

that make up the geographies of affectual and emotional life" (Anderson, 2006, p. 733;

see also Pile, 2010, p. 6). While building upon this work, my approach overcomes the

conceptual split between affect and emotions that has dominated academic literature to

develop an analysis "grounded" in my fieldwork data themselves (Charmaz, 2006, p. 2).[40]

Thus, I rely on gathered observations, interactions, and materials to explore how affect

sticks to and circulates through spaces and bodies, eliciting a wide range of emotions—

fear, joy, shame, hope, etc.—that affect how these bodies experience and move through

space. My focus is on how the various affective registers that pervaded public space since

the January 25 Revolution enabled a series of bodily capacities and capabilities while it

constrained others (Anderson, 2006, p. 734), how activists organizing against public

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[40]   For a literature review and discussion of scholarly engagements with emotions and/or affect, see, for
example, Thien (2005), McCormack (2006), Tolia-Kelly (2006), and Pile (2010). In contrast to
either/or approaches, Massumi (2002), (Ahmed 2004a & 2004b), Anderson (2006), Clough (2012), and
Arenas (2015) articulate models that explore the connections between emotions and affect.

sexual harassment and assault affected women's experiences of and interactions with others in public space while at the same time "opening themselves up to being affected in turn" by these forms of collective organizing (Massumi, 2002, p. 212), and how emotions such as fear, shame, and anger were politicized and resignified by initiatives against public sexual violence to produce new "ways of knowing, being, and doing" in Egypt (Anderson & Smith, 2001, p. 8). By situating myself in these affective fields, my aim is to reflect on my positionality as a researcher within the "ever-shifting social landscapes in which we and the knowledge we produce is embedded" (Laliberté & Schurr, 2016, p. 74). More importantly, through my embodied experience in public space, I endeavor to capture the precarious conditions—amid growing public sexual violence, political violence and military repression—within which the activist practices that I document unfolded, thrived and, still today, struggle to survive.

Chapter Outline

Chapters one and two of the dissertation situate public sexual violence within spatial, temporal, affective and historical frameworks. In chapter one, I review academic literature on public sexual harassment and assault in Egypt and propose an alternative model that analyzes the affective and embodied dimensions of the act of public sexual violence and the interactions that take place around it. In relation to this, I examine how the interplay of fear and shame and the impact of lived and relayed experiences of public sexual harassment and assault shape women's spatial practices. In chapter two, I build upon Foucault's notion of *governmentality* to theorize public sexual violence as a mode

of sexual governmentality aimed at controlling Egyptian women's conduct in public. I adopt a historical perspective to conceptualize women's status in public space as simultaneously *at risk* and *a risk,* and discuss the imbrication of gendered constructions of risk and normative ideas of masculinity and femininity.

Chapters three and four discuss the spaces of intervention and testimony against public sexual violence created by activists after the January 25 Revolution. In chapter three, I analyze projects of direct action and community intervention to prevent and stop the perpetration of acts of public sexual harassment and assault, and focus on the work of OpAntiSH and HarassMap. In chapter four, I analyze through the case study of The BuSSy Project and WenDo Egypt initiatives of testimony and bearing witness about sexual aggressions. In the Conclusion, I reflect on the potentialities of initiatives against public sexual violence that reclaim women's right to the city, and situate these practices within a context of heightened militarization and securitization of public space following the 2013 coup.

Chapter One

Affective Geographies of Public Sexual Violence

> I am afraid to go out, I hate my clothes, my body to the extent that I decided to wear long clothes but there's no point. In the beginning I was scared to talk to anyone about it and felt ashamed of people looking at me although I am the victim, so I kept silent and endured which led to psychological problems and I was afraid to go out into the street. I refuse to work far from my home as I am so scared of sexual harassment.
>
> – Harassment report, posted in HarassMap's website.[41]

A Continuum of Sexual Violence

Yasmine el-Baramawy was sexually assaulted in Tahrir Square on November 23, 2012. On that day, the square was packed with thousands of Egyptians protesting against then-President Morsi's constitutional declaration, which granted him extraordinary executive powers.[42] "The police [were] throwing tear gas on us," El-Baramawy (2015) told me in an interview, "and the people [beside] me felt safe to attack me in that situation, to give their back to the [security] forces and try to take off my clothes." The thirty-two-year-old musician was on a side street off of Tahrir Square when about forty men "came in one second, attacked me, together," she remembered. The collective sexual assault lasted for more than an hour—in the course of which El-Baramawy was stripped, repeatedly groped and finger raped—and ended in Abdeen, almost a mile away from

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[41] See Fahmy, Abdelmonem, Hamdy, Badr, and Hassan (2014, p. 66).

[42] At least eight other collective sexual assaults took place in Tahrir square on November 23, 2012, one of them against a twelve-year-old girl (El-Baramawy, 2015; see also El-Nadeem, Nazra & New Woman Foundation, 2013, p. 19-26). For a discussion of Morsi's constitutional declaration and an analysis of its political implications, see Kirkpatrick and El Sheikh (2012) and Sabry (2012).

Tahrir Square.[43] Among the hundreds who witnessed her ordeal, many participated in the assault but only one—a woman—intervened to help her. Sitting in a restaurant in downtown Cairo, El-Baramawy described to me how that woman sought the help of her husband and his friends to free her from her assailants. She remembered how the husband of her savior looked at her—at that point, she noted, she was covered in blood, her clothes torn to sheds—and asked her distrustfully "what did you do?" She recalled, vividly: "I felt that he wants to beat me … because I was assaulted." When they asked her where she wanted to go, she told them to bring her home. She refused to go to the hospital or to the police station because, as she remarked, she did not feel ready "for any more violations from a doctor or from an officer."

El-Baramawy returned to Tahrir Square after the attack, but the memory of the violence she had been subjected to affectively shaped her experience of the space thereafter. "I was afraid, I was alert, I was looking around me all the time, I wore a lot of layers of clothes," she told me. At the time of the assault, El-Baramawy was living in downtown Cairo, not far from Tahrir Square, but she decided to move away shortly afterwards. "How can I go back to the same streets … and bear more sexual harassment?," she noted. She decided to leave behind the short walks to the supermarket where "you can expect anything" and moved to a gated community in Sixth of October City, one of the towns built in the desert in times of President Anwar Sadat, located twenty miles away from Cairo (see Map 2). Aware of the privilege that allowed her to

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[43]   While women's organizations as well as the media have often referred to these attacks as "mob" sexual assaults in English (see, for example, El-Nadeem et al. 2013; FIDH, Nazra, New Woman Foundation & The Uprising of Women in the Arab World, 2014; Trew, 2012), following Hind Ahmad Zaki and Dalia Abd Alhamid (2014) I prefer to use the term "collective," which is closer to the expression used in Arabic (*taḥarrush ginsy gamaʿy*) and does not entail the racialized and islamophobic undertones that the term "mob" has in Western representations of the "Arab street" (Amar, 2013, p. 28; Bayat, 2003).

live in an environment where she felt shielded from the risk of public sexual violence, she described the compound where she lived as "a prison, but a good one, a wealthy prison, like the golden cage." When I met her, in March of 2015, she only occasionally visited downtown Cairo and, when she did, she traversed this space in the safety of her private car.

El-Baramawy's fraught relation to public space nevertheless predated the collective sexual assault of November of 2012. As she emphasized in our conversation, women in Cairo "suffer from sexual violence every day on the streets, all the time." She distinctly recalled—"like it was yesterday"—the first time she was sexually harassed, when a man groped her on the street at the age of fifteen: "I didn't understand what's that … and that guy ran away after he touched me, he ran away and he came back, maybe he was turning around the building … and he comes back, and he hits me again and he runs, and he comes back, and he did that three times." She described how, after overcoming the initial shock, she screamed. But "people didn't do anything and I had to take a taxi," she recollected. For El-Baramawy, this repeated transgression of her bodily boundaries and, more importantly, the passivity of the adults around her—who heard her screams and did nothing—were, at the time, "a strong indication that I shouldn't walk on the street." She recognized that, after that day, more than seventeen years ago, she did not feel "comfortable walking on the street anymore."
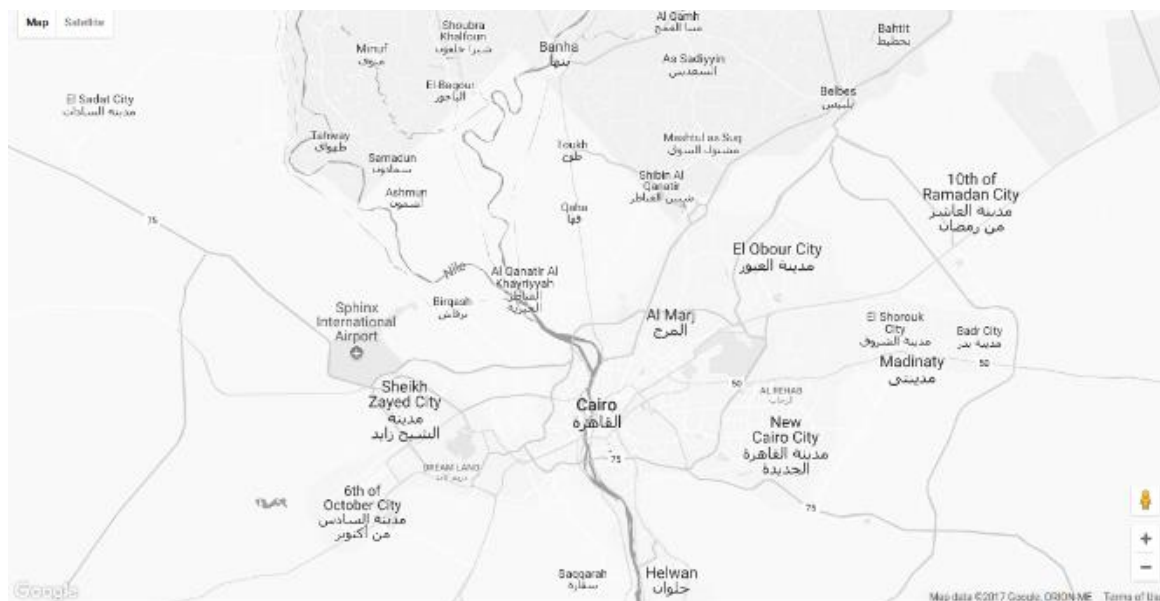
Map 2: Cairo's metropolitan area and adjacent desert cities. Source: Google Maps.

El-Baramawy's story echoes the experiences of many of the women I interviewed during my fieldwork. Notably, it highlights the continuities between "sledgehammer" behaviors—such as sexual assault and rape—and the "routine" expressions of public sexual violence that more generally impinge upon women's use of public space (Wise & Stanley, 1987, p. 114; Kelly, 1988, p. 27).[44] In these narratives, the actual and potential occurrence of a range of violations—from microaggressions to more severe attacks—does not necessarily determine but nevertheless frame women's inhabitation of the streets and public transportation, eliciting feelings of fear and shame that, as expressed in the epigraph that opens this chapter, affectively shape their movements and interactions with others in these spaces.

In this chapter, I propose an examination of women's experiences of public sexual violence in Cairo that is particularly attuned to their embodied and affective dimensions.

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[44] Wise and Stanley (1987) argue that everyday forms of sexual harassment act as a "dripping tap" that "wear [women] down" through their repeated occurrence while instilling in them the fear of more severe forms of violence (p. 98; see also McNeill, 1987, p. 102; Kelly, 1988, p. 104).

For that purpose, I define *public sexual violence* as visual, verbal or physical acts of a sexual character that take place in public space and in the presence of publics, and are affectively experienced by women as threatening, intrusive, or abusive. Needless to say, this definition does not fit legal or popular understandings of sexual violence, public or otherwise. On the one hand, the Egyptian penal code recognizes only two forms of sexual violence under the rubric of "crimes of honor" (*garāʾm ʿird*). Article 267 prohibits "sexual intercourse with a female without her consent" (*waqaʿa untha bighair ridaha*), thereby limiting rape to violations that involve penile-vaginal penetration (Sonbol, 1996, p. 287; Reza, 2011, p. 198). Articles 268 and 269 regulate a lesser crime, "indecent assault" (*hatk al-ʿird,* literally "violation of honor"), which includes any type of non-consensual sexual contact that does not involve penile-vaginal penetration, from touching to sexual assault (Sonbol, 1997, p. 215). After the amendment of Article 306 in June of 2014, verbal, behavioral, phone and online sexual harassment are considered offenses against the "modesty, honor or dignity of another" (*khadsh ḥayāʾ*), but these acts are not recognized as a form of sexual violence. On the other hand, in popular parlance, non-physical forms of public sexual harassment are still widely seen as *muʿāksa,* flirtatious exchanges between consenting adults (Abdelmonem, 2015, p. 33). These restricted characterizations neglect many of the behaviors that women perceive as threatening and/or abusive in public space, while failing to recognize the qualitatively distinct impact of acts of sexual violence that take place in the presence of other members of the community (Kelly, 2000, p. 56).

I consider the wide range of behaviors included within the category of public sexual violence—from ogling, catcalling, wolf-whistling, stalking and groping to sexual

assault and rape—not as discrete expressions of sexual violence but as situated on a "continuum" (Kelly, 1988, p. 27).[45] Alongside this continuum, behaviors that are often regarded as "just being friendly" or "harmless fun" can be perceived by women as intrusive and intimidating (Kelly, 1988, p. 104), as they negate their right to decide who they want to interact with and reinforce men's entitlement to women's attention, time and bodies while "remind[ing]" them of the possibility of rape (McNeill, 1987, p. 105). The experience and felt possibility of sexual violence is a quotidian part of women's lives that affectively impacts their movement through public space.[46]

By *public space* I mean the streets, squares, alleys, and parks, as well as public means of transportation, including the interior of buses and microbuses, and the carriages and platforms of the metro. In particular, I consider these spaces in opposition to the private space of the home as well as to the privatized spaces that have proliferated in and around Cairo, i.e. through the mushrooming of shopping malls and gated communities.[47] At a conceptual level, I understand public space as a "meeting place" that operates both

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[45]   Kelly (1988) developed the concept of the "continuum of sexual violence" to describe the extent and range of sexual violence in women's lives. Based on interviews with sixty women, she situated the most common experiences reported by her respondents—threat of violence and sexual harassment—on one end of the continuum and the least common—incest and rape—on the other end (Kelly, 1988, p. 78). Importantly, she argued that severe forms of sexual violence such as rape were not aberrant behaviors but mere "extensions of more commonplace intrusions" such as sexual harassment (Kelly, 1988, p. 27). On that regard, she observed that sexual harassment and sexual assault, on the one hand, and sexual assault and attempted rape, on the other, often overlapped in her respondents' accounts, particularly when it included "physical forms of abuse" (Kelly, 1988, p. 103).

[46]   As Kelly (1988) remarks, women's uncertainty about what may happen next—and fear of a situation escalating into full-fledged assault—transforms ordinary encounters into menacing experiences (p. 97). The trivialization of these incidents under the premise that "nothing actually happened" is another example of the negation of women's experiences of sexual violence (Radford, 1987, p. 35).

[47]   My focus on public space by no means intends to reassert the historically and ideologically-constructed private/public dichotomy that presents public space as "male and rational, the site of politics and civic engagement" as opposed to a private space seen as "domestic, feminine, irrational, and apolitical" (Gökarıksel, 2016, p. 242; see also Hasso & Salime, 2016, p. 5). Similarly, it is not meant to silence or negate women's experiences of sexual violence in private/ized spaces (for data on intimate sexual violence in Egypt, see El Zanaty, Hussein, Shawky, Way & Kishor, 1996; El Zanaty & Way, 2006 & 2009; Boy & Kulczycki, 2008; Kaplan, Khawaja & Linos, 2011; Ambrosetti, Abu Amara & Condon, 2013). Instead, it seeks to emphasize the social and political implications of expressions of sexual violence that take place *in public and in the presence of publics.*

as a social and a political space, functioning as "a place for socialization and for identity

formation and affirmation" by means of casual interactions with strangers and

acquaintances as well as "a location for democracy, politics, and social movements"

regulated by negotiation, conflict, and surveillance (Staeheli & Mitchell, 2007, p. 798-

799).[48] Public space—as opposed to private/ized spaces—is characterized by the

"throwntogetherness" of unrelated, heterogeneous others that, through compromise and

contestation, produce space as a social space (Massey, 2005, p. 140).[49] It is on the streets

and the squares that social relations are ordinarily negotiated—among others, through the

use of violence (Skoda, 2013, p. 53-54). Bridging the material and the symbolic, public

space is the arena where "ritual, codes and relations become visible and are acted out"

(Lefebvre, 1996, p. 236).

It is from this perspective that I analyze public sexual violence and its impact on

women's inhabitation of public space, understanding this term—inhabitation, to inhabit—

in the Lefebvrian sense to encompass not only women's physical occupation of public

space but their participation "in a social life, a community, village or city" *through* their

use and production of space (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 76). In this regard, I see public displays

of sexual violence—from unwanted sexual advances to rape—as prefiguring women's

place in the community in limited and restrictive ways: When women are ogled on the

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[48]   Urban theorists have warned against the hollowing of public space from its social and political
       components in contemporary cities. This phenomenon leads to the convergence between public and
       private/ized spaces, as "existing public space is increasingly controlled by various forms of
       surveillance and increasingly invested with private meanings" (Ellin, 1997, p. 36). I return to this
       question in the conclusions.

[49]   Privatized spaces, on the contrary, are committed to the production of similarity, regularity and
       predictability by means of residential segregation and enhanced security (Blakely & Snyder, 1997, p.
       90; Ellin, 1997, p. 34; Flusty, 1997, p. 52). These attributes contrast with the uncertainty, difference,
       and disorder that characterize public space (Sennett, 1970, p. 80; Lefebvre, 1996, p. 75; Massey, 2005,
       p. 153).

street, they are deemed an object of public consumption (Quinn, 2002, p. 395).[50] When

they are catcalled or wolf-whistled or when they receive sexual remarks, they are publicly

interpellated, not as speaking subjects but as spoken to or spoken about objects, often in

front of an all-male audience that is the actual addressee of this communication (Thomas,

1997, p. 146).[51] When they are stalked, they are reminded that their movements in public

are the object of continuous surveillance, close scrutiny and judgment.[52] When they are

groped, they are instructed that their body is not their own but the property of male

relatives. In the absence of a man that identifies them as "mother/daughter/sister/wife of,"

women walking alone—or in the company of other women—are construed as potentially

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[50] Sexual objectification has been described by Sandra Lee Bartky (1990) as the process through which a person's "sexual parts or sexual functions are separated out from the rest of her personality and reduced to the status of mere instruments or else regarded as if they were capable of representing her" (p. 26). When ogling is accompanied by catcalls, wolf-whistles and sexual comments, this adds an "element of compulsion" to these interactions, as women are "being-made-to-be-aware of [their] own flesh," regardless of whether they wish it or not (Bartky, 1990, p. 27). This does not preclude the possibility of taking pleasure in one's objectification or, as Elaine Van Dalen (2013) notes with regard to women from the low-income Cairene neighborhood of Būlāq ad-Dakrūr, to view these gazes as the prelude of a courtship ritual that may lead to marriage (p. 25). Women's position within these interactions, however, is precarious, as they risk reducing their "value" in the marriage market if they engage in short-term romantic relationships (Van Dalen, 2013, p. 95). Moreover, while *being seen by strangers* opens possibilities for romance and a potential engagement, *being seen by family members, acquaintances or neighbors while interacting with strangers* may hurt their reputation (Van Dalen, 2013, p. 37). It is for this reason that, as Van Dalen remarks, these encounters take place outside of the familiar space of the neighborhood.

[51] Courtship rituals usually take the form of a (verbal and/or non-verbal) dialogue where two subjects exchange looks, gestures and words in a reciprocal manner, while public sexual harassment is an imposed monologue, in which the harasser looks, directs gestures and talks to a non-consenting other. As Deidre E. Davis (2002) notes, one of the characteristics of street harassment is "the unacceptability of a 'thank you' as a response" (p. 214). In Cairo, as I discuss more in depth in chapter two, norms of respectable femininity prescribe that women do not look back or respond to these interactions regardless of whether they welcome them or not (Van Dalen, 2013, p. 25). These norms render women's consent invisible, thus obscuring the distinction between public sexual harassment and *muʿāksa* (flirtation).

[52] Following a woman can be understood as part of a courtship ritual that may end up in marriage (Van Dalen, 2013, p. 22). Whether the followed woman wants to be pursued or not is, however, rendered invisible by gender norms dictating that a respectable Egyptian woman should not react to male attention or, if the stalker persists in following her, should "call [him] names" even if she consents to the interaction (Van Dalen, 2013, p. 25). This creates the conditions within which instances of public sexual harassment can be read as consensual and, therefore, socially legitimized and accepted.

belonging to any and every man (Larkin, 1991, p. 114).[53] When they are encircled by groups of men and sexually harassed during the celebration of the Eid, a *mulid,* or the victory of Egypt's national soccer team, they are excluded from collective expressions of festive joy and *de facto* banished from participating—again, alone—in forms of sociality and amusement that are central to notions of religious, spiritual and national belonging in the country.[54] When they are subjected to collective sexual assaults in protests, they are stripped of their roles of political activists and revolutionaries and reduced to their bodies, thus symbolically expelled from the body politic.[55]

In the sections that follow, I first review academic literature on public sexual violence in Egypt and examine the blindspots of this scholarship. I then develop an analytical framework that transcends scholarly characterizations of public sexual harassment and assault as either socially or politically motivated, and situates these expressions of violence within Cairo's affective spatial politics. My focus is on the interactions that take place between gendered bodies in public space. In particular, I

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[53] As Eileen Green, Sandra Hebron, and Diana Woodward (1987) remark, when women go out without male company they are seen as having "given up [their] entitlement to the protection from any man" (p. 86). According to Claudia Card (1996), moreover, women are considered to be alone not only when they are on their own in public but also when they are in the company of other women. In this case, as she notes, they are often represented as being "'*all* alone' which sounds even more alone than before (although it is often the safest situation)" (Card, 1996, p. 111). To counter this effect of "manlessness," women are advised to "engineer … an escort" (for example, by asking a male friend to walk them home) or to hint at the existence of a man who can claim private ownership over them (Larkin, 1991, p. 114; Gardner, 1990, p. 316-319).

[54] As Samuli Schielke (2009) notes, Eid al-Fitr is "an occasion [for Muslims] to reward themselves for withstanding the trial of fasting" (p. S29). The increase of public sexual harassment during this religious holiday, however, limits the enjoyment of this collective gratification to men and women accompanied by their husbands and/or families. *Mulids* are festivals held on the occasion of the birthday of Prophet Muhammad and a number of Sufi saints. In Cairo, they are infamous for the presence of groups of young men who "use the anonymity of the crowds to aggressively grab women" (Schielke, 2012, p. 42).

[55] This question is pointedly raised by a survivor of the collective sexual assaults of November 23, 2012: "In this situation, I am solely a female. The mother, sister, daughter, neighbor, and friend are just females, on the corner of Mohammed Mahmoud street, the martyrs street and the Eyes of Freedom street. They stripped me off my nationality and my sense of belonging to that scene" (cited El-Nadeem et al., 2013, p. 24).

analyze the affective regimes generated by incidents of public sexual violence, their sticking to certain spaces and times by means of the ritualization of public sexual harassment and assault, the circulation of affect through social contact, and the ways in which material and vicarious experiences of public sexual violence shape women's spatial practices.

Social or Political? Fragmented Scholarship on Public Sexual Violence

Public sexual harassment and assault in Egypt became a central topic of scholarly investigation in the aftermath of the January 25 Revolution, following the multiplication and exacerbation of collective sexual assaults in protests. Literature on public sexual violence against women, however, predates Mubarak's ouster. This issue first appeared in the radars of academics following the so-called "Eid incident" of October of 2006, when a group of prominent activist bloggers denounced a series of collective sexual harassment attacks—with "large groups of young men chasing after women, surrounding them, and ripping their clothes" (Otterman, 2007, p. 6)—in downtown Cairo during the celebration of Eid al-Fitr. Early engagements with this question came from media studies scholars, who emphasized the role played by the burgeoning Egyptian blogosphere in calling attention to what was already perceived as a "long-concealed problem," denouncing the passivity of the police in the face of such events, and challenging the government's denial (Otterman, 2007, p. 6; see also Al Malky, 2007; Rifaat, 2008; Radsch, 2008). Following the publication in 2008 of a study conducted by the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR) stating that eighty-three percent of Egyptian women and ninety-eight percent of

foreign women living in Egypt had been subjected to unwelcome sexual advances, the prevalence of public sexual harassment became an object of sociological inquiry (Hassan, Aboul Qomsan & Shoukry, 2008, pp. 16 & 18).[56]

Drawing on the ECWR study, Fatima Mareah Peoples (2008) explained street harassment in Cairo as a "symptom of disintegrating social structures." According to this author, this phenomenon resulted from rising unemployment—especially among young men—and the breakdown of the patriarchal family following women's incorporation into the paid economy and the displacement of men as primary breadwinners in the 1980s and 1990s. This "economic" argument posited that, in this socio-economic context, Egyptian men were increasingly unable to get married and fulfill their traditional role as economic providers for their families and turned to harassing women in front of other men to "symbolically reclaim their masculinity in public" (Peoples, 2008, p. 3).[57] Similarly, Nadia Ilahi (2009) reflected on widespread considerations of sexual harassment as the only outlet available for the sexual frustration of increasing numbers of 'unmarriageable' young Egyptian men (p. 64).[58] More recent engagements have criticized these arguments for depoliticizing public sexual violence by focusing on "men with bad cultural attitudes" while disregarding state-sponsored sexual violence under Mubarak (Abu-Lughod, 2013, p. 156). Notably, Paul Amar (2011b) has examined how approaches oriented at "policing

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[56] ECWR's definition of sexual harassment was very broad and included sexual, physical and psychological abuse committed against men or women by male or female strangers, acquaintances or intimates in public or private places. Nevertheless, the study emphasized that public sexual harassment of women by male strangers was the most frequent form of harassment in Egypt (Hassan et al., 2008, p. 13).

[57] It is worth noting, however, that Peoples' (2008) focus on unemployment and delayed marriage contradicted the findings of the 2008 ECWR report, according to which public sexual harassment was not directly linked to employment, educational level or marital status (Hassan et al., 2008, p. 17).

[58] Discourses that linked public sexual harassment with youth unemployment, delayed marriage and sexual repression abounded in the Egyptian media in the mid- and late 2000s, contributing to the development of a shared narrative (see, for example, Leila, 2008; Atassi, 2009).

and rectifying the deviant behavior of youthful, working-class men" contributed to the expansion of the authoritarian state and broadened the security prerogatives of the Mubarak regime (p. 317). From a different perspective, Hind Ahmad Zaki and Dalia Abd Alhamid (2014) have criticized the "cultural discourse" that explains public sexual harassment as the result of "gaps in education and wealth." As they note, such a rational promotes the false notion that only working-class men harass women, and that middle-class women are the only ones being harassed.[59]

The question of public sexual violence gained particular relevance in the aftermath of the January 25 Revolution. Most research since has focused on gendered and sexualized attacks in protests, presenting this violence as state-led attempts to discourage women activists from participating in demonstrations. Following the collective sexual assault of CBS correspondent Lara Logan during the celebrations for Mubarak's resignation, on February 11, 2011, for example, Radwan (2011) linked this violence to the sexual assaults perpetrated by paid thugs against women activists on Black Wednesday of 2005.[60] Countering US media's interpretation of Logan's attack through the Orientalist lens of Arab misogyny and predatory sexuality, Radwan (2011) argued that this violence had little to do with "Middle East attitudes toward women" and should be instead interpreted as a symptom of the "desperation of a dying regime."[61] In a similar way, Amar (2011b) described the sexualized assaults against women activists in Tahrir

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[59]   As Ahmad Zaki and Abd Alhamid (2014) note, this rhetoric seems more progressive than more traditional discourses that blame women for their attire and conduct and/or criticize bystander men for failing to perform their protective role in public, yet both preclude a broader discussion of the many forms of violence women across class boundaries are subjected to on a daily basis.

[60]   For more information on Black Wednesday, see the introduction, note 27. Radwan was insulted, beaten and stripped by a group of men while she was trying to access Tahrir square on February 2, 2011 (to read her first-person account, see Radwan, 2011). For more information on Logan's assault, see CBS News (2011).

[61]   For a discussion of this Orientalist narrative, see Replogle (2011, p. 797-798) and Amar (2011b, p. 301).

Square as replicating a strategy long practiced by the Egyptian state to discredit the political opposition by targeting women protesters' respectability. According to this author, the Ministry of Interior under Mubarak paid gangs of thugs (*balṭagiyya*) to infiltrate protests and "wreak havoc" by any means, including the use of public sexual violence (Amar, 2011b, p. 308).[62] This produced what Amar called the "*baltagi-effect,*" whereby the security state terrorized activists while presenting an image of the protesters as unruly mobs. The revelation in March of 2011 that seventeen women in detention had been subjected to forced virginity checks (*kushūf ʿadhariyya)* and the assault by the military police of a woman protester—who was beaten and stripped down to her jeans and blue bra—during the Cabinet clashes of December of 2011 signaled the continuation of these tactics after Mubarak's ouster (Seikaly, 2013; Kandiyoti, 2013; Hafez, 2014a & 2014b).

In his influential article, Amar (2011b) used the *harasser state* model to read the attacks suffered by the participants in the International Women's Day march of 2011 as "the legacy of the security state's *baltagi-effect"* (p. 322).[63] Yet first-person testimonies of the events contradict this analysis, and instead describe a situation in which the "brewing resentment" towards the protesters' demands for gender equity turned into verbal and physical confrontations, with those who opposed the march rebuking the women for raising what they considered to be unnecessary demands, accusing them of threatening the gains of the revolution, and telling them to go back to the kitchen

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[62]   *Balṭaga* (pl. of *balṭagiyya)* are criminals commissioned by the police to use violence against certain individuals—by means of voter intimidation, sexual violence against activists, forceful removal of farmers from their land, etc.—in exchange for remuneration and/or leniency towards their illegal activities (Abdelrahman, 2017, p. 189-190).

[63]   On March 8, 2011, less than a month after Mubarak's ouster, the participants in a women's march held on the occasion of International Women's Day were verbally and physically abused in Tahrir square (Al-Shalchi, 2011; Sholkamy, 2011).

(Sholkamy, 2011). These accounts do not talk about organized violence initiated by thugs but, rather, inscribe these expressions of anger within the broader backlash against women's rights that followed the January 25 Revolution, in reaction to a long history of state feminism and the identification of several amendments to the personal status laws—notably the introduction of the controversial *khulʿ* divorce in 2000—with the deposed first lady, Suzanne Mubarak (Elsadda, 2011; Dawoud, 2012, p. 160; Abdalla, 2014, p. 65-66).[64] More generally, Amar (2011b) has described public sexual harassment as "the particular perversion practiced by the repressive security state," presenting the 2006 Eid incident as being "fully consistent" with the regime's strategy of targeting public women (pp. 313 & 314).[65] By emphasizing the passivity of the police during these attacks, his analysis presents public sexual harassment and assault as invariably organized by the regime, and thereby practically apportions all forms of public sexual violence to the harasser state in its different configurations—the conscript, the police officer, the thug. At the same time, however, Amar's (2011b) focus on the *figure* of sexual harassment—which he denounces as a depoliticizing device articulated around the binary middle-class woman/unemployed working-class man within a matrix of feminist internationalism and human-security state practices—disregards the *reality* of public sexual violence on women's lives (p. 314). This elision ultimately renders "irrelevant and invisible" the experience of working-class women who are subjected to harassing behaviors on a daily basis (Amar, 2011b, p. 314).

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[64] These legal amendments fell under heavy criticism after Mubarak's ouster due to their association with the old regime and, according to conservative circles, their inconsistency with *shariʿa* law (Coleman, 2011, p. 219; Dawoud, 2012, p. 160).

[65] In this line, Amar (2011b) criticized, in retrospect, the Egyptian NGOs that, like ECWR, "did not connect the dots" and displaced responsibility for this violence onto working-class men (p. 314).

From a different perspective, Mariz Tadros (2013a & 2013b) has differentiated between "socially motivated sexual harassment" and "politically motivated sexual violence." According to this author, both co-exist in Egypt and have the effect of dissuading women from participating in public life, but each demands a different kind of intervention. On the one hand, the author describes socially motivated sexual harassment as "ordinary" and "socio-economically motivated" (Tadros, 2013a, p. 5; Tadros, 2013b, p. 3). Drawing on the cultural discourse discussed above, Tadros (2013a) argues that the prevalence of public sexual harassment in Egypt is caused by individual, economic and social factors, including "a perceived sense of sexual deprivation" among men who cannot afford to get married (p. 7). Within this logic, the increase of public sexual harassment after the January 25 Revolution is for Tadros (2013a) the result of the "lax security situation" (p. 7). Conversely, politically motivated sexual violence is examined, drawing on scholarship on sexual violence in conflict and war, as an extraordinary form of violence used by certain political actors to eliminate the opposition in order to "obtain or maintain political power" (Tadros, 2013a, p. 6).[66] This dual conceptualization of public sexual violence, however, obscures the many ways in which state and social actors are implicated in the perpetuation of all forms of public sexual violence. Moreover, Tadros' (2013a) argument ultimately leads to contradictory conclusions, as she *calls for* collective mobilizations against a regime that uses "political" sexual violence against women activists while, at the same time, *calling upon* these same authorities to enforce law and

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[66] Following sexualized attacks against women protesters in the vicinities of the Presidential Palace on December 5, 2012, scholars and activists accused the Morsi regime and the Muslim Brotherhood of this violence (Tadros, 2013a, p. 5; Pratt, 2013; see also Nazra for Feminist Studies et al., 2012). However, activists' observation of "bystanders' spontaneous involvement" in the collective sexual assaults against women protesters have complicated discussions about the identity of the assailants (Kirollos, 2013). Adding to this complexity is the fact that Morsi's ouster and the regime change did not bring an end to public sexual violence against women, neither in Tahrir square nor in public space more generally.

order against "social" forms of public sexual harassment, thus implicitly linking the improvement of women's situation in public space to the restoration of order by means of police intervention (p. 7).[67]

Everyday Scenes of Fear and Shame

Public sexual violence is not a new phenomenon in Cairo. "We have experienced harassment at a very young age, it was there, in public space, long before the Revolution, it's just that there weren't any reports," remarked in a conversation Amal ElMohandes (2015), director of the Women Human Rights Defenders Program at Nazra for Feminist Studies, "no one was talking about it because of the social stigma, but it's always been there." Many of my informants—including ElMohandes—questioned the extraordinariness of the collective sexual assaults that proliferated in Tahrir Square after Mubarak's ouster, calling attention to the repeated occurrence of similar attacks in crowded areas long before 2011, particularly in the context of festive events such as concerts, *mulids,* soccer games and the religious celebrations of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha (Abd El-Hameed, 2015; El-Baramawy, 2015; El-Rifae, 2015; Hegab, 2015;

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[67] Not all analyses of public sexual violence in Egypt fall into the social/political dichotomy. Ahmad Zaki and Abd Alhamid (2014), for example, interpret the escalation of public sexual violence after the January 25 Revolution as resulting from the "normalization of a longstanding culture of sexual violence" whose primary locus of production is the family and the home. Engaging the notion of "domestication of the public sphere," these authors describe how the dominant patterns that structure family relations are transferred to the public sphere in ways that mirror them. As they note, the state's inaction and its failure to detain and prosecute the perpetrators reinforce the idea that women are responsible for this violence, while prompting men to adopt their traditional role as protectors of "their" women against other men. For Mariam Kirollos (2013), on the other hand, public sexual harassment and assault—both in protests and on the streets—is a "socially accepted practice" that enjoys great impunity. As she notes, this violence is the result of gender inequality and requires far-reaching reforms in the fields of the police, judiciary, education, health and media for it to be eradicated.

Soliman, 2015).[68] Such expressions of public sexual violence have often been discounted

with the use of phrases like *iḥtafal ʿalaihum* (literally "have a party" or "celebrate on

them," see Langohr, 2013, p. 20), which positions women's bodies as objects of male

recreation, downplaying the seriousness of these forms of sexual assault while hindering

women's ability to name their experiences of violence (cf. Kelly, 1988, p. 27).[69] The

patterns of public sexual violence that proliferated in the aftermath of the January 25

Revolution represent, thus, according to my interviewees, *a change in degree but not in*

kind. These observations are consistent with Liz Kelly's (2000) characterization of sexual

violence in periods of political upheaval as not fundamentally distinct but rather an

intensification of "already existing attitudes and behaviours," whereby widespread

regimes of impunity convey an "implicit permission" to engage in acts of sexual

violence, resulting in an increase in the frequency and intensity of both "opportunistic

and planned assaults" (pp. 55, 60).[70]

My conversations with Egyptian and foreign activist and non-activist women

living in Cairo reveal that the possibility of public sexual violence hovers over women's

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[68] While there are no official reports about the prevalence of collective sexual assaults in public space before the January 25 Revolution, first-person accounts attest to their occurrence since, at least, the 1990s. One such episode took place in 1994, as a group of male students from a public school sexually assaulted a female student from a neighboring international school (Soliman, 2015, I discuss this case more in depth in chapter four). According to HarassMap's Safe Areas Unit Manager Ahmed Hegab (2015), similar attacks were common in downtown Cairo and the Nile Corniche in the late 1990s: "It happened a lot before, but nobody talked about it." Hegab recalls that they targeted foreign women and lasted about "ten minutes," until people working in the area stopped them. Months before the Eid incident of 2006, the celebration of Egypt's victory over the Ivory Coast in the final of the Africa Cup of Nations was also marred by collective sexual violence (for a YouTube video of the events, posted by blogger Wael Abbas, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9nLJJHt-L6k).

[69] A most recent—and infamous—example of this tendency to minimize the severity of public sexual violence occurred on June 9, 2014, as news anchor Maha Bahnassy referred to the collective sexual assaults that were taking place in Tahrir square during the celebrations for El-Sisi's presidential inauguration as "just [men] having a good time" (Youssef, 2014).

[70] Kelly's (2000) examination of continuities and similarities between expressions of sexual violence in contexts of political and civil unrest and those that women commonly experience in times of 'peace' contrasts with feminist scholars' efforts—particularly in the field of international law—to highlight the specificity of patterns of sexual violence in conflict as "act[s] of war, genocide, or crime against humanity" (MacKinnon, 2006, p. 942; see also Zinsstag, 2006; Leatherman, 2011).

lives and affectively shapes their experiences of public space. "For us, every day when we're walking down the street, we automatically, if we see a man or a group of young men walking up, we expect [harassment]," noted ElMohandes (2015). These sexual intrusions are such a regular occurrence that women in Cairo have to learn how to "function around it" if they want to conduct part of their lives in public space (El-Rifae, 2015). My interviews reflect that the anticipation of public sexual harassment rarely "keep[s] women off the streets" (Griffin, 1971, p. 21; see also Bowman, 1993, p. 520; Gardner, 1995, p. 11), as few opt for or can afford complete seclusion at home or in the securitized enclaves that proliferate in the suburbs, but it often dictates the spaces and times that women inhabit, and governs their conduct in these places (Koskela, 1999, p. 111; Crouch, 2009, p. 137). To limit these unwelcome sexual advances, women adjust their clothes depending on where they are going and what mode of transportation they are going to use, and may take alternative routes to avoid streets where they have been harassed, use the women-only carriages in the metro or abstain from taking public transportation or staying out late (Fahmy et al., 2014, p. 47). Other preemptive and anticipatory measures adopted by women to reduce exposure to public sexual harassment include wearing sunglasses, changing paths to avoid a person or a group perceived as dangerous, and walking fast (Ilahi, 2008, pp. 92, 133). The potential for such sexual intrusions also affects the way women conduct themselves in public space. As El-Rifae (2015) noted, "I'm constantly en garde … you feel a little bit like you're a soldier, you have to be very alert, you have to be a little bit suspicious of everyone around you, be careful not to smile because if you smile someone may take it the wrong way or it may invite a comment that you don't want."

These everyday restrictions on women's inhabitation of public space are accomplished through the interaction of fear and shame, two affects with distinctive spatial dimensions. Studies of public sexual harassment in Egypt reveal that the "cumulative impact" of recurring public sexual harassment causes women to be "scared to go out on the street again" or to develop aversion towards their bodies and towards intimate relationships more generally (El Deeb, 2013, p. 12; cf. Kelly, 1988, p. 16). Fear operates at the level of the body by "carving into the flesh habits, predispositions, and associated emotions" (Massumi, 1993, p. viii). It manifests itself in a heightened awareness of the self and others, as well as in physical sensations such as increased heart rate, shortness of breath, sweating, hot and cold chills, muscle tension, and shakiness when danger is perceived (Davidson, 2002, p. 22; see also Bankey, 2002; Ahmed, 2004b, p. 65; Acarón, 2016, p. 144). Spatially, fear modulates bodily space as it brings some bodies together and others apart (Ahmed, 2004b, p. 15). Among the fearful, it generates a desire to maintain a physical distance from bodies and spaces perceived as fearsome and—when such a separation cannot be secured—the urge to leave the space before the object of fear materializes, privileging containment over mobility (cf. Ahmed, 2004a, pp. 125-126; Ahmed, 2004b, p. 70). Similarly, shame is an embodied experience felt intensely on the skin—like "one's body seems to burn up" (Ahmed, 2004b, p. 103). Considered a "moral gyroscope" by Thomas Scheff (2003), shame is a socially-situated affect that mediates the relationship between an individual and their community, signaling a threat to the social bond (p. 254). It reflects a "pervasive sense of personal inadequacy," a flaw only appreciated as one appears before and to others (Bartky, 1990, p. 85; Ahmed, 2004b, p. 105; see also Scheff, 2003, p. 253).[71] In space, shame translates

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[71] Drawing on Jean-Paul Sartre's (1956) observation that "shame is shame of oneself before the Other"

into an urge to hide—"an impulse to 'take cover' and 'to cover oneself'" (Ahmed, 2004b, p. 104)—and a desire for self-effacement (Biddle, 1997, p. 228). "I felt uncomfortable and shy when there is someone looking at me, like I'm walking naked, I'm so annoyed and nervous," told me Yasmine Nassef (2015), a lawyer at the Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance (CEWLA) and now WenDo self-defense trainer. "I always hide when this happens to me," noted El-Baramawy (2015) with regard to everyday public sexual harassment, "I feel like I want to get rid of my body, if I were not a woman this wouldn't happen to me."[72] The urge to "make [oneself] absent from space" and the desire for disembodiment that often accompany experiences of public sexual violence reinforce the perceived need for adopting strategies that ultimately "erase" women's bodies from public space (Rose, 1993, p. 143; see also Young, 1980, p. 154).

Strategies of evasion and invisibility—avoiding certain spaces at certain times, occupying the women-only carriages of the metro, walking fast or wearing sunglasses—perpetuate women's "liminal and ambiguous status as marginalized, and potentially illegitimate and disreputable, passers-by" (De Koning, 2009, p. 547) and consolidate a

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(p. 222), Bartky (1990) notes that once an initial judgment has been passed by the Other and recognized by the self (once "I recognize that I *am* as I am seen by the Other"), the self develops "an internalized Other in imagination" that continues to pass judgment on the self (p. 85). It is important to remark that these evaluations are not based on arbitrary standards but reflect social ideals (Peristiany, 1966, p. 9). As such, they should not be understood as an interpersonal exchange (the self vis-à-vis the Other) but as part of broader collective processes.

[72]   Feelings of shame and guilt are often expressed by survivors of sexual harassment or assault, even rape (Stanko, 1985; Kelly, 1988, p. 213; Cairns, 1997, p. 91). The difference between shame and guilt has been often conceptualized as follows: shame relates to what one *is* while guilt refers to what one *does* (Bartky, 1990, p. 87). Following John Deigh (1983), "[s]hame is felt over shortcomings, guilt over wrongdoings" (p. 225). As emotions of self-assessment, shame and guilt often appear together but have a different effect on the self. While guilt indicates an awareness that one has transgressed a moral or social boundary, shame reflects a perception of the self as "inferior, defective, or in some way diminished" (Bartky, 1990, p. 87). For socially subordinate individuals, Ullaliina Lehtinen (1998) remarks, shame "function[s] as confirmations of what the agent knew all along—that she or he was a person of lesser worth" (p. 62). In the case of public displays of sexual violence, Kelly (2000) argues that women's sense of shame is "multiplied by the knowledge that their degradation was witnessed" (p. 56).

perception of public space as a hostile and treacherous battlefield (Rose, 1993, p. 146), thereby precluding women's enjoyment of the pleasures associated with exploring the city, strolling or loitering on their own. Moreover, individual women's repeated adoption of such tactics generates an affect that has a "rippling effect" on other women traversing the city (cf. Ahmed, 2004, p. 120), contributing to the production of a space that is less available for other women to inhabit without restrictions (Koskela, 2005, p. 263). While fear and shame take hold of singular bodies in public space as they anticipate or encounter public sexual violence, these affects do not remain contained but "move sideways" between physical bodies, stick to certain places and times leaving a residue that affects other women traversing that space (Ahmed, 2004, p. 120), and are transmitted through the communicative exchanges that take place around the act of violence. It is to these interactions that I turn to in the following section.

"The People on the Street Scared Me and Made Me Feel I Was Wrong"

In July of 2012, the independent theater group The BuSSy Project conducted three "street experiments," whereby they staged different situations of public sexual harassment and recorded bystanders' reactions to these incidents.[73] Afterwards, the actors who enacted the three scenarios wrote short texts about their experiences.[74] In the first situation, a man (Seif) followed and catcalled a woman (Marwa) wearing a *niqab,* until

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[73] The first experiment is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aBCJ1Na8_zk. The second experiment is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ywgAb_4AOmA. The third experiment is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TmgauMVysDs.

[74] This document was shared with me by The BuSSy Project's director, Sondos Shabayek.

she confronted him and asked people around for help to bring him to the police station.

After the dispute, Marwa wrote:

> A woman approached me in the middle of my argument with the guy who harassed me and said: "Shhh! No woman should raise her voice at a man!" I got the feeling that the people where shutting me up, and that no one cares no matter what. I was screaming: "I'll call the police," and I assumed that the people would at least ask me "What happened?," but no one asked. Everyone was telling me: "It's okay! It's okay! Calm down!" Another woman told me: "The police doesn't have time for such stuff!"

In the third scenario, two men (Shady and Seif) verbally harassed two women (Nihal and Sally). The women stopped the two men and, after a few minutes of discussion, a crowd of around twenty men had formed around the group while a large number of people observed the incident from the sidewalk. Reflecting on the situation, Shady noted:

> At first, I was nervous. I thought that we might get beaten up. When the girls answered back and we started fighting, a guy came out of a shop and tried to calm us down. But when Sally told me: "I'll drag you to jail," he left and went back to his shop. At that moment I realized that no one is going to stop me or beat me up, and suddenly I felt that I have a lot of power and strength. I can do whatever I want, I can grab her and beat her up in the middle of the street and no one is going to do anything about it because everyone is on my side. No one tried to physically stop me except for Sally herself. Everyone else was just trying to resolve [the] situation and make us leave. It seemed as if they're implying that as long as they're siding with me, no one can do me any harm. So I own this space, and you can't do anything about it! I can do whatever I want! The people around me were the reason I felt this kind of power, all these feelings and thoughts … Being surrounded by a huge crowd was not a problem for me at all, it was more protection for us, and if Sally tried to beat me up, they would've stopped her.

Despite the obvious limitations that these staged settings pose for analysis, these scenes offer a glimpse into the affective exchanges that surround public sexual

harassment in Cairo.[75] Far from being limited to an interpersonal exchange, instances of

public sexual harassment often become collective affairs in which bystanders *side* with

either part, attribute responsibility—"she is probably a loose woman" notes a male

bystander to Seif in reference to *niqabi* Marwa, "look at her and her hair" says another in

reference to either Nihal or Sally—, and jointly appraise the meaning and significance of

these unwelcome sexual advances to determine whether something—at all—happened

and whether the police has—or, by extension, should have—*time for such stuff.* Based on

these collective (dis)engagements, the crowd is differently figured as hostile (Marwa) or

protective (Shady), leading to disparate constructions of safety and danger in these

spaces. As Shady's fears of being *beaten up* dissipate and he develops a sense of

ownership over the street and an entitlement to interact with Nihal and Sally as he

pleases, the unsympathetic response that Marwa encounters conveys to her the idea that

no one cares no matter what, that on the street she is on her own. The differential

production of affect in these encounters is further reinforced by women's general distrust

of the police in cases of public sexual harassment, a judgment informed by—direct and

indirect—experiences whereby police officers act as perpetrators on the streets and in

police stations, refuse to intervene to stop such incidents, blame women who have been

harassed, try to dissuade them from filing a complaint or, if they do, coerce them into

dropping the charges.[76]

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[75] While public sexual harassment in Egypt happens in all kinds of places and at all times of the day and night, a majority of incidents takes place in crowded areas and during the daytime (Hassan et al., 2008, p. 7).

[76] Women in Egypt have often identified police officers, members of the security forces, and security personnel as harassers (Hassan et al., 2008, p. 16; El Deeb, 2013, pp. 9 & 15; Fahmy et al., 2014, p. 49). Police officers often refuse to intervene in cases of sexual harassment they witness, including collective sexual assaults like the 2006 Eid incident (FIDH et al., 2014, pp. 12 & 20). Women seeking police assistance in cases of public sexual harassment often report being mocked and scolded by representatives of the police force (ECWR, 2009a, p. 17; El Deeb, 2013, p. 15). In police stations,

The dynamics that unfold between what David Riches (1986) has called the "triangle of violence"—the triad formed by perpetrator(s), survivor(s), and witness(es)—infuse the encounter with a certain affect while imposing a narrative that, in many cases, negates women's experiences of violence (p. 8).[77] "Even though I know I'm right, the people on the street scared me and made me feel I was wrong," wrote Sally in her report. This observation complicates scholars' assertion that perceptions of danger in public space are, at their core, a "fear of the stranger, the person who is potentially harmful, but whose behavior seems unpredictable and beyond control" (Merry, 1981, p. 126; see also Riger & Gordon, 1981, p. 81; Valentine, 1989, p. 386). While encounters with strangers are unavoidably anxiety-ridden, due to a basic inability to completely fathom their intentions and anticipate their actions, it is the "belief [or not] that others will assist you if you're attacked" that ultimately elicits perceptions of safety or can exacerbate fear in public space (Riger & Gordon, 1981, p. 81, the bracketed addition is mine).[78] Studies of public sexual harassment in Egypt reveal widespread skepticism towards the possibility of bystanders' assistance as well as very low rates of bystander intervention, thus

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officers often mobilize notions of family honor and reputation to dissuade women from filing complaints (FIDH et al., 2014, p. 41). More generally, police representatives have publicly expressed distrust towards women's narratives of sexual violence (El Dessouky, 1997, p. 80; Tadros, 1998). The logical result is that women rarely rely on the police for assistance or report public sexual harassment to the authorities (Hassan et al., 2008, p. 17; El Deeb, 2013, p. 13; Fahmy et al., 2014, p. 35).

[77] Riches (1986) defines violence as "a social and cultural resource" (p. 11). His analysis focuses on the act of violence itself and examines the dynamics that unfold between "performer" (perpetrator), victim, and witness to reach a consensus about the legitimacy of the act of violence (Riches, 1986, p. 8; for an elaboration of this model, see Schröder & Schmidt, 2001; Stewart & Strathern, 2002, p. 35). I adopt the term *survivor,* as opposed to *victim,* to underline women's active engagement to resist, cope and survive not only the act of violence itself but also its short- and long-term consequences (Kelly, 1988, p. 159).

[78] Women's "sense of attachment to the community" is, according to Riger and Gordon (1981), one of three attitudinal variables that significantly predict women's fear, the other two being the perceived risk of becoming a victim and a belief in one's physical (in)competence (p. 81). Similarly, Kelly (1988) noted that her respondents mentioned "the presence of other people who might provide support or be witness to any response" as a factor that reduced "the perceived risk of the incident escalating" (p. 168). In her research on women's fear of urban violence in Finland, Hille Koskela (1997) found that her respondents' feeling that "someone will help you if needed" contributed to increase their sense of confidence when other people were around (p. 310).

suggesting that women's fear in public space is not generated by an *uncertainty* regarding strangers' behavior and potential for violence as much as by the *certainty* that witnesses will not support them if violence materializes.[79] This anticipatory knowledge establishes the conditions within which women affectively experience public space and the encounters that take place in it. In addition to fear, the mobilization of shame serves to put those women who resist everyday expressions of public sexual violence *in their place,* as the following testimonial published in the 2014 HarassMap report reflects: "Someone was passing by, telling me, you're blaming him? Look at yourself, the blame isn't on him, the blame is on whoever raised you" (Somaya, cited in Fahmy et al., 2014, p. 50). In this case, shaming functions as a "deterrent" to induce women to comply with normative ideals of femininity (Ahmed, 2004b, p. 107). More generally, these verbal (and non-verbal) interactions produce a space where harassing behaviors are rendered acceptable—their seriousness downplayed, their impact minimized—and where the use of public sexual violence against women is commonly condoned. It is through the everyday deployment of public sexual harassment and the collective transference of fear and shame onto women's bodies that messages about women's place in public space are articulated and consolidated.

Bystander responses to public sexual harassment are, however, not consistent across the urban territory, and they substantially differ in areas like Islamic Cairo or the *ʿashwāʾiyyāt,* as opposed to downtown Cairo or the upper-class neighborhood of

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[79] The 2014 HarassMap report revealed that only 0.8 percent of women subjected to public sexual harassment asked bystanders for help, while only 17.7 percent of those who witnessed incidents of public sexual harassment intervened to stop these sexual intrusions (Fahmy et al., 2014, p. 32). Respondents' justification for their inaction varied along gender lines: While women tended to invoke "fear of being beaten" (47.3 percent), men argued that the incident was "no big deal" (32 percent) or that "the girl [was] to blame" (18 percent; Fahmy et al., 2014, p. 32).

Zamalek. As Caroline Kamel Nassif (2010) remarks, in the informal settlement of Manshiet Nasser "no man dares to physically harass a woman from his area, because of the closed community and the fact that everyone knows the other; hence a fight could erupt due to a physical harassment incident" (p. 98; see also Ghannam, 2002, p. 100). This point is confirmed by architect and urban planner Kareem Ibrahim (2015), founding member of Takween, an urban development company that partners with UN Women in their Safe Cities program:

> Everybody knows that where we have sexual harassment is … where people, like girls are hanging around, youth are hanging around, and nobody knows them, they can come from any area, do what they want and then leave … In informal areas there may be sexual crimes but it's not like harassment, because everybody knows each other. You cannot do that in an informal area or in any city core area like Islamic Cairo because once you do that there is a family and the family is gonna come with vengeance and there's gonna be big trouble.

Downtown Cairo—and to a lesser extent the neighborhoods around it, including Zamalek, Doqqi, Mohandeseen, and Mounira—is a mixed-use development area that integrates residential, commercial, cultural and institutional uses (see Map 3). While only a small number of Cairenes live downtown, Egyptians of all social classes come to the city center for work, administrative purposes, or leisure. Working-class women and men living in the ʿashwāʾiyyāt often leave these residential areas to shop in the streets around Talaat Harb square or the Attaba market, stroll along the Nile, lean on the bridges' balustrades, and sit in one of the city's few parks or in Tahrir Square. In these spaces of anonymity, young women find possibilities for "secrecy, privacy and adventure" far from the moral constraints placed by the neighborhood community on their appearance and public conduct (Van Dalen, 2013, p. iii). Before the January 25 Revolution, it was also common to see middle- and upper-middle-class young Egyptians in the environs of Tahrir

Square, where the main campus of the American University in Cairo (AUC) was located

(cf. De Koning, 2009). At the same time, however, the pervasiveness of public sexual

harassment in this area has traditionally marked downtown Cairo as fraught with danger,

thus conditioning women's inhabitation of spaces free from community surveillance and

control to the acceptance of a risk to their bodies and respectability.[80] The collective

sexual assaults that proliferated in Tahrir Square during the many protests that followed

Mubarak's ouster has intensified the sticky association between downtown Cairo and

public sexual violence.
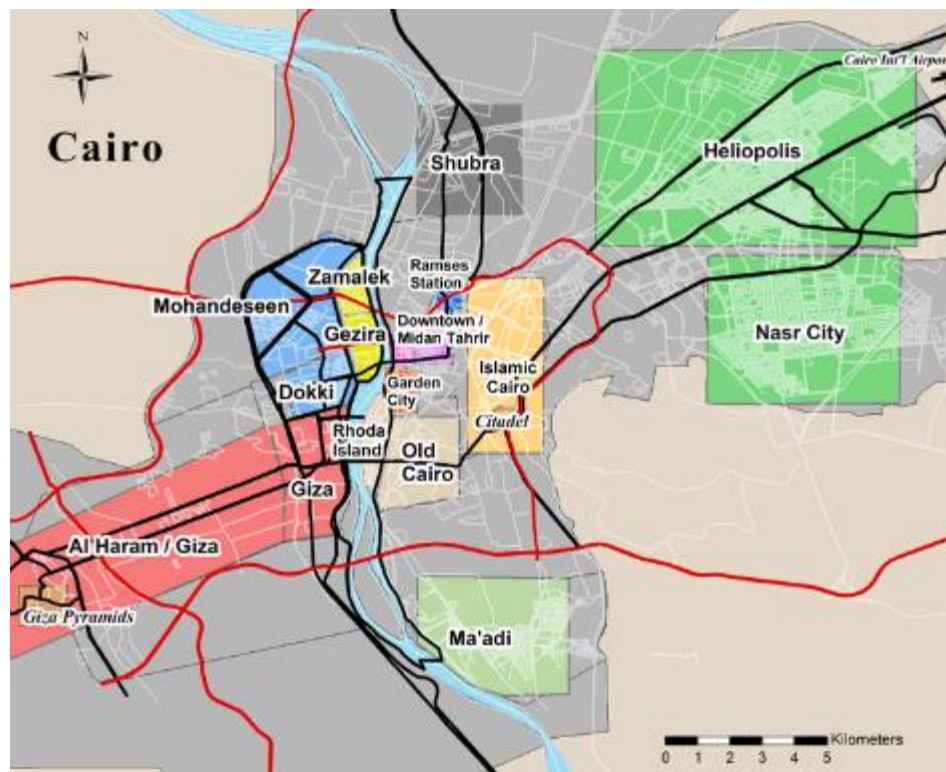
Map 3: Cairo's neighborhoods. Source: Aude, based off of Open Street Map and Landsat imagery. Creative Commons.

The Ritualization of Public Sexual Violence and its Residues

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[80]   I explore these questions more in depth in chapter two.

Women's perceptions of downtown Cairo in general, and Tahrir Square in particular, as a dangerous place for women changed abruptly on January 25, 2011 and the days that followed, when hundreds of thousands of Egyptians occupied Tahrir Square to demand Mubarak's resignation. Transformed into an "abstract, symbolic, imaginary space" by virtue of the revolutionary process (Hydlig Dal, 2014, p. 17), Tahrir Square came to epitomize the revolutionary ethos. For El-Baramawy (2015), the eighteen revolutionary days were "like a utopia" characterized by large crowds of friendly and welcoming people that filled the emblematic square:

> Before the revolution if any Islamist sees me he looks disgusted at me because I'm not wearing a veil, I'm not religious by their patterns of mind, it's provoking, they hate me … But surprisingly in the square they were smiling at me. And the people were organized, very cooperative, and if you want to do anything many people will help you. I didn't see Egypt like that before or after the eighteen days. These eighteen days it was like we were dreaming, it's a solid dream that we lived.

Yet this convivial atmosphere was short-lived. "After the army removed Hosni Mubarak [on February 11, 2011] all the Egyptians were on the streets celebrating and many people who were not in the square came to the square," recalled El-Baramawy, who decided to leave the area before the celebrations started. "I really escaped it because I saw it coming," she noted, evoking Egypt's long history of sexual violence during festive events. The collective sexual assault against Lara Logan that same night marked the beginning of a period where Tahrir Square would become synonymous with public sexual violence. This association was not only cognitively perceived but also affectively sensed by those, like human rights activist Dalia Abd El-Hameed, who regularly inhabited the space: "Personally, I was [never] really comfortable when I was in the square, there was always that sense, and you could even sometimes smell it, that hostility," she remarked.

The multiplication of collective sexual assaults in mass gatherings after Mubarak's resignation accentuated the notion that Tahrir Square was not a place for women. "Tahrir became associated with this problem and it started happening more and more," El-Rifae (2015) noted. Reflecting on this process, she remarked: "Between the fall of 2012 and the summer of 2013 [there] was a very clear progression, an increase in violence against women in the square, and I think that it became known as a place where this was happening, and I think that it became a place where some people went just for that purpose."

First-person accounts of the "circles of hell" reveal an unmistakable pattern repeated, with variations, in every protest that filled Tahrir Square after the January 25 Revolution. Testimonies from survivors and witnesses describe how women were isolated and encircled by groups of men who stripped them, sometimes using knives to cut their clothes (see El-Nadeem et al., 2013). Survivors narrate how the number of assailants grew rapidly, with large numbers of men groping them and raping them with their fingers. They describe how some men were telling them that they were there to help them while, at the same time, they participated in the assault. This dissonance between words and deeds was particularly disconcerting for the women under attack, who could not differentiate between who was participating in the assault and who was trying to stop it. As a survivor of a collective sexual assault on June 2, 2012 recalled, "I didn't know who was trying to help and who wasn't. The only person I trusted was my friend. Others said they were helping but [they were] really just trying to get in the first row, getting a piece of the cake" (C., cited in El-Nadeem et al., 2013, p. 13).[81]

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[81] C. was subjected to a collective sexual assault on June 2, 2012, during a protest against the verdict that condemned Mubarak to life in prison and acquitted many senior officials responsible for the death of

El-Baramawy (2015) reported a similar experience during the collective sexual assault she suffered on November of 2012: "The attackers themselves were saying that they were helping. It was like a trick to stop anyone from trying to help me." These similarities in the execution of the violence led activists to believe that the assaults were organized (El-Nadeem et al., 2013, p. 10). Yet, on this question, ElMohandes (2015) offered some insights that shed light onto the dynamics of the violence:

> When we say that it's organized we don't mean that it's organized by the state or the Ministry of Interior, but rather [that] the men knew how to organize themselves. Because usually it starts with a group of ten or fifteen [men] and then … it's like this small circle in the midst of this huge crowd, so sometimes even the people here are not aware of the fact that a mob sexual assault is taking place here, and of course it's very loud and very noisy, some people can't even recognize what's happening and then you'd have … men on the outside periphery of the circle that either would be watching passively what's happening or they'd start to join in … Personally, I don't think that they planned ahead, ok, *yalla,* let's go, I think it's because it's been happening during the demonstrations a lot of times, so I think they just, you know, have this way of … working together.

Eyewitness' testimonies reveal the ritualized character of the "circles of hell," whereby certain elements—the formation of a circle, the rape with fingers, the pretense of protection—were performed in a particular way, almost as if they were part of a choreography. Similarly, El-Baramawy (2015) recognized that the attack she was subjected to seemed coordinated, with all the perpetrators "saying the same things" and acting as if "everybody knows its role."[82] As Anton Blok (2000) notes, "ritualization" aspects are present in the enactment of most forms of violence, either through the

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demonstrators during the January 25 Revolution (Urquhart, 2012). C.'s is one of the many testimonies of survivors and witnesses of the collective sexual assaults in Tahrir square compiled by human and women's rights organizations (see El-Nadeem et al., 2013). In this section, I rely heavily on this material for discussing these forms of public sexual violence.

[82] In this line, a survivor of the collective sexual assaults during the celebrations for the second anniversary of the January 25 Revolution described the attacks as "rehearsed" (El-Nadeem et al., 2013, p. 28).

adherence to certain rules and prescriptions, specifications of time and place, or the use of

special vocabulary (p. 29). The existence of a recurrent pattern calls attention to the

expressive dimension of these acts of violence, shifting the focus away from the relation

between means and ends—its instrumental function—and onto the messages that a

particular form of violence transmits (Blok, 2000, p. 28).[83] Within this framework,

ElMohandes' account points to a number of non-verbal interactions among the

perpetrators, and between perpetrators and bystanders, that are crucial for understanding

the workings of the "circles of hell."[84]

Firstly, the emergence of a ritualized practice facilitates its imitation by assailants

who, without knowing each other, *knew how to organize themselves*.[85] Secondly, and

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[83] Blok (2000) notes that scholars' attempts to understand violence in utilitarian, 'rational' terms have resulted in characterizations of certain forms of violence as senseless and irrational, particularly when no goals or clear connection between means and ends can be discerned (p. 24). For this author, however, violence should be understood as a "cultural form or construction" shaped by particular historical circumstances. According to him, it is only when violence is devoid of the context that gives it meaning that it appears to be "senseless" (Blok, 2000, p. 24). On the tension between instrumental and expressive violence, Blok (2000) argues that even when violence is used to achieve a particular goal, the act of violence should not be reduced to its end; it is in the way it is performed that we can see its symbolic import (p. 28).

[84] The behavior of crowds and of the individuals that integrate them has been the object of scholarly attention since the late 19th century. In the seminal *The crowd: A study of the popular mind,* Gustave Le Bon (1897, published originally in French in 1895) argued that, when part of a crowd, individuals acted as moved by a "collective mind" in ways that substantially differed from how they would behave as isolated individuals (p. 2). He claimed that members of a crowd became suggestible, which facilitated the contagion of sentiments and acts, and noted that under the protection of the numbers and the anonymity of the crowd its participants were able to "yield to instincts" while diffusing responsibility (Le Bon, 1897, pp. 9-10). Le Bon's "contagion theory" was countered, among others, by Hadley Cantril (1941), who argued that it was "personal values as these [were] acquired from experience and knowledge and by [the individual's] derivative ego drives and frames of reference" that determined whether a person would become part of a mob or join a revolutionary political movement in the first place (p. 69). This so-called "convergence theory" was, in turn, contested by Ralph Turner and Lewis M. Killian (1957), who developed what became known as "emergent-norm theory." According to the latter, crowd participants did not have pre-existing ideas about how to behave collectively but developed, through "communication of mood, imagery, and a conception of what kind of action is appropriate," a set of norms that resulted from their interaction in a particular situation (Turner & Killian, 1957, p. 83). For the purpose of my discussion of collective sexual violence, none of these characterizations are adequate.

[85] This point is further emphasized by testimonies' references to a "division of roles" among the perpetrators. As an eyewitness of the collective sexual assaults of November 23, 2012 recalled: "[A] group of men were beating the girl with the belt so she would not resist and get distracted covering her face to shield herself from the beating, one man is down on the girl's body raping her, while others

partly as a result, the serial repetition of this form of sexual violence confers these assaults a theatrical character, becoming a spectacle that onlookers can voyeuristically enjoy, or *join in.*[86] Public spectacles, Diana Taylor (1997) reminds us, are "a locus and a mechanism of communal identity" upon which contested notions of national identity and belonging are built (p. ix). As the "glue that holds communities together" (Taylor, 1997, p. 76), spectacles shape nationness by means of entangled choreographies that bind members of the population with each other. Thirdly, the ritualization of violence serves to diminish the sense of responsibility among those who perform these highly scripted acts, as well as those who witness them (Blok, 2000, p. 29).[87] Vis-à-vis spectacles of violence, spectators' adoption of a passive role—a position of "just watching"—is itself an intervention, as it enables the act of violence to take place (Taylor, 1997, p. 141; see also Snow, Zurcher & Peters, 1981, p. 32). The "self-blinding" of the public through a collective act of percepticide (Taylor, 1997, p. 123) renders public sexual violence an imperceptible—and thus insignificant—act. Lastly, social tolerance towards public sexual violence coupled with widespread regimes of impunity from state authorities contributes

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were beating whoever tries to break into the circle, and they switched roles" (El-Nadeem et al., 2013, pp. 21-22).

[86] Several survivors and eyewitnesses referred to bystanders' attitudes and behaviors during the "circles of hell." For example, Sally Zohney, who was sexually assaulted on June 8, 2012, during a protest to denounce the sexual assaults of June 2, wrote in her testimony: "The strange thing is that I could see people meters away, watching us while eating Koshary [Egyptian dish made of rice, macaroni and lentils], as if the beatings were taking place on television!" (El Nadeem et al., 2013, p. 18). Similarly, a man who witnessed the collective sexual assaults of November 23, 2012 and tried to intervene to stop them, noted: "I swear to you that the number of people helping us throughout this ordeal were not more than 2 individuals. Meanwhile, regular people, onlookers who did not belong to this group of thugs, were also harassing the girl as we were carrying her" (El-Nadeem et al., 2013, p. 22).

[87] While I have reduced the complexity of these interactions to the abuses of the perpetrators and the passive or active connivance of bystanders in the attacks, it is important to acknowledge the experience of all those who felt powerless in the face of violence, who attempted to stop it but failed, and who effectively challenged it (see, for example, El-Nadeem et al., 2013, p. 22; also El-Baramawy, 2015). It is equally important to emphasize that survivors of violence are not mere recipients of sexual abuse but active respondents to these violations in a multiplicity of ways, including verbal and physical self-defense as well as a variety of strategies of self-protection, however limited their effectiveness given the circumstances (Caignon & Groves, 1987; Kelly, 1988, p. 159; see, for example, El-Nadeem et al., 2013, pp. 13 & 25).

to conveying the idea that "you can tamper away with women's bodies and you … won't be held accountable" (ElMohandes, 2015).

Image 1: The mural "The Circle of Hell," by Zeft and Mira Shihadeh. The text reflects some of the elements that characterize these collective sexual assaults, including the deceptive "Don't be afraid, we've come to help you." The rest of the text reproduces some of the justifications commonly used to excuse public sexual violence: "Don't you see what she's wearing?," "But… she's not my sister," "She really wants it," "I'm horny, what am I supposed to do?," "A very tasty girl, honesty," "I can do what I like, pal!" The mural was painted on the concrete-block wall erected by the SCAF on Mansour street, off Mohamed Mahmoud Street. Picture by the author.

The repetition with slight differences of almost identical expressions of public sexual violence generates an affect that congeals around the objects, places, times, and bodies associated with the attacks, persisting as a sticky residue that continues to affect other bodies after the fact. Places, Doreen Massey (2005) notes, are "ever-shifting constellations of trajectories" shaped by the weaving together of a multiplicity of ongoing (hi)stories (p. 151). Within this context, experiences of violence linger in space to sustain embodied reactions and influence the movements of those who inhabit it (Acarón, 2016,

p. 145). In the aftermath of the January 25 Revolution, Tahrir Square became sticky—

saturated with affect (Ahmed, 2004b, p. 11)—as the result of the "sticking together" of

this space with political protests and the "circles of hell" (cf. Ahmed, 2004a, p. 136). This

affective entanglement ultimately served political ends, as it was used to send a

"message, aiming to scare people and shame the girls that demonstrate" (Sally Zohney,

cited in El-Nadeem et al., 2013, p. 17).

More generally, instances of public sexual violence that have become regular—

and hence another form of ritual—during Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha affectively connect

downtown Cairo, the celebration of religious holidays, and collective sexual

harassment.[88] Such sticky associations intensify the affects of fear and shame already

attached to women's bodies in public space, as illustrated in narratives like Meagan's

(2015), an expat woman who suffered a collective sexual assault during Eid al-Adha of

2011. Her account of the events—from the moment she was surrounded and attacked by a

group of men on Qasr al-Nil bridge to the instant when another group of men drove the

assailants out using their belts—was punctuated with expressions of gendered shame like

"I was so stupid."[89] As if the mere act of venturing on the streets—particularly in

downtown Cairo—during the Eid constituted reckless behavior, she confided to me: "I'm

embarrassed to tell the story more than anything because I should have never done that."

The sharing of accounts of public sexual violence through formal and informal channels

of communication contributes to the circulation of messages that render public space a

dangerous place for women, thus reinforcing its affective charge.

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[88]　Such connections are explicitly addressed in the media by means of articles that seasonally warn about these areas (see, for example, Egypt Independent, 2017).

[89]　In her research on battered women, Viveka Enander (2010) regards feeling and labeling oneself stupid as an expression of gendered shame with connotations of "being at fault, blameworthy, irrational, or simply unintelligent" (p. 7).

The Circulation of Fear and its Spatial Effects

Egyptian women's testimonies attest to the multiplication and intensification of everyday instances of public sexual violence in the aftermath of the January 25 Revolution following the disappearance of the police from the streets (Tadros, 2013a, p. 21).[90] "After the Revolution happened, the neighborhood totally changed," recalled Meagan (2015), who was living in Mohandeseen at the time, "I used to walk for fifteen minutes to the gym and it became impossible, I had motorcycles on more than one occasion running into me just for fun [and] harassment skyrocketed." The prison break of Wadi el-Natrun and three other jails on January 29, 2011 exacerbated Cairenes' sense of insecurity, as rumors about the presence of armed gangs of criminals and looters circulated across the city (Fayed & Saleh, 2011; Saleh, 2011; Tisdall, 2011). In response to these perceived threats, many neighborhoods created "popular committees" (sing. *lagna shaʿbiyya*), made up of mostly young men who were responsible for the protection of the area (Mossallam, 2011; Reuters, 2011; El-Meehy, 2015).[91] Such extraordinary measures, however, did not appease people's anxieties regarding personal safety, nor did they reduce the possibility of public sexual harassment and assault. "I felt unsafe only after the Revolution," long-term Cairo resident Kisa (2015) told me, "it gave people the green light: if you're not happy do whatever you want because nobody cares." In the

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[90] Women participants in focus groups organized by Tadros (2013a) in Cairo, the Delta and Upper Egypt identified a substantial increase in public sexual harassment after the January 25 Revolution, as perpetrators became "more emboldened than ever to go beyond the passing comments about their beauty to making sexually explicit comments about women's body parts, making sexual advances and molesting women by touching parts of their bodies" (p. 21).

[91] While most of these popular committees disappeared with the return of the police, other became more than just neighborhood watches and, after the eighteen revolutionary days, continued to organize at the local level for community development and reform (Mossallam, 2011; El-Meehy, 2015).

rapidly changing situation of post-Revolution Egypt, images and stories of violence traveled swiftly through social contact and in the media, affectively transforming women's perceptions of public space in ways that dramatically altered their spatial practices.

Direct and indirect experiences of violence, feminist geographers remark, are instrumental to the "management of fear in daily life" (Pain, 1997, p. 236), as they contain specifications of place, time, people, and other details that constitute the cues based on which assessments of safety and danger are made, and can be "learned, shared, and refined" (Merry, 1981, p. 10) to actualize "images of dangerous environments" (Valentine, 1992, p. 24). Besides first-hand experiences, second- and third-hand accounts are considered reliable sources of information because their origin is known and trusted. Closely related to these narratives—to the point that it is often difficult to differentiate between them—are rumors. This form of interpersonal communication is characterized by its "infectious quality," as it rapidly spreads within and across social networks (Das, 2007, p. 100). The force of rumors is that, regardless of whether what they describe has taken place or not, they are bestowed with credibility, if not by past experience then by deep-seated anxieties about social relations. Rumors are a "source of 'folk wisdom'" that, together with indirect experience shared through informal networks, represent an important source of information that women mobilize to handle danger in their daily lives (Smith, 1985, p. 246). At the same time, however, the circulation of accounts of violence facilitates the *socialization of fear,* as episodes of public sexual violence are vicariously and affectively experienced at a distance by their audiences (Valentine, 1992, p. 27), prompting—by proxy—the preemptive and anticipatory adoption of safety measures, the

intensification of paternal and marital control over women's movements, and the abandonment of public space.

An example of these dynamics can be found in the proliferation of news about assaults—sexual and otherwise—and attempted rapes perpetrated by cab drivers in the period that followed the January 25 Revolution. Similar stories predated Mubarak's ouster and have been part of the popular imaginary since the early 2000s, when rumors of a serial killer driving a cab in the upper-middle-class suburb of Heliopolis circulated by email among Cairo residents (De Koning, 2009, p. 131).[92] In the post-Revolution period, "narratives of danger" (Phadke et al., 2011, p. 50) involving cab drivers multiplied, and circulated profusely through formal and informal channels of communication, effectively deterring many women from using this means of transportation.[93] "After the Revolution I'm scared to go on a taxi, I just go if I have to," commented Kisa (2015) citing "stories [she had] read or heard." Second-hand experiences of violence have an even more dramatic impact on women's mobility, as illustrated by Meagan's (2015) account:

> My best friend, she has left Egypt now, but she lived here for six years, fluent Arabic speaker, Egyptian husband, totally knew her way around … [S]he was going from Garden City to Maadi in the evening and she got in a taxi, and she said that [the moment] she got in she had a weird feeling about it, like something was not right, but it was the only taxi she could find and, you know, it was late. And she tells him the way to go and he goes the wrong way. And she [says] "where are you going?" and he mumbles something about a shortcut, and she is like "this is not a shortcut, stop the car, what are you doing, what are you doing." Finally he pulled over and she actually at this point had no idea where she was, and he pulled over and said "I have something to show you" and he pulled a giant

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[92] As De Koning (2009) remarks, the rumor contained some 'truth,' as a woman had been indeed murdered by a cab driver (p. 132). However, the culprit had been detained and no other crimes followed.

[93] "Narratives of danger," Phadke et al. (2011) remark, "draw on particular 'events' of violence, assault and rape which then have implications even for those women who are not directly involved in them" (p. 50).

knife and he stole everything … After my husband heard that story, ohhh no more taxis for Meagan. There is just no way.[94]

Such anecdotes "fit in with a larger repertoire" of episodes that tap into class-based anxieties regarding upper-middle-class women's encounters with working-class men (De Koning, 2009, p. 140), revealing how class and gender interact to shape fear in public space (Day, 1999, p. 307). The repeated narration of similar stories intensifies these apprehensions. "I have never taken a taxi because my husband would not let me, he's concerned about safety," remarked Jana (2015), a German woman who moved to the desert town of New Cairo in 2012. "I don't know anyone personally who's experienced anything with a taxi, but just having read stuff in the Internet, in Facebook, it's scary," echoed US expat Ratna (2015). These and other similar stories, she admitted, prompted her and her husband to hire a full-time driver at Ratna's disposal—a privilege that few women in Cairo can afford—and to rent an apartment in a gated community in New Cairo upon their arrival in the city, in 2015: "Just having read a lot of things in the newspapers, and having seen a lot of things on TV, safety was the … top thing that we considered," she emphasized. Fear discourses such as these "make" the borders that separate safe from dangerous, proper from deviant, order from disorder (Ahmed, 2004b, p. 67), and provide the rationale under which some Cairo residents feel compelled to isolate themselves from the rest of the city—to literally wall themselves off (Ellin, 1997, p. 32).

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[94]   References to whether the protagonist of the story knew Arabic or was familiar with the city are important, as they position her as "street savvy" and therefore not an easy victim (Riger & Gordon, 1981, pp. 83-84). These rhetorical devices—as well as others that specify what the person was wearing, the time of the day or place—serve the audience to confer responsibility and to "evaluate their own spatial movements and hence vulnerability" (Valentine, 1992, p. 27).

Gated communities—enclosed and access-controlled upscale residential enclaves—started to proliferate in the new towns built in the desert around Cairo under the auspices of the Mubarak regime in the mid-1990s (Mitchell, 1999, p. 29; Kuppinger, 2004, p. 43). Compounds like El Rehab, where Kisa lives, feature several shopping malls, in addition to language schools, clinical and medical services, religious buildings, sports and social clubs, so residents rarely need to leave their premises (see Images 2 and 3).[95] "Nowadays I don't like to go out of Rehab unless I'm with somebody," noted Kisa, "I don't feel safe." When they do go out, most residents take a number of protective measures, such as driving their private cars or relying on the compound's cab service, what allows them to avoid public space almost altogether (El-Baramawy, 2015; Kisa, 2015).[96] Those who walk across urban areas adopt additional defensive actions, like German expat and resident of the gated community Katameya Heights Anneliese (2015), who confided to me that she always kept a *taser* in her car and carried it "as a precaution" whenever she ventured into the city on her own—even for a short walk to a restaurant in the upper-class neighborhood of Zamalek. [97] Thus, as critical urban studies scholars

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[95] El Rehab has a surface of ten million square meters for a planned population of 200,000 inhabitants (see El Rehab's website at http://www.alrehabcity.com/rehab2011/). While less impressive in its features than other gated communities, this compound is still considered to be an improvement over central Cairo by guaranteeing an electricity network that ensures "a constant and uniform electric current," sewage that "can also drain rain" and a water system that pumps drinking water "to everyone, including residents of the highest floors." Many of these enclaves function as "collective consumption clubs" (Webster, 2002, p. 397) that provide a series of benefits—enhanced security, no overcrowding, etc.—residents are willing to pay for. Gating enables these differentiated services to exist by restricting their enjoyment to members and their guests, and preventing free-riding (Smith Bowers & Manzi, 2006).

[96] Private cars promise "control, protection, and absolute freedom of movement" in opposition to the "forced proximity and possible harassment" of public transportation (De Koning, 2009, p. 150). Yet the protection provided by the car is precarious, as El-Baramawy (2015) pointed out in our conversation, sharing an episode whereby "a guy threw himself on the hood of the car and he was licking the glass in front of me."

[97] The Katameya Heights Golf & Tennis Resort in New Cairo is located on the busy Ring Road, between the suburbs of Heliopolis and Maadi. This luxury compound extends over an area of 1.5 million square meters of lavish greenery, water fountains and empty streets. An extra membership allows residents unlimited use of the golf course, where enthusiasts of this sport can practice and play in solitude or join

emphasize, exclusionary segmentation and spatial segregation produce rather than diminish fear, notably by facilitating the proliferation of negative stereotypes and distrust vis-à-vis those beyond the walls (Caldeira, 1996: 324; Blakely & Snyder, 1997, p. 95; Ellin, 1997, p. 42; Marcuse, 1997, p. 102).

Image 2: Access to the gated community El Rehab, seen from inside. Picture by the author.

a group to hit the green in company (see Katameya Heights' website at http://www.katameyaheights.com/home.html).

Image 3: Interior of the gated community Katameya Heights. Picture by the author.

Gated communities deploy a profusion of security technologies, including access control, personnel on the ground patrolling the compound's streets around the clock, and video surveillance, features that stand out in stark contrast to the absence of police forces in Cairo's public spaces in the months and years that followed the January 25 Revolution. The "informal zoning" (Mitchell, 2003, p. 213) that results from the uneven securitization of these different urban spaces functions as a mechanism of "spatial governmentality" (Merry, 2001) that "exclud[es] potential criminal acts from segregated spaces, leaving the rest of the city to watch out for itself" (Zukin, 2003, p. 145). While a minority of Egyptians and foreigners can afford to enclose themselves in these "islands of well-maintained urban areas," the lives of those who stay in the city core are made more precarious as they try to survive in "a sea of completely neglected" neighborhoods as a result of the state's disinvestment and the failure of governance in the city (Ibrahim, 2015; see also Caldeira, 1996, p. 319; Blakely & Snyder, 1997, p. 97; Ellin, 1997, p.

40).[98] At the same time, and at another level, upper- and upper-middle-class women's increasing adoption of strategies of evasion further marginalizes those women who continue to inhabit public space. As a result, women in the city are rendered simultaneously more vulnerable and more alienated, facilitating the articulation of discourses that figure women's bodies in public space as *at risk* and *a risk,* a question I turn to in the next chapter.

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[98]   This trend has been exacerbated by El-Sisi's efforts to reactivate Mubarak's vision of a "new capital" in the desert (Kingsley, 2015), a development I discuss in the conclusions.

Chapter Two

Women At/As Risk

> Women without men in the city symbolise the menace of
> disorder in all spheres once rigid patriarchal control is
> weakened. That is why women—perhaps unexpectedly—
> have represented the mob, the 'alien', the revolutionary.
> – Elizabeth Wilson, *The sphinx in the city,* 1991.

A Past Without Public Sexual Violence?

In my conversation with musician Yasmine El-Baramawy (2015), she evoked a

past time—sometime between the 1960s and the 1970s—when women wore "short skirts

and no sleeves" in Cairo. According to El-Baramawy, the cultural productions of the

period as well as her grandmother's and mother's accounts attest to a time when "if

something happens to a girl, people will defend her." In the course of my fieldwork and

in many of my interviews with activists and women living in Cairo, I encountered almost

identical references to a not too distant past when women strolled through the Egyptian

capital without fear of sexual intrusions. In very similar terms, HarassMap's Safe Areas

Unit Manager, Ahmed Hegab (2015), shared his mother's memories of a time when she

would "go to the street with a mini skirt and very classy and casual clothes, and no one

would stop her to say something and no one would touch her."[99] Contrary to Peoples'

(2008) theses, discussed in chapter one, Hegab did not link the emergence of public

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[99] Not all of my respondents adhered to this narrative, however. As HarassMap's Safe Areas Coordinator
and WenDo trainer Kamilia el-Kady (2015a) remarked, her mother recalled wearing dresses in public
but she also remembered how young men attempted to unzip them. According to El-Kady, the only
difference between now and then was that in the past "[women] didn't dare to say that there is
harassment, but now we dare to say it."

sexual harassment to structural unemployment and changes in the patriarchal family but to another set of socio-economic transformations that ensued under the rule of president Anwar Sadat (1970-1981). The increase of male migration to the Gulf in the 1970s and the 1980s, he noted, led to the introduction in Egypt of a Salafi ideology that, imported by the returned guest workers, propounded more conservative views of family and gender relations.[100] According to Hegab, the popularization of Salafi satellite television channels in the mid-2000s contributed to the expansion of these views among Egyptians across the socio-economic spectrum and spread a discourse that was hostile to women's occupation of public space.[101] This origin story of public sexual harassment is particularly popular among the secular elite, as it imagines a cosmopolitan—and relatively gender-egalitarian—past when the Egyptian capital participated of an idealized Western modernity, only to see its promising future shattered by the proliferation of Islamist and Salafi ideas.[102]

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[100] Following large-scale unemployment in the late 1970s, migration to the Gulf and other oil-producing countries became an attractive alternative for lower-middle class Egyptian men (Gran, 1977, p. 6; Aulas, 1982, pp. 14-15). The Gulf crisis of 1990-1991 prompted the return to Egypt of a large number of temporary migrants (Abdalla, 1991, p. 19). Despite widespread interpretations of Egyptian Salafism as a "Saudi import" (Field & Hamam, 2009, p. 3), religious scholars see this trend as the result of "Saudi (and other) influences" onto endemic developments "*within* the Egyptian religious establishment" (Gauvain, 2010, p. 805).

[101] Salafi satellite TV stations are thematic channels focused on prayer recitation and readings from the Qurʾan. They feature popular Salafi-oriented preachers who deliver sermons advocating restrictive views on women and gender relations. Salafi satellite TV stations were licensed to operate in Egypt in 2006 in what political commentators saw as an attempt by the Mubarak regime to counter the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood, which had secured a fifth of the seats in the 2005 parliamentary elections (Field & Hamam, 2009, p. 1).

[102] Similar comments linking the rise of public sexual harassment in Cairo to the increase of Islamic religious conservatism in the 1980s are reported by Ilahi's (2009) informants (p. 64). This argument resonates with a nostalgic vision of Egypt that ultimately idealizes its colonial past, when the country was under Ottoman/Khedival and British rule (De Koning, 2009, p. 96). As an example of this viewpoint, the Facebook page "Observation on Woman and Egyptian Society Prior to the Wahhabi Invasion and the Hijab and Niqab Obsession" compiles photographs of an era—approximately between the 1920 and the 1970s—when, according to the site, "the latest fashions arrived to Egypt before Paris." The Facebook page encourages Egyptians to send family pictures and other images portraying this version of the past. See https://www.facebook.com/Egypt.without.hejab (in Arabic).

In this chapter, I draw on historical, sociological, and anthropological scholarship on Egypt to contest these narratives and elaborate a theoretical framework that situates public sexual violence against women at the center of strategies of sexual governmentality aimed at controlling women's bodies and sexuality by regulating their movement through, and behavior in, public space. When I use the term *sexual governmentality,* I build upon Michel Foucault (2007) to describe the "ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics" that are used to govern sexual conduct (p. 108).[103] Under the broad rubric of *government* or *governmentality,* Foucault's later work studied the "processes and techniques that are used in different institutional contexts to operate on the behavior of individuals, taken individually or as a group—to shape, to direct, to modify their manner of conducting themselves" (Florence, 1988, p. 15).[104] According to Foucault (1982), power was not exercised by means of direct action exerted on bodies and things but, instead, it was brought to bear upon the actions of an "acting subject" (p. 220). Power relations, he remarked, could only be exercised "over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free" (Foucault, 1982, p. 221).[105] Governmentality thus required a "versatile equilibrium" between what he called *techniques of domination,* geared towards dictating the conduct

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[103] Foucault discussed the notion of "governmentality" for the first time in his Lectures at the Collège de France of 1977-1978. This concept was defined by the French philosopher as a "very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security" (Foucault, 2007, p. 102). While Foucault's analysis is centered around the study of forms of government and population management particular to 17th-18th century Europe, this term acquired a life of its own after the publication of one of Foucault's lectures in Burchell, Gordon, and Miller (1991). My take on this notion builds upon the idea of "conduct of conduct" to examine the deployment of a series of mechanisms aimed at governing sexual conduct (Senellart, 2007, p. 389; Miller & Rose, 2008, p. 108).

[104] Foucault (1982) understood *government,* building upon the broad meaning that this term had in 16th century Europe, to designate "the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed: the government of children, of souls, of communities, of families, of the sick" (p. 221).

[105] *Freedom,* in Foucault (1982), has a meaning closer to *agency,* understood as "a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments may be realized" (p. 221; see Garland, 1997, pp. 196-197 for a discussion of this question).

of individuals, and *techniques* (or *technologies) of the self* directed to self-construction and -transformation (Foucault, 1993, p. 204).[106] The latter were, as the French philosopher explained in a lecture at Dartmouth College,

> techniques which permit individuals to effect, by their own means, a certain number of operations on their own bodies, on their own souls, on their own thoughts, on their own conduct, and this in a manner so as to transform themselves, modify themselves, and to attain a certain state of perfection, of happiness, of purity, of supernatural power, and so on (Foucault, 1993, p. 203).

Feminist engagements with governmentality have identified gendered and sexual subjectivities as a crucial "contact point" where the government of others and the government of the self interact (Larner, 2003, p. 512; Clough, 2007, p. 19; Crowley & Kitchin, 2008, p. 355; Hasso, 2011, p. 39; cf. Foucault, 1993, p. 203).[107] The control and shaping of gender relations and sexual practices is accomplished by means of a tightly-knit "grid of discipline, reform and self-regulation" enacted by a multiplicity of actors through a diversity of techniques in a wide array of locales (Crowley & Kitchin, 2008, p. 355). While such projects have been historically linked to—or have intensified during—state-led processes of modernization and nation building (Crowley & Kitchin, 2008, p. 355; Hasso, 2011, p. 40), state authorities are only part of the equation. Power relations, Foucault remarked, have become increasingly governmentalized—and thus "elaborated, rationalized, and centralized in the form of, or under the auspices of, state institutions"

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[106] Disciplinary power—the focus of his examination of asylums and prisons—is for the late Foucault (1993) only "one aspect of the art of governing people in our society" (p. 204). As he argued in a lecture delivered at Dartmouth College in 1980, "[p]ower consists in complex relations: these relations involve a set of rational techniques, and the efficiency of those techniques is due to a subtle integration of coercion technologies and self-technologies" (Foucault, 1993, p. 2014).

[107] In his latter interventions, Foucault identified the study of subjectification—"the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects" (Foucault, 1982, p. 208)—as central to his work. His examination revolved around the double meaning of the word (*subject*) as both "subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge" (Foucault, 1982, p. 212).

(Foucault, 1982, p. 224)—but remain grounded on, and embedded into, social networks. The deployment of governmental practices has also a marked spatial character, as it endeavors to produce particular subjectivities within the home, in the workplace and in public space through a dynamic interplay of "proscription and prescription" (Crowley & Kitchin, 2008, p. 367). In the public realm, women's bodies have become a privileged site of social intervention in an attempt to prevent sexual—and urban—disorder (Crowley & Kitchin, 2008, p. 367). The techniques of government aimed at maintaining social order through the *conduct of women's conduct* in public space are not the exclusive prerogative of the state but require the active collaboration of a multiplicity of political, religious, social and familial authorities through the diffuse deployment of "countless, often competing, local tactics" (Miller & Rose, 2008, p. 55). Likewise, they depend on women's adoption and cultivation of modes of self-regulation in response to—and resulting into—a constant "modulation of moods, capacities, affects, and potentialities" in public space (Clough, 2007, p. 19).

In what follows, I adopt a historical approach to examine the development of mechanisms of sexual governmentality in 19th century Egypt, with a particular focus on the governmentalization of virginity and the disciplining of the body of the public woman—the prostitute, the political activist. Drawing on Fatima Mernissi's (1987 [1975]) scholarship, I identify a range of practices that position women in public space as simultaneously *at risk* and *a risk,* and analyze the *at risk/as risk juncture* as a technique of government that serves to justify, while rendering inevitable, public sexual violence

against women.[108] I locate the emergence of public sexual harassment in Cairo in the late

19th and early 20th century as a conservative response to the erosion of seclusion and strict

gender segregation amidst processes of state formation, urbanization, rural-urban

migration, and nation-building, and trace the persistence of these practices during the 20th

century, under the regimes of Gamal Abdel Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak. In the second

part of the chapter, I examine the imbrication of gendered constructions of risk with

idea(l)s of masculinity and femininity, and conclude by discussing the social and political

currency of the *at risk/as risk juncture* in the aftermath of the January 25 Revolution.

Sexual Governmentality and Public Space

The control over women's bodies and sexuality is central to the maintenance of

social order in patriarchal societies (Mernissi, 1987 [1975], p. 27; see also Hatem, 1986b;

Ilkkaracan, 2002). In Egypt, the appropriate order of bodies was secured, until the late

19th and early 20th century, through a system of gender segregation instituted prior to the

Islamic conquest (Hatem, 1986b, p. 253; Badran, 1995, p. 48).[109] This spatial

configuration governed women's mobility and gender interactions along the lines of class

(Hatem, 1986b, p. 253; Thompson, 2003, p. 56). Upper- and middle-class women lived

secluded in the harem and veiled their faces on the seldom occasions they went out,

thereby minimizing their contact with unrelated men (Hatem, 1986b, p. 261; Badran,

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[108] I understand *practices,* drawing on Foucault, "simultaneously as a mode of acting and thinking, which provide the key of intelligibility to the correlative constitution of the subject and the object" (Florence, 1988, p. 15).

[109] This system was established following the sedentarization of tribal groups in the region (Hatem, 1986b, p. 253). Judaic, Greek and Byzantine societies similarly created systems of gender segregation during that period (Hatem, 1986b, p. 253; Badran, 1995, p. 5).

1995, p. 4).[110] Among the urban poor and the peasantry, gender relations were not so strictly regulated, as women worked inside and outside of the home as peasants, midwives, peddlers, servants and unskilled laborers, and peasant women did not veil in the fields (Hatem, 1986b, p. 263; Badran, 1995, p. 4). Despite their greater mobility, lower-class women had to routinely produce legitimate reasons to be in public, and their conduct was closely monitored by their families as well as by the community at large (Hatem, 1986b, p. 263; Badran, 1995, p. 5; Kozma, 2011, p. xxii).[111] While seclusion and segregation were neither ordained by Islam nor observed by women of all socioeconomic backgrounds, these practices were nevertheless "upheld as a Muslim ideal," socially valued and, when possible, enforced (Hatem, 1986b, p. 256; Badran, 1995, p. 5). The preservation of women's sexual purity until marriage was a matter of collective interest, as women's virginity was linked to family honor (Badran, 1995, p. 5). As Liat Kozma (2011) argues, honor functioned as an "organizing concept" that connected the individual with the community and established the moral framework that governed social interactions, so that an offense against one's honor was an offense against the community that threatened the foundation of social life (p. 100).[112]

Within this context, sexual crimes were seen as a "source of unrest" that needed to be neutralized through the regulation and control of sexuality (ZeʾEvi, 2001, p. 233).

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[110] While Egypt was a province of the Ottoman empire, between 1517 and 1867, the upper-class Mamluk elite possessed houses that functioned like "autonomous entities" and allowed their inhabitants to conduct much of their lives within the confines of their residences (Hanna, 1996, p. 151). Upper-class women did leave the harem to visit friends and family, go to the baths or to the cemetery, and on ceremonial occasions (Fay, 1998, p. 135). Upper-middle and middle-class households had a similar structure and women of these classes were also subjected to seclusion and veiling in public (Hatem, 1986b, p. 261).

[111] Among these legitimate reasons was the development of their work activities, attendance to religious festivals and visits to the cemetery (Hatem, 1986b, p. 263).

[112] As anthropologists of the Middle East have amply examined, honor is translated in Arabic using different words, each with its particular connotations: *Sharaf* implies rank and prestige and is generally held by a masculine subject, while *ʿird* means good repute, commonly refers to women's sexual conduct and can only be lost or redeemed (Baron, 2006, p. 1).

Under Ottoman rule, rape was treated as an "usurpation of property" and thus courts

granted a monetary compensation (*diya,* or blood price) to those women who could

demonstrate they had been raped (Sonbol, 1996, p. 285).[113] Rape was seen as a private

matter that only concerned the authorities if the parties involved demanded their

intervention, and most cases were settled informally between families (Sonbol, 1997, p.

221). Growing state centralization under the rule of Muhammad ʿAli and his heirs,

between 1805 and 1892, had wide-ranging effects on the regulation of women's sexuality,

as the central administration progressively encroached upon matters that had been

previously regulated by customary law (Kozma, 2011, pp. 13-14).[114]

Following the adoption of the Sultanic Code in 1855, premarital defloration was

considered a violation of honor (*hatk ʿird*), and as such became a locus of state

intervention (Fahmy, 1998, p. 61; Kozma, 2011, p. 103).[115] The state's involvement in

areas previously managed by the family and the community did not translate into more

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[113] Under *sharīʿa* law rape fell under the category of *zina* (fornication, or extralegal sexual intercourse) and was a *ḥudūd* crime (Sonbol, 1997, pp. 215-217). *Hudūd* crimes were those "pertaining to God—hence the community at large—and as such [could] not be reduced, increased, changed, or commuted by anyone" (Sonbol, 1997, pp. 216-217). In Ottoman Egypt, however, the dominant Hanafi school of jurisprudence privileged marriage and the payment of a compensation in case of rape, and limited the cases in which rapists were physically punished (Sonbol, 1997, p. 217).

[114] Muhammad ʿAli was an Albanian officer who participated in the Anglo-Ottoman expeditionary forces sent to Egypt to combat the French troops in 1801 (Al-Sayyid-Marsot, 1984, p. 23). After four years of fights against the weakened Mamluk factions, he became *wali* of Egypt in 1805. Under his rule, Egypt increased its autonomy from Istanbul, created a conscripted army, developed a civil bureaucracy, and adopted major legal and medical reforms. In 1841, Muhammad ʿAli declared himself *khedive* (viceroy) of Egypt and secured hereditary rule for his family. After he died in 1849, his heirs Ibrahim (1848), ʿAbbas (1848-1854), Saʿid (1854-1863), Ismaʿil (1863-1879), and Tawfiq (1879-1892) continued the process of modernization of the state and the integration of the Egyptian economy into the global economic system.

[115] The Sultanic Code was an adaptation of the Ottoman Penal Code of 1851 to the Egyptian context (Baer, 1963, p. 32). The Ottoman Penal Code, as part of the Tanzimat legislation, combined Enlightenment principles with Islamic legal philosophy and Ottoman legal tradition, and as such conceived honor as an individual right that required protection (Kozma, 2011, p. 101). In Egypt, however, a violation of honor (*hatk ʿird)* was interpreted*,* following widely-held understandings of the term, as a violation of women's honor (Kozma, 2011, p. 101; see also Peters, 1997, p. 81). As Kozma (2011) notes, this interpretation was "foreign to the spirit" of the Ottoman law, based on the French Code of 1810 (p. 103).

protection for women, but rather led to a displacement of traditional modes of social control by a newly formed medical, legal, and judicial bureaucracy that attempted to enforce a monopoly over the protection and punishment of women (Baron, 2006, p. 2). Under the new code, for example, a woman could file a defloration case and demand monetary compensation for the loss of her virginity but also risked being convicted for violating *her own* honor if it could not be proven that she was a virgin prior to the fact or if the *majlis* ruled that she had lost her virginity "with her consent and without coercion" (Kozma, 2011, pp. 99 & 102).[116] This consideration reinforced the idea that a woman's hymen was "jointly owned" by herself, her family and the community (Ruiz, 2005, p. 222).

The pivotal role that women's bodies and sexuality played in these processes was informed by what Fatima Mernissi (1987 [1975]) termed the "double theory of sexual dynamics" (p. 32). For this author, Muslim societies are characterized by a contradiction between what she called an "explicit theory" that regards women as passive vis-à-vis men's aggressive interactions with them, and an "implicit theory" that posits women's sexuality as active and potentially disruptive (Mernissi, 1987 [1975], p. 32). The former presents women as constantly *at risk* of men's predatory sexuality outside of marriage. According to this theory, the institution of seclusion and the practice of segregation that prevailed in Egypt until the early 20th century served to reduce the risk of rape and,

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[116] Following the adoption of the Sultanic Code in 1855, homicides and violations of honor could no longer be handled between families or settled through the mediation of the *qāḍī,* but were to be tried by the Khedival *majālis* (sing. *majlis)* as well (Hunter, 2000, p. 149; see also Baer, 1977, p. 143; Fahmy, 1999a, pp. 263-264). The *majālis,* or councils, were administrative bodies that enforced the penal code, while Islamic law was applied by the *maḥākim* (sing. *maḥkim*), or *sharī'a* courts, presided by the *qāḍī* (Peters, 1997, pp. 72 & 75-77). In criminal matters, the *majālis* represented the interests of the state and judged criminal cases from the perspective of public order and security, while the *qāḍī* responded to the financial and punitive claims of the affected individuals (Peters, 1997, p. 70; Fahmy, 1999a, pp. 263-264).

specifically, of economic loss brought about by the "theft" of women's virginity.[117]

Within this logic, survivors of rape and/or their families had to be compensated

commensurate with the woman's value in the socio-economic order.[118] On the other hand,

the latter theory—best represented in the work of Imam Al-Ghazali—imagines women as

a risk for society, a "destructive element in the Muslim social order" (Mernissi, 1987

[1975], p. 33).[119] The Islamic notion of *fitna*—chaos provoked by sexual disorder and

initiated by women (Mernissi, 1987 [1975], p. 31)—captures the unruly effects that

unbridled female sexuality could unleash. In the course of the 19th and until the early 20th

century, fear of women's seductive power upheld the imperative of modesty through

veiling, and justified the maintenance of seclusion and segregation in Egypt. The tension

between these two coexisting figures—the *woman at risk* vs. the *woman as risk*—is at the

center of the legal apparatus that regulates women's status in Egyptian society, the

personal status laws (cf. Mernissi, 1987 [1975], p. 19).[120] Less visibly, perhaps, this

dichotomy animated an array of mechanisms of sexual governmentality deployed to

conduct women's conduct in public space.

A case in point is the governmentalization of women's virginity in the course of

the 19th century, as premarital defloration came to be considered an "act that undermined

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[117] As Kozma (2011) remarks, virginity was "legally and socially significant" and its loss had a direct impact on a woman's marital prospects (p. 40).

[118] According to Sonbol (1997), under Ottoman rule the compensation for rape varied depending on the religion of the rapist, whether the woman was a minor or an adult, if she was a virgin, a free woman or a slave, etc. (p. 221).

[119] Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1058-1111) was a renowned philosopher, theologian, jurist, and mystic of Sunni Islam (for a discussion of his thought in the fields of philosophy, ethics, law, and mysticism, see Moosa, 2005).

[120] Personal status laws were not an unmediated reflection of *sharīʿa* law but resulted from *talfiq,* the patching of Western laws with interpretations of the different Islamic schools of jurisprudence regarding family relations (Sonbol, 1996, p. 277; El Alami, 1994, p. 116; Cuno, 2009, p. 17-18). In these laws, the institutions of polygamy and repudiation, the prohibition of *zina,* and the guarantees of paternity were, according to Mernissi (1987 [1975]), designed as "a defence against the disruptive power of female sexuality" (p. 45).

the authority of the state and its ability to maintain urban security" (Fahmy, 1998, p. 61).

The administration of virginity checks to unmarried girls and women—a practice

traditionally performed by midwives (sing. *daya*) and *shaykhs*' wives as part of the

"community's surveillance of women's premarital conduct" (Kozma, 2011, p. 39)—

became institutionalized with the introduction of the figure of the *hakima*. *Hakimas* were

female doctors trained following European medical standards that were stationed in every

urban health clinic and police station in the mid-19th century.[121] As part of their tasks,

they routinely examined girls seized by the police after escaping their homes to establish

whether their hymen was intact or damaged, and served as forensic experts in cases of

premarital defloration (Fahmy, 1998, p. 59; Kozma, 2011, p. 23).[122] Virginity checks had

legal implications, and served to determine women's status as *victims* or *perpetrators* in

violations of (family) honor. Medical reports were used to confirm or deny women's

accounts of sexual violence, and could lead to the absolution of the alleged rapist if the

hakima's report concluded that a woman had been "deflowered prior to the date of the

alleged assault" (Kozma, 2011, p. 40). Besides their role in the medical, legal and police

apparatus, *hakimas* integrated informal networks of surveillance and control and

"supplement[ed] midwives and *shaykhs*' wives as neighborhood guardians of female

conduct" (Kozma, 2011, p. 41). Ordinary Egyptians could resort to the services of the

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[121]   In 1832, the French doctor Antoine-Barthélemy Clot, later known as Clot Bey, founded the School of
Midwives to train female doctors in obstetrics, medicine, and surgery (Hatem, 1997, p. 69; Fahmy,
1998, p. 35). Clot Bey was appointed in 1825 by Muhammad ʿAli to reform the Egyptian medical
system and monitor the health of the army (Fahmy, 1998, p. 35). Within this framework, the *hakimas*
were meant to replace the traditional *dayas,* whom Clot Bey blamed for the high number of stillbirths
and abortions, a trend that posed a threat to the sustainability of Muhammad ʿAli's ambitious army
(Hatem, 1997, p. 72; Fahmy, 1998, p. 46).

[122]   An intact hymen was seen as proof of virginity while a damaged hymen was considered a
"unequivocal" evidence that penile-vaginal penetration had taken place, despite widespread
controversy regarding the validity of virginity checks in the religious and medical literature of the time
(Kozma, 2011, pp. 38-39).

hakimas to examine a family member, and use their virginity diagnosis to demand the bridewealth to the man responsible for the defloration or, conversely, to disown their female relative for "improper sexual behavior," thus validating these techniques of government (Fahmy, 1999b, p. 366; see also Kozma, 2011, p. 40).

Mechanisms of sexual governmentality aimed at regulating illicit sexual relations and controlling women's mobility affected disproportionately those women who routinely found themselves in public space.[123] Deemed potential agents of risk, women in public were the object of state and community surveillance and control. In particular, the body of the prostitute was subjected to close scrutiny and routinely disciplined. In the 18th century, the *wali* (governor) of Cairo kept a record of prostitutes, thieves and beggars (Tucker, 1985, p. 151), and an Ottoman law stated that a prostitute "could have her face blackened or smeared with dirt and be led through the streets sitting backwards on a donkey, holding its tail instead of its reins" (Tucker, 2008, p. 197).[124] The boundaries of prostitution were porous, and women "accused of licentiousness" could be tied to a horse's tail and dragged through the streets as well (Winter, 2003, p. 227).[125] In addition,

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[123] The Khedival state manifested a heightened concern for public security and the maintenance of order in urban space (Kozma, 2011, p. 7). In his quest for restoring order and security, Muhammad ʿAli reformed the police force and established posts in all quarters of the city (Abu-Lughod, 1971, p. 88). The police was used by the Khedival authorities to control and monitor the Egyptian population by means of the systematic recording of births and deaths, the creation of criminal records, the collection of statistics, etc. (Fahmy, 1999b, p. 375).

[124] Under Ottoman rule, prostitution was deemed immoral by the ʿulema (learned *sheikhs* of Islam) but tolerated by the authorities because it represented a source of tax revenue (Winter, 2003, p. 224). Women who worked as prostitutes were organized in a corporation or guild, registered with the police and paid taxes (Tucker, 1985, p. 151; Winter, 2003, p. 224-225; see also Al-Sayyid-Marsot, 1995, p. 108). While Ottoman courts imposed monetary fines in cases of consensual *zina* among adults, recurrent offenders—generally prostitutes—received harsher penalties, including flogging and public ridicule (Tucker, 2008, p. 197; Zeʾevi, 2001, p. 230).

[125] As Afaf Lutfi Al-Sayyid-Marsot (1995) notes, the chronicler Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti (1753-1825) described "any woman he saw doing something of which he disapproved (such as consorting with French or Ottoman soldiers) as a woman of ill-repute" (p. 120). In the aftermath of the French expedition to Egypt (1789-1801), the Egyptian women who had associated with the occupiers were the target of state repression. Following the departure of the French army, Zaynab al-Bakri—purportedly Napoleon's mistress—was executed for adultery (Hatem, 1986b, p. 267), while the daughter of Sheikh

it was not uncommon for the *wali* to extort women "discovered in a compromising situation," threatening to register them as prostitutes if they rejected to pay a certain sum of money (Tucker, 1985, p. 151). In the course of the 19th century, the body of the prostitute became the object of a multiplicity of mechanisms of surveillance and control. By the 1830s, prostitutes were seen by the Khedival authorities as a health hazard for the growing conscripted army and banned from Cairo, where troops and military schools were concentrated (Fahmy, 2002, p. 84).[126]

In the 1850s, the ban on prostitution was no longer in effect, but other forms of regulation were set in place (Tucker, 1985, p. 153; Toledano, 1990, p. 238). In particular, neighborhood *shaykhs*—notables responsible for reporting births and deaths as well as the arrival of strangers in a neighborhood—had the prerogative to control the residence, conduct and appearance of prostitutes in public space (Kozma, 2011, p. 93).[127] Acts of sexual immorality were considered a matter of public security for the state, which saw its authority undermined by these transgressions of appropriate behavior (Ruiz, 2005, p. 224). The brothel—associated with alcohol consumption and gambling—was seen as a space that threatened the peace of the city, and needed to be physically removed from the places where respectable people (*al-nas al-ahrar)* lived (Fahmy, 2002, p. 90). As part of

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Abdullah al-Sharqawi, imam of Al Azhar, was killed for socializing with French women, "going out unveiled, riding horses, and laughing in a loud voice" (Sonbol, 2000, p. 85).

[126] Clot Bey considered prostitution to be detrimental to the health and discipline of soldiers, and held prostitutes responsible for the spread of syphilis (Fahmy, 2002, p. 82). Following his advice, Muhammad ʿAli banned prostitutes and public female dancers from Cairo and other cities of Lower Egypt in 1834 (Tucker, 1985, p. 153; Van Nieuwkerk, 1996, p. 32; Kozma, 2011, p. 89; Fahmy, 2002, p. 77). Despite the ban, prostitutes continued to practice their trade in Cairo, albeit in an underground fashion (Tucker, 1985, p. 152; Toledano, 1990, p. 238; Fahmy, 2002, p. 80).

[127] Neighborhood *sheykhs* were part of the wide network of informants police officers relied on to maintain order in the territory (Kozma, 2011, p. 8; Fahmy, 1999b, p. 350). This "intricate web" of regular and irregular forces allowed the state to penetrate the urban fabric "in a more diffuse and subtle way" (Fahmy, 1999b, p. 350). Women offering sexual services needed the approval of the neighborhood *shaykh* before establishing their residence in the city (Kozma, 2011, p. 92). As a result of this "informal zoning," brothels were concentrated in certain neighborhoods of Cairo, such as the upper-class Azbakiyya and the lower-class Būlāq (Fahmy, 2002, p. 89; Kozma, 2011, p. 85).

their law and order approach, the authorities publicly harassed prostitutes as a means of intimidation and, in an admonitory way, "to deter others" (Kozma, 2011, p. 93).[128] The boundary between respectable and non-respectable women was not clearly delineated, and formal and informal modes of surveillance and control were commonly extended to all lower-class women whose everyday activities brought them to the streets (Kozma, 2011, p. 81).[129] The erosion of seclusion and strict gender segregation between the late 19th and early 20th century evidenced the necessity of new techniques of sexual governmentality to regulate women's increasing mobility and visibility in public space.

The "New Hobby" of Public Sexual Harassment

In the late 1890s, local papers reflected on the appearance of a "new hobby" whereby young men riding the Cairo tram ogled and harassed, both verbally and physically, the women who occupied the first-class mixed-gender cars (Barak, 2013b).[130] In 1898 this phenomenon had apparently become so widespread that the tram stop next to the Sunīyah girls' school had to be relocated to protect students from these sexual

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[128] With the introduction of criminal records in the 1850s, the state could keep a more accurate record of the name of prostitutes, and easily check whether they were first or repeated offenders (Fahmy, 1999b, p. 360). While the ban on prostitution was in force, women caught offering sexual services could be punished with fifty strokes for the first offense and with one-year imprisonment with forced labor for repeated offenses (Fahmy, 2002, p. 81).

[129] The 1880 Police Act cautioned policemen and neighborhood *shaykhs* that "prostitutes might pretend to be respectable women" and that brothels could be easily mistaken for regular homes (Kozma, 2011, p. 80). The distinction between respectable and non-respectable women was further complicated by the fact that, following the disruption of traditional networks of protection due to mass rural migration and military conscription as well as the abolition of slavery in 1877, many rural women and manumitted female slaves turned to prostitution for survival (Baer, 1968, p. 154; Tucker, 1979, p. 262; Fahmy, 2002, p. 84; Kozma, 2011, p. 96). In addition, by the mid-19th century it was common to identify female singers and dancers with prostitutes (Toledano, 1990, p. 237; Tucker, 1985, p. 151). In popular parlance, more generally, women's interactions with unrelated men and nonmarital sex were usually equated with prostitution (Kozma, 2011, p. 81).

[130] For Egyptian writers' remarks on women's preference for seating in first class with men, instead of using the tram's women-only compartment, see Barak (2013a, p. 159).

intrusions (Barak, 2013b).[131] At the end of the 19th century, Cairo was a modern city of broad boulevards and spacious squares (*midans*) modeled after Paris that offered novel possibilities for unregulated encounters between the genders (Baron, 2006, p. 14; Kozma, 2011, p. 79).[132] The arrival of large numbers of rural migrants and manumitted slaves—particularly after the abolition of slavery in 1877—favored new forms of sociality that posed a threat to the official vision of public morality and respectability.[133] Within this context, public sexual harassment emerged as a technique of sexual governmentality that effectively managed women's movements through the increasingly anonymous city by means of the modulation of risk in public space. The prevalence of public sexual harassment did not escape reformist writers like Qasim Amin (2000), who wrote:

> [W]atch [women] as they approach a group of coarse, ignorant men and notice the loud indecent expressions that they use with no consideration for these passers-by. Sometimes they bump up against her or touch her with their hands, although she has not made any suspicious movement that would cause them to accost her or arouse their repulsive actions (p. 132).[134]

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[131] This educational center, also known as Siyufia School, was opened by the *khedive* Ismaʿil in 1873 and was the first state primary school for girls in Cairo (Badran, 1991, p. 203; Russell, 2004, p. 104).

[132] Impressed by the Parisian boulevards during his visit to the French capital on the occasion of the Exposition Universelle of 1867, the *khedive* Ismaʿil devised a master plan of wide thoroughfares radiating from open spaces that was to be completed for the celebration of the inauguration of the Suez Canal in 1869 (Abu-Lughod, 1971, p. 110). Between 1867 and 1869, the *khedive* carried out the "Haussmannization of Cairo," a large and ambitious urban development project that transformed extensive parts of the city emulating Baron Haussmann's designs for Paris (Abu-Lughod, 1971, p. 110).

[133] Military conscription and labor in state projects, land confiscation and the burden of state taxation forced peasants off their land (Baer, 1968, p. 141; Tucker, 1979, p. 256). In other cases, families voluntarily moved to the cities to avoid recruitment in the army or corvée labor in public works projects (Tucker, 1979, p. 256). Between 1877 and 1899, about 20,000 slaves were manumitted by the official Bureaux of Manumission, while uncounted others were directly freed by their masters (Baer, 1968, p. 152; see also Cuno, 2003, p. 251).

[134] While not explicitly addressed, this encounter is charged with class tension in Amin's (2000) narrative. In his description, the (upper-class) veiled woman is escorted by a servant who, in a clear reversal of roles, "knows he has authority and is in charge" as "[h]e walks ahead and she follows." At the same time, the (probably lower-class) "coarse, ignorant men" feel confident enough to "humiliate" her, as they know that "she fears men and does not dare to chastise them" (Amin, 2000, p. 133). It was on the basis of this and other arguments that Amin presented veiling as a form of slavery and veiled women, regardless of their belonging to the upper classes, as enslaved.

Contrary to contemporary explanations, Amin (2000) identified veiling as the reason behind these "abominable language and atrocious actions" (p. 132).[135] According to him, veiled women were the object of these unwelcome sexual advances because "the veil and the silken wrap" were seen by men as "badges of ignorance and weakness and signs of gullibility" (Amin, 2000, p. 132.).[136] Unlike Amin, who advocated for the end of seclusion and veiling, leading nationalist intellectuals like Mustafa Kamil and Talʿat Harb opposed these changes, which they saw as a threat to the integrity of the family and the reproduction of the nation. The two leaders favored women's education but expressed their concern about the effect that the "loosening of restrictions on the circulation of women in society" could have on modesty and chastity (Cole, 1981, pp. 402-403).[137] Building upon this conservative stance, nationalist discourse appropriated family honor as the basis for national honor through a "familial-political metaphor" (Pollard, 2005, p. 11) that regarded Egyptian women as the mothers who "biologically and culturally" reproduced the nation and equated women's with the nation's honor (Baron, 2005, p.

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[135] In his book *Tahrir al-marʾa* (*The Liberation of Women*), published in 1899, Amin called for the abolition of veiling and the seclusion of women and criticized polygyny and the practice of arranged marriage, situating his critique within the framework of Islam (Cole, 1981, p. 392). He further developed these ideas in *al-Marʾa al-jadida* (*The New Woman*), published in 1900, where he adopted a more liberal position towards the emancipation of women (Cole, 1981, p. 393).

[136] Other references to public sexual harassment during this period similarly inscribed themselves within a nationalist narrative that measured Egypt's modernization through the status of women. For example, in 1929 the nationalist press reported that the wives of two visitors from the United States had been subjected to intensive "pinching" during a *mulid,* a festival that celebrates the birthday of a Sufi saint (Schielke, 2012, p. 117). Following this incident, nationalist commentators concerned with Egypt's international image called for the abolition of *mulids,* wary that practices considered backward and uncivilized could be used by the British occupiers as a justification for colonial rule (Schielke, 2012, p. 117).

[137] One expression of the anxieties that accompanied women's growing presence in public space was the so-called "marriage crisis" of the late 19th and early 20th century, sparked by a perceived increase in the number of bachelors in Egypt. While this trend mostly affected middle-class urban men, several writers and commentators blamed it on "educated women, who were too immodest and liberal to make honorable obedient wives and mothers" (Kholoussy, 2010, p. 2). The relaxation of arranged marriage and female seclusion, the argument went, had led to the "appearance of depraved women in public places" that subverted norms of active masculinity and passive femininity, thus hindering single men's ability to find suitable partners (Kholoussy, 2010, p. 56).

5).[138] Upper-class women took advantage of the moral authority that the maternal

metaphor conferred upon them to gain access to the public sphere and, on certain

occasions like the Ladies' Demonstrations of 1919, to public space (Baron, 2005, p. 5).[139]

However, the pervasive identification of honor with women's sexuality constrained the

repertoire of political acts available to them, and opened the way for the disciplining of

female political opponents—identified as a risk by the authorities of the independent

Egyptian state[140]—through the manipulation of their respectability, notably by associating

them with the practice of prostitution (Badran, 1991, p. 213; Baron, 2006, p. 15).[141]

The establishment of a nationalist-socialist regime under Gamal Abdel Nasser

after the 1952 Revolution brought about profound social and economic transformations,

but did not substantively challenge dominant narratives regarding women's place in

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[138] A case in point was the politicization of the rape of Egyptian women by British soldiers during the Revolution of 1919, presented by nationalist leaders as the "rape of the nation" to mobilize efforts against the colonial power (Baron, 2005, p. 45). The assaults were memorialized in protests in Cairo, and testimonies of the events were presented as "evidence of British misrule" by nationalist leader Saʿad Zaghloul at the Paris Peace Conference, in June of 1919 (Baron, 2005, p. 48).

[139] The Ladies' Demonstrations were a number of marches organized by feminist Huda Shaʿarawi and other upper-class Egyptian women in Cairo to protest the arrest and exile of several members of the Wafd Party, including Zaghloul, by the British authorities (Al-Sayyid-Marsot, 1979; Badran, 1987, p. 113; Baron, 2005, p. 107). Elite women active in the nationalist movement often presented themselves as "mothers of the nation" in their petitions to the British authorities and their appeals to the Egyptian public (Baron, 2005, p. 37). In particular, Safiyya Zaghloul, wife of the nationalist leader, skillfully mobilized the label of "mother of the Egyptians" during her husband's exile and after his death in 1927 (Baron, 2005, p. 136). According to Baron (2005), the family rhetoric had the double function of creating a sense of solidarity among Egyptians across class, race, ethnic, and religious lines, and instilling obedience from the masses (the "sons") to the nationalist leaders (the "fathers") (p. 145).

[140] Great Britain unilaterally granted Egypt independence in 1922 but retained control over defense issues, the Suez canal, the protection of foreign interests and minorities, and the Sudan (Brown, 1995, p. 107). In 1936, British and Egyptian authorities signed an Anglo-Egyptian treaty which recognized Egypt as an independent and sovereign country but maintained British troops in Egyptian territory (Botman, 1999, p. 27). Opposition to this military presence became increasingly militant during World War II and its aftermath, particularly from the Muslim Brotherhood and left-wing (mostly socialist and communist) groups (Botman, 1999, p. 28). British soldiers remained in the country until the Free Officers Movement's coup of 1952 (Pollard, 2005, p. 177).

[141] Baron (2005) has examined how nationalist women challenged the identification of honor with women's sexuality by avoiding the term ʿird when referring to national honor, while male nationalist leaders privileged this concept because of its popular appeal (p. 54). Several sources have documented authorities' attempts to tarnish the reputation of female figures deemed a threat to the government (Baron, 1994, pp. 19-20; Badran, 1991, p. 213).

public space in Egypt.[142] Progressive government measures in the fields of education,

employment and reproductive health benefited middle- and lower-class women, who took

advantage of the new educational opportunities and entered the labor force in great

numbers to take up clerical, teaching, and administrative posts in the burgeoning state

bureaucracy (Hatem, 1992, p. 232; Botman, 1999, p. 57).[143] This dynamic led to what

Mervat Hatem (1992) has described as *state feminism,* a "system of public patriarchy"

whereby women were "economically independent of their families, but dependent on the

state" for education, employment and social services (p. 233). Nasser's policies were not

aimed at achieving gender equality but at furthering socio-economic growth, and thus

women's public participation was subordinated to the development needs of the socialist

state (Botman, 1999, p. 52; Badran, 1991, p. 218). This tension was particularly manifest

with regard to the competing demands of production and reproduction.[144] Socio-

economic advances were neutralized by the maintenance of the discriminatory provisions

dictated by the personal status laws passed between the 1920s and the 1940s (Hatem,

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[142]   On July 23, 1952, the Free Officers Movement led a coup that overthrew king Farouq and declared the republic (Botman, 1999, p. 22). The 1956 Egyptian constitution proclaimed the equality of all Egyptians under the law regardless of gender, race, language or creed, and granted women the right to vote and hold public office (Badran, 1991, p. 216-217; Hatem, 1992, p. 232; Botman, 1999, p. 54). The fundamental law also guaranteed equality of opportunity and fair treatment of all employees with respect to work hours, salaries, benefits, etc. (Botman, 1999, p. 54).

[143]   Under Nasser, education became free of charge and primary education was made compulsory for boys and girls (Botman, 1999, p. 56). As a result, the number of women with primary and secondary education tripled and the number of female college students multiplied sixfold between 1960 and 1976 (Hatem, 1986a, p. 29). Aware of the detrimental effect that unplanned population growth could have on his development goals, Nasser promoted a population program that included, among others, the establishment of clinics providing family planning services for women (Fargues, 1997, p. 118). Between 1961 and 1969, women's participation in the labor force increased by 31.1 percent (Botman 1999: 72). According to Hatem (1986a), one-third of economically active women had clerical jobs and another third occupied technical and professional positions (p. 29).

[144]   The National Charter established that "children are the makers of the future and it is the obligation of our working generation to provide them with all that is necessary to successfully carry out that responsibility" (cited in Hatem, 1986a, p. 30). Despite the gender-neutral formulation, the regime's protective measures aimed at supporting Egyptians to juggle work and family responsibilities only targeted female workers, thus reinforcing the idea that women were the main childrearers (Hatem, 1986a, p. 30).

1986a, p. 30).[145] Despite several gestures that pointed at the possibility of reform (Najjar,

1988, p. 321), Nasser never reviewed these legal codes during his presidency, thus

encouraging women to become educated and integrate the labor force while maintaining

the "gender asymmetry" that existed within the family (Hatem, 1986a, p. 39; see also

Najjar, 1988, p. 321). This contradiction manifested itself most clearly in public space,

where state-sponsored ideas regarding women's participation in public life ordinarily

clashed with socially-entrenched beliefs about women's position in society (Botman,

1999, p. 60).[146] Women's growing presence in public space, unaccompanied as it was by

concomitant changes in social attitudes, was seen with ambivalence and faced diverse

forms of resistance.[147] Among them, public sexual harassment consolidated itself as "the

special sexual sport of the country" amidst rapid socio-economic transformations coupled

with a strict morality (Aldridge, 1969, p. 308; see also Nassif, 2010, p. 29). Within this

context, gendered notions of honor and shame retained their social and political valence,

and continued to be mobilized to discipline women political activists in detention as well

as in prison (Booth, 1987, p. 35; see also Botman, 1999, p. 68).[148] Rather than

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[145] Egyptian personal status laws were codified over the course of three decades through a number of legal codes, notably Law no. 25 of 1920 on maintenance (amended in 1929 to include some provisions on divorce), Law no. 56 of 1923 on the minimum age of marriage, Law 78 of 1931 on the organization of *sharīʿa* courts, Law no. 77 of 1943 on inheritance, and Law no. 71 of 1946 on testamentary bequests (Hatem, 1986a, pp. 26-28; El Alami, 1994, p. 116; Welchman, 2004, pp. 33-35; Hasso, 2011, pp. 54-55).

[146] In popular understandings, women's wages were considered "supplementary" to men's, while women's work at home continued to be seen as their main task and sole responsibility (Botman, 1999, pp. 72-73; see also Ibrahim, 1985, p. 296 & 298; Mohsen, 1985, p. 62).

[147] This ambivalence is visible in cinematographic productions like the comedy *My wife the Director General* (1966), where film director Fatin ʿAbd al-Wahab reflected popular considerations that regarded women's access to the job market as a source of men's disempowerment in public and private life (Shafik, 2007, p. 126). Similarly, the movie posters of the time often featured an "association between wanton female display and a corrupted (and corrupting) public space" (Houston, 2015, p. 381).

[148] Prisoners' memoirs of the time attest to the use of attempted and threatened rape as a form of torture, to sexual insults and innuendo, to forceful stripping and use of the toilet in front of male prison guards, to attempted and threatened forced miscarriage, to forced separation from a nursing child and to the threat of losing one's children (Booth, 1987, p. 37 & 40; Botman, 1999, p. 69).

"criminals," the Nasser regime considered these women "social deviants" who defied

socially accepted ideas of women's role and position in society (Booth, 1987, p. 35).

Anwar Sadat's Open-Door policy, or *infitah,* and his alliance with Islamist

groups—a strategy deployed to undo Nasser's economic and political legacy after his

death in 1970—rendered Egyptian women's presence in public space even more

precarious.[149] Increasing inflation and economic stagnation led to a sharp decline of the

standard of living of middle- and lower-class Egyptians and affected particularly women,

who were disproportionately employed in the public sector (Tucker, 1978, p. 3; Hatem,

1968a, p. 33).[150] Massive unemployment in the late 1970s prompted large-scale migration

of lower-middle class men to the Gulf and other oil-producing countries, forcing women

head of households into the workforce (Hatem, 1986a, p. 35; Badran, 1991, p. 224).[151]

Oblivious to this situation, the regime espoused a conservative discourse that discouraged

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[149]   Sadat was a member of the Free Officers Movement and Nasser's vice-president since 1964. He
became president after Nasser died from a heart attack in 1970. Shortly after coming to power, Sadat
started a "corrective revolution," aimed at expunging the state administration of Nasserist and other
leftist elements (Tucker, 1978, p. 6; Ibrahim, 1982, p. 79). As part of this strategy, he undertook a shift
from a centrally-planned to a market economy through a program of economic liberalization, popularly
known as Open-Door policy or *infitah,* aimed at integrating Egypt's economy into the world market,
opening it to foreign capital and goods, attracting foreign aid and private investment, reinvigorating the
private sector, and stimulating consumption (MERIP, 1974, p. 20). He also supported the emergent
Islamist movements to curtail Nasserist, secularist and other left-wing influences in universities,
professional associations and unions (Badran, 1991, p. 222; Rouleau, 1982, p. 4). In addition, he
released members of Islamist groups imprisoned by Nasser, including Muslim Brotherhood leaders and
militants, and allowed those in exile to return to Egypt (Aly & Wenner, 1982, p. 348).

[150]   Far from revitalizing the economy and creating growth, Sadat's economic measures increased Egypt's
national debt and dependence on international—mostly US—capital and aid, while flooding the
Egyptian market with foreign products (Stork, 1977, p. 8; Owen, 1983, p. 13). Only a small minority of
entrepreneurs and businessmen, as well as Western-educated upper-middle- and upper-class women,
benefited from the new job and investment opportunities, clustered in foreign banking, import-export
trading, tourism and real state speculation (Gran, 1977, pp. 5-6; Hatem, 1968a, p. 33; Mohsen, 1985,
pp. 57-58). These liberalization measures were accompanied by a social and economic retreat of the
state from sectors central to Nasser's development program, notably health and education.

[151]   According to the 1976 census, 1.4 million Egyptians (600,000 workers) were abroad (Aulas, 1982, p.
14). Worker remittances represented one of the main sources of income for the Egyptian economy,
growing from 289 million dollars in 1974 to 2,214 million dollars in 1979 (Aulas, 1982, p. 8). Guest
workers often left for long periods, leaving their families behind (Gran, 1977, p. 6; Aulas, 1982, pp. 14-
15).

women's participation in the job market, and privileged their domestic responsibilities.[152]

Such contradictions triggered a discussion about women's work outside of the home that

grew increasingly hostile in the People's Assembly and the media, with opponents of

women's employment emphasizing its detrimental effect on family life and blaming

working women for juvenile delinquency, male un(der)employment, and crowded

transportation (Mohsen, 1985, p. 62; Hatem, 1986a, p. 35). The multiplication of media

reports warning about an "alarming increase" of cases of prostitution among female high

school and college students further fueled the debate that linked women's education and

participation in the job market with socially-entrenched fears of sexual disorder and

corruption of morals (Mohsen, 1985, p. 68).[153] In a context marked by the rise of political

Islam, a growing number of Egyptian college students and lower-middle-class working

women adopted the veil in the 1970s as a "technique of the self" that projected

conformity to certain moral and spiritual values while enabling them to continue

occupying public space (Foucault, 1993, p. 203).[154] Public sexual harassment also played

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[152] The percentage of women in the labor force doubled from seven to fourteen percent between 1971 and 1981 (Hatem, 1986a, p. 35). Despite this reality, women's work outside of the home continued to be regarded by Egyptian lower-middle-class families as undesirable, only to be performed in case of economic necessity (Rugh, 1985, p. 280). At the same time, household tasks and child care continued to be seen as women's main responsibility regardless of whether they were employed or not (Rugh, 1985, p. 276). These conservative views were supported by the regime and materialized in the redrafting of the Constitution in 1971. The new text stated that "the family is at the base of the society and is shaped by religion, ethics, and nationalism" and, in a clear reversal of Nasser's principles, emphasized that "[t]he state pledges its support for women in reconciling their duties to the family and work in society" and "guarantees women's equality to men in political, social, and cultural arenas *provided this does not contradict the rules of Islamic law"* (Hatem, 1986a, p. 31, emphasis is mine). This principle was supported by a series of legal measures. Among them, the civil workers' code of 1978 allowed women to take a two-year leave of absence without pay for maternity reasons and to work part-time for a reduced salary (Hatem, 1986a, p. 35).

[153] Reports emphasized that the prostitutes had been arrested in apartments rented by men from the Gulf, thus feeding Egyptians' hostility towards the lavish way of life of visitors from this region and, more generally, to the conspicuous consumption favored by Sadat's *infitah* (Mohsen, 1985, p. 68).

[154] While Safia Mohsen (1985) argues that the adoption of the veil was in many cases a strategy to defuse men's suspicions about women's activities outside of the home, she nevertheless notes that those women who decided to veil had a "genuine respect" for traditional values and norms (p. 69). Similarly, Hatem (1986a) has pointed to a multiplicity of factors behind the popularization of the *higab* (a veil

a role in the resurgence of this sartorial practice, as it was assumed that this sign of piety and respectability would deter sexual intrusions (Williams, 1979, p. 53; El Guindi, 1981, p. 481; Hoffman-Ladd, 1987, p. 43; MacLeod, 1991, p. 113).[155] This attempt to "accommodate" to norms and expectations of appropriate behavior, however, shifted responsibility onto women while underscoring prevailing notions of public space as a male space that women could only legitimately occupy under particular conditions (MacLeod, 1991, p. 139).

After Sadat's assassination in 1981, Hosni Mubarak assumed the state presidency.[156] His tenure, which lasted three decades, was characterized by a continuation and intensification of Sadat's programs of economic liberalization and by an authoritarian control over all spheres of public life, including public space.[157] Despite the constrained

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that covers the hair and the neck of a woman) while emphasizing that their adherents ultimately saw this practice as "part of a larger Islamic code of ethics" (p. 34).

[155] These authors, like Mohsen (1985) and Hatem (1986a), articulate functionalist explanations of veiling while refusing to reduce this practice to its utilitarian role. Williams (1979), for example, understands a woman's adoption of the *higab* as "a personal statement, usually connected with her faith" (p. 53), while El Guindi (1981) links this religious revival to the psychological impact of Egypt's defeat in the 1967 Six-Day War (p. 483), and Hoffman-Ladd (1987) regards this sartorial practice as a rejection of Western models of sexual objectification (p. 24). MacLeod's (1991) ethnography offers a rich overview of the many motives (personal, spiritual, etc.) mentioned by women to explain their decision to veil. In response to these arguments, however, Saba Mahmood (2005) has warned against scholars' tendency to marginalize veiled women's references to "morality, divinity and virtue" in their narratives by according these values the "status of the phantom imaginings of the hegemonized" (p. 16). It is important to note that (un)veiling practices are not a-historical but they are informed by colonial and postcolonial histories and reflect political, economic, and social developments (for a discussion of these questions, see, for example, Fanon, 1965 [1959]; Abu-Lughod, 1986; Badran, 1987; Göle, 1996; Mahmood, 2005; Salime, 2011).

[156] Mubarak was an officer in the Egyptian Air Force and Sadat's vice-president since 1975. Sadat was assassinated on October 6, 1981, in an action that evidenced the Islamist infiltration of the military (Stork, 1982, p. 16).

[157] Mubarak inherited an economy in crisis that suffered from massive foreign debt, an overvalued currency, inflation and rising unemployment (Abdalla, 1991, p. 19). The Gulf crisis of 1990-1991 exacerbated the situation with the return of guest workers employed in the region and the resulting decrease of worker remittances (Abdalla, 1991, p. 19; Pripstein Posusney, 1991, p. 20). Yielding to pressure from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Mubarak signed in 1991 an Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment Program (ERSAP) that prescribed a set of neoliberal policies to transform the Egyptian economy into a market-based, export-oriented economy (Pripstein Posusney, 1999, p. 38; Ezzedine, 1999). Increasing un(der)employment among former public sector employees following the privatization of major state-owned enterprises and the devaluation of the

political climate, the 2000s was a period of intense mobilizations and escalating street protests that soon acquired a marked anti-regime character.[158] In response to these challenges, Mubarak employed diverse means of repression, including the use of public sexual violence against politically-active women. On May 25, 2005, a protest organized by the *Kefaya* movement to boycott the referendum on the amendment of Article 76 of the Constitution was attacked by supporters of Mubarak's National Democratic Party (NDP), who sexually harassed women activists.[159] As cultural historian and activist Alia Mossallam (2015) recalls, the protesters were standing on the stairs of the Journalists' Syndicate when groups of plainclothes thugs arrived in microbuses: "There was a cordon of central state security [forces] between us and them, but then [the police] let them in …

Egyptian pound provoked a shrinking of the middle class and the upsurge of poverty in the 2000s (Langohr, 2000; El-Ghobashy, 2003; Moustafa, 2004; Beinin, 2005). Under the cover of the state of emergency in place since Sadat's assassination, the Mubarak regime curtailed civil liberties and repressed its opponents, especially Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist militants but also, increasingly, human rights activists and journalists (Abdalla, 1993, p. 30; Pratt, 2000; El-Ghobashy, 2002; Abdelrahman, 2017, p. 189). Strikes and protests were outlawed and—when they happened—harshly repressed by the security forces (Abdalla, 1991, p. 18; Zubaida, 1992, p. 8).

[158] The eruption of the Second Intifada in 2000 marked the beginning of a series of student marches that became increasingly large in 2002, when slogans against the regime emerged alongside pro-Palestinian chants (Langohr, 2000; Schemm, 2002). In March of 2003, protests against the US invasion and bombing of Iraq devolved into sustained street battles between demonstrators and riot police and ended with the occupation of Tahrir square, where the participants—a mix of students, Islamists and leftist activists—chanted against Mubarak and his intention to secure presidential succession for his son, Gamal Mubarak (Schemm, 2003). The mid-2000s also saw an upsurge in labor activism (Beinin, 2005 & 2007; Beinin & El-Hamalawy, 2007a & 2007b). These labor struggles culminated with the organization by the April 6th Youth Movement of a general strike in 2008; its repression by the security forces was contested with workers' protests and street fights in Mahalla al-Kubra (Beinin, 2007; Stacher, 2008). The 2009 Gaza war and the international blockade of the Palestinian enclave sparked large rallies that denounced Mubarak's complicity with Israel and demanded the opening of the Rafah border for humanitarian relief (Stacher, 2009, p. 2; Lindsey, 2010).

[159] Founded in 2004, the *Kefaya* ("Enough") movement was a loose coalition of activists, intellectuals and journalists with a wide range of political sensibilities (Beinin, 2005; El-Ghobashy, 2005; Tadros, 2005). While very active in Cairo, the movement remained circumscribed to the urban middle-class intellectual elite and did not manage to evolve into a cross-class national social movement (Tadros, 2005; Beinin & El-Hamalawy 2007b; Stacher, 2008, p. 311). In 2005, the group opposed the amendment of Article 76 of the Constitution, which they saw as part of Mubarak's strategy to secure presidential succession for his son (Stacher, 2008, p. 301). The amended article opened the way for direct multi-candidate presidential elections but established very stringent restrictions that limited the possibility of competition, particularly from independents not affiliated with a political party (El Amrani, 2005; Tadros, 2005; El-Ghobashy, 2010).

and they started stripping the women, and any man who tried to protect the women was beaten up very badly."

While *Kefaya* activists routinely faced violence and arrest, this was the first time that state-sponsored sexual violence took place in such an "organized and open way" (Mossallam, 2015). The events of what became known as Black Wednesday received international media attention, albeit a kind that ultimately contributed to demobilizing the movement by "embarrassing the women" (Mossallam, 2015). While this incident had an impact on political activism, two previous cases of public sexual violence—in the mid-1980s and the early 1990s—had more pervasive and long-lasting effects on women's inhabitation of public space.

In 1985, a seventeen-year-old girl was kidnapped by five men while she was in the company of her boyfriend in the suburb of Maadi and gang raped (Dupret, 2007, p. 552).[160] Seven years later, in 1992, a woman was sexually assaulted in the middle of the day by several men in Attaba square.[161] The "Maadi Girl" and the "Attaba Girl" cases served to incite heated media discussions about women's modesty and the sexual behavior of the youth, the decline of state authority and religious values, and safety and danger in public space (Singerman, 1995, p. 101; Dupret, 2007, p. 553).[162] Debates about

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[160] This case was part of a "wave of rape cases" that dominated Egyptian media in the mid-1980s (Singerman, 1995, p. 101).

[161] Different versions of the incident co-exist in the literature. According to Aseel El Dessouky (1997), two men assaulted a 23-year-old secretary, who "lost her virginity on the steps of a public bus" as a result of finger rape (p. 13). In Sonbol's (1997) description of the event, the assaulted woman was repeatedly raped after the attack by "up to three men … before a station attendant intervened and a woman vendor used her overgarment to protect the girl's modesty" (p. 214). The case was particularly shocking because it took place in one of the most crowded squares of Cairo, in broad daylight, and during the month of Ramadan (El Dessouky, 1997, p. 13; Tadros, 1998). The gravity of the incident was enhanced by the fact that the assaulted woman dressed conservatively, as newspapers were quick to emphasize, and was accompanied by her mother at the time of the attack (El Dessouky, 1997, p. 14; Sonbol, 1997, p. 214).

[162] The "Maadi Girl" and the "Attaba Girl" cases had other important consequences. Both prompted reforms of the penal code, with the extension of the death penalty to cases of rape where more than one

public sexual violence were dominated by Islamic scholars, who explained rape as the

result of moral decadence and consumerism, and promoted the restoration of traditional

values and women's return to the home (Singerman, 1995, p, 103; El Dessouky, 1997, p.

77).[163] Playing on the figure of the *woman as risk,* commentators often presented

survivors as "having done something to bring about their predicament," hinted at an illicit

sexual relationship between consenting adults or raised the specter of prostitution

(Tadros, 2000, p. 24; see also El Dessouky, 1997, pp. 78-79).[164] At the same time, in a

further development of the *woman at risk* narrative, the proliferation of rape cases in the

media contributed to increasing women's fear in public space and to heightening families'

control over their female members (Singerman, 1995, p. 101; El Dessouky, 1997, p. 14).

Despite the many bystanders who witnessed the sexual assault in Attaba square, the case

was dismissed for lack of evidence and contradictory testimonies in 1994 (El Dessouky,

1997, p. 14). The judicial and media attacks suffered by the "Attaba Girl" during the trial

and the ultimate release of the perpetrators sent, according to Aseel El Dessouki (1997), a

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perpetrator was involved in 1985, and to cases that did not involve kidnapping in 1993 (Mohsen, 1990, p. 22; Sonbol, 1997, p. 228). The multiplication in the media of reports of *shillas (*"gangs" of unemployed young men) abducting and raping middle- and upper-middle class women led to the abrogation, in 1999, of Article 291 of the penal code, which exonerated a kidnapper who married his victim (Sonbol, 1996, p. 288; Tadros, 2000, p. 25). Before the annulment of Article 291, the police "automatically" offered survivors of rape the option of marrying the rapist when the girl was a virgin (Sonbol, 1997, p. 229). This legal change responded to a general understanding that "no marriage could come out of such a situation" due to class difference (Sonbol, 1996, p. 288), but was nevertheless criticized in the media by conservative voices that saw marriage as the only way to protect the survivor and her family against social stigma (Tadros, 2000, p. 25). In relation to this, Nehad Abul-Qumsan, director of ECWR, referred to Article 291 as a "loophole" that allowed "frustrated, unemployed youth to hit the jackpot by raping a woman," as following this act they could get married "without incurring any financial obligations" (cited in Tadros, 1998).

[163] As an example of this religious concern with rape, the *mufti* of Al Azhar issued in 1998 a *fatwa* urging the state to grant survivors of rape an operation to restore their virginity (Tadros, 2000, p. 24). While supporters of the measure emphasized its importance for the protection of family honor, its critics dismissed it on the grounds that it would represent a deception of the woman's future husband and ultimately legitimize sexual promiscuity (Tadros, 2000, p. 24).

[164] In other cases, the family of the survivor was considered responsible for the act of sexual violence. As Sonbol (1996) remarks, following the "Attaba Girl" case several voices in the media and the People's Assembly discussed the possibility of introducing a law that "blame[d] families of rape victims for allowing their daughters out of their homes" (p. 280).

clear message to Egyptian women: any woman could be sexually assaulted, it could happen anywhere, and the assailants would not be held accountable for their crimes (pp. 14-15).[165] While the Mubarak regime downplayed reports about the rise of public sexual violence as an "exaggeration that spoil[ed] Egypt's reputation" (El Dessouky, 1997, p. 78), first-person accounts attest to the increase of public sexual harassment and to the multiplication of collective sexual assaults in Cairo in the 1990s and 2000s (Hegab, 2015; Soliman, 2015; see chapter one).[166] This development has been linked to the disappearance of the police from the streets, as then-Interior Minister Habib Al Adly reserved police officers to the protection of buildings (Hegab, 2015). Urban insecurity, however, cannot fully account for the pervasiveness of public sexual violence in the years that led to the January 25 Revolution. In the next section, I focus on the entanglement of notions of risk with idea(l)s of masculinity and femininity to further examine this question.

Masculinities, Femininities, and Risk

There is little research on what motivates men to sexually harass women in public space in Egypt. The 2008 ECWR report offered some preliminary data, revealing that

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[165] During the trial, the assaulted woman's reputation and conduct were subjected to extreme scrutiny, at the end of which the court imposed her a fine for false accusation (El Dessouky, 1997, p. 14). In the media, she was slandered by police officers and members of the government commenting on the case, who implied that there was an agreement between the assaulted woman and the defendants, hinted at a case of drugs, revenge or a sexual affair, and blamed the woman for encouraging the assailants by failing to scream as the attack started (El Dessouky, 1997, p. 80).

[166] Following the "Maadi Girl" and the "Attaba Girl" cases, Mubarak criticized those who "exaggerated the extent of crime and corruption" in Egypt in his Labor Day speeches of 1985 and 1992 (Singerman, 1995, p. 104; El Dessouky, 1997, p. 77). In an interview for *Al-Ahram Weekly* in 1998, Major-General Mohamed Shaarawi, head of public security at the Ministry of Interior, denied an increase in the number of rapes, and affirmed that many cases were fabricated and "motivated by spite" (Tadros, 1998).

about half of the men who recognized harassing women—62.4 percent of a sample of 1,010 men—blamed it on women's clothes or beauty and argued that women enjoyed being harassed (Hassan et al., 2008, p. 18). The study also stated that 41.8 percent of surveyed men said they harassed women to "satisfy their repressed sexual desires" and 13.9 percent noted that they did it to "feel more masculine, more confident, stronger in relation to women, powerful" (Hassan et al., 2008, p. 18). The 2014 HarassMap report confirmed some of these findings, noting that about half of the men who recognized having harassed women—77.3 percent of a sample of 150 men—shifted responsibility onto women's clothes and more than a third argued that "girls want it," while about a fourth noted that they did it "to feel I'm a man" or "to satisfy my sexual desire," a fifth "to see what the girl will do," and more than a sixth of the respondents "for fun and [to] pas[s] time" (Fahmy et al., 2014, p. 34). It is clear from these statements—and the extent to which men admit harassing women—that public sexual harassment is a common practice that, far from being considered deviant or aberrant, is seen as typical male behavior on the basis of particular constructions of masculinity and femininity.[167]

Addressing this question, Peoples (2008) ascribed harassing behaviors, as discussed in chapter one, to a "masculinity in crisis" whereby men expressed their frustration for the loss of their patriarchal prerogatives as a result of high unemployment and changes in family structure (p. 16). Under these circumstances, Peoples (2008) argued, public space became the arena where men could enact "alternative forms of masculine affirmation" to restore their endangered masculinity in front of other men (p. 16). Despite the appeal of

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[167]   More than a reflection of the 'real' reasons behind public sexual harassment, I regard these statements as a "vocabulary of motive" used by perpetrators to excuse and justify their behavior in ways that are socially appropriate and acceptable (Scully & Marolla, 1984, p. 530). These rationalizations, as Sheffield (1984) notes, are often shared by police officers and other state representatives and reflect wider beliefs and attitudes regarding gender relations as well as men's and women's sexuality (p. 176).

an argument that offers a theoretical base to popular discourses about public sexual violence, this logic is contradicted by the fact that, as I have discussed above, public sexual harassment has existed in Cairo long before the socio-economic changes identified by Peoples took place, as well as by the fact that, as the ECWR and the HarassMap reports demonstrate, public sexual harassment is a widespread practice not limited to men from a particular socioeconomic milieu (Hassan et al., 2008, p. 17; Fahmy et al., 2014, p. 34).

According to the data, thus, public sexual harassment does not operate within the frame of a marginalized masculinity, as Peoples argues, but rather, drawing on R.W. Connell's (1995) formulation, it is an articulation of hegemonic masculinity whereby men who harass women simply "overconform" to what is a widely-accepted form of masculine behavior (Thomas, 1997, p. 132; cf. Connell, 1995, p. 77).[168] "'Doing power' over women" or "'doing masculinity'" by means of visual, verbal and physical sexual harassment plays an important role in the formation and maintenance of a masculine identity within a heteronormative order that prompts men and women to construct their gender identities in opposition to each other (Thomas, 1997, pp. 135-136; see also Connell, 1987, p. 80).[169] Such underlying norms and shared understandings are reflected

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[168] In the seminal *Masculinities,* R.W. Connell (1995) theorized the co-existence of and hierarchy among multiple masculinities—or gender patterns among men—within the social structure of gender (p. 80; see also Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 846). According to this author, "marginalized masculinities" result from the interplay of gender with other structures such as class and race. A marginalized masculinity, then, is articulated by a subordinated class or ethnic group in relation to the hegemonic masculinity of a dominant group (Connell, 1995, p. 80). In Egypt, this notion has been mobilized by Salwa Ismail (2006) and Mustafa Abdalla (2014), who speak of "injured masculinities" and "challenged masculinities," respectively, to explain phenomena as diverse as young men's dominance over women at home and in the neighborhood or Egyptian men's support of Islamist and Salafi parties in the parliamentary elections of 2011-2012.

[169] Masculinit(ies) and femininit(ies) are always relational and acquire their meaning in relation—as well as in contrast—to each other, "as a social demarcation and a cultural opposition" (Connell, 1995, p. 44; see also Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 848). It is important to note that masculinities and

in and reinforced by state practices, as police officers' tolerance towards—and

implication in—the pervasiveness of public sexual violence reflects.[170] As "active

player[s]" in gender politics (Connell, 1990, p. 519), state actors actively regulate gender

relations by "promoting certain types of masculinities [and femininities] while devaluing

and disciplining others" for the maintenance of order (Rizzo, 2014, p. 5, the addition is

mine).[171]

    Following Ghannam (2013), I regard masculinity in Egypt as a "collective

project" negotiated through daily interactions with young and old men and women in

private and public spaces, both inside and outside of the community (p. 3). Thus, boys

and young men acquire a masculine identity through the enactment of particular practices

and bodily presentations that are, in turn, evaluated, criticized, corrected or recognized by

others. Women play a central role in this process by "instructing, monitoring, and

modifying the conduct of their male relatives" (Ghannam, 2013, p. 104; see also Connell

& Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 848). My take on masculinity, however, unlike Ghannam's

(2013), is not restricted to ideals about how a man *should be*—as articulated around the

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femininities are neither absolute nor static, but they are both historically constituted and constantly transformed by political, economic and social developments (Connell, 1995, p. 73).

[170] Police officers and security personnel are often identified as harassers by the female respondents of the 2008 ECWR report and the 2013 UN Women study (Hassan et al., 2008, p. 16; El Deeb, 2013, p. 9). Moreover, according to FIDH et al. (2014), members of the police forces usually refuse to intervene when they witness public sexual harassment (pp. 12 & 20; see also FIDH et al., 2014, pp. 12 & 20). When women seek police assistance in cases of harassment, they are often mocked and scolded (ECWR, 2008, p. 17; El Deeb, 2013, p. 15). Among other obstacles, police officers make references to family honor and reputation to dissuade women from filing a harassment case (FIDH et al., 2014, p. 41). These factors contribute to the underreporting of sexual violence in Egypt (Hassan et al., 2008, p. 17; Fahmy et al., 2014, p. 35; FIDH et al., 2014, p. 36).

[171] In Egypt, police surveillance and control were used under the Mubarak regime to discipline working-class masculinities within the framework of the legal exceptionalism provided by the emergency law and the adoption of Law 6 on thuggery (Ismail, 2006; Amar, 2011a, p. 40). The crackdown by the police and the vice squad on queer and gender non-conforming people—a practice that was common under Mubarak and has dramatically intensified under El-Sisi—criminalizes and persecutes gendered expressions deemed deviant (Bahgat, 2001; Human Rights Watch, 2004; Kingsley, 2014c; FIDH, 2015, pp. 16-18).

notion of *rugūla* (manhood)—but includes also widely-held ideas about how men *are.* In relation to this, for example, while public sexual harassment of women may not be considered an appropriate behavior for the "ideal man" (Ghannam, 2013, p. 119), it is nevertheless a condoned practice on the basis of naturalized notions of male and female sexuality. Drawing on Connell (1995), I consider these ideas to be hegemonic—in the Gramscian sense—by virtue of their being supported and legitimized by social conventions, cultural meanings, legal codes and religious discourses (p. 77).

The street is an important space for male socialization in Egypt. On the street, young men develop bonds with other men and internalize norms regarding proper interaction between men and women as well as expectations about their (and women's) conduct in public. Within this context, public sexual harassment can be seen as one of the many practices through which a boy learns "how to conduct himself as a man" (Ghannam, 2013, p. 66). It is through observation and imitation of other men's behavior that boys and young men adopt ogling, catcalling and wolf-whistling as a "source of enjoyment and entertainment" available to them (Ghannam, 2002, p. 100). Through these homosocial interactions, young men *have fun and pass time* while, at the same time, they assert their dominance over women—in what can be seen as an attempt *to feel they are men*—and reproduce a system of gender inequality that prescribes men's control over women's movements (Bird, 1996, p. 120; Quinn, 2002, p. 393).[172] Physical forms of public sexual harassment, such as groping, are not socially sanctioned, but they are

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[172] Male homosocial interactions that promote emotional detachment, competitiveness and the sexual objectification of women contribute to perpetuate a system that subordinates femininity as well as alternative expressions of masculinity (Bird, 1996, p. 122). In Egypt, as Ghannam (2013) remarks, the ability to control the mobility of female relatives—particularly, sisters—is central to a young man's assertion of authority (p. 66). As Ismail (2006) further notes, the monitoring of young women's movement can also extend to female members of the community, such as neighbors (p. 109).

nevertheless absolved on the basis of men's supposedly biological need to *satisfy their sexual desire* and their equally assumed inability to resist "the power of female sexual attraction over men" (cf. Mernissi, 1987 [1975], p. 31)—even when covered by the modest *higab* or the *niqab*. While more severe forms of sexual violence, such as sexual assault and rape, are widely condemned, pathologizing and victim-blaming rhetoric serve to frame these intrusions as inevitable, given women's supposedly inherent vulnerability to predators—their *at risk* situation—and the uncontrollable sexual attraction they exert on men when in public space—their position as *a risk.*[173]

The force of the *at risk/as risk juncture* is reinforced by norms of respectable femininity dictating that women in Egypt should occupy public space with a purpose— for example, to buy groceries, go to school or to work, or visit a relative—and, when in public, dress conservatively and show modesty, averting eye contact, keeping their voice low and walking fast (Singerman, 1995, p. 82; Ghannam, 2002, p. 100; Nassif, 2010, p. 106; Van Dalen, 2013, p. 25). These unwritten rules also establish that women should ignore public sexual harassment and not respond to sexual advances, neither reciprocating nor challenging—with an angry look, an insult or a menacing gesture—the widely-held assumption that *girls want it* (Ghannam, 2002, p. 100)*.* These norms render women's consent invisible, thus obscuring the distinction between public sexual harassment and *muʿāksa* (flirtation) and creating the conditions within which these sexual intrusions become socially accepted. Despite the prominence of the figure of the "modest woman" in mainstream social and religious discourse, this is not the only socially-valued

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[173] Pathologizing discourses are often deployed in media reports of rape, where the perpetrators are referred to as "wolves" and depicted as drug addicts and/or consumers of pornography (Singerman, 1995, p. 104; El Dessouky, 1997, p. 79; Tadros, 2000, p. 25). At the same time, survivors are held responsible for their own victimization because of their alleged risky behavior, inappropriate dress or loose morality (El Dessouky, 1997, p. 78; Tadros, 2000, pp. 24-25).

form of female behavior in Egypt. On the contrary, women who are firm but fair and able to assert themselves in front of men are praised with expressions like *hiyya rāgil* ("she's a man") and *sitt bi mīt rāgil* ("a woman who equals hundred men"), (see El-Messiri, 1978, p. 534; Ismail, 2006, p. 117; Ghannam, 2013, p. 54). As Sawsan El-Messiri (1978) has discussed in her ethnography of traditional urban women in Cairo, the figure of the *bint al-balad* (literally, "daughter of the country") embodies an alternative expression of femininity in which respectability is demonstrated by means of verbal and physical self-defense (pp. 533-535). Concern for their reputation is nevertheless central to *banāt al-balad*'s life, as they can be reprimanded and socially ostracized if they are seen in public with unrelated men or behave in any way considered immodest (El-Messiri, 1978, p. 533). In addition, social expectations demand that they continuously prove themselves honorable and reputable in front of other members of the community. Similarly, forms of "symbolic and honorary masculinity" as those described above do not come without limitations, as these exceptional women still have to conform to norms of sartorial and sexual respectability (Ismail, 2006, p. 117; see also Ghannam, 2013, p. 54).

These discourses enhance women's vulnerability in public space by imposing a disciplinary regime on women's aspect, posture and movement that ultimately produces "docile bodies" (Bartky, 1988, p. 64; cf. Foucault, 1977, p. 136).[174] Femininity—or the "rigid code of appearance and behavior defined by do's and don't-do's," as Susan

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[174] In *Discipline and punish,* Foucault (1977) investigated the body as "object and target of power" and developed the notion of *docile body* to designate a body that is "subjected, used, transformed, and improved" through a number of disciplines that construct and gradually adjust its gestures and behaviors (pp. 136 & 138). While Foucault (1977) focused on a gender-neutral body—male by default—and identified the army, the school, the hospital, the prison and the factory as the institutions that played a central role in "controlling or correcting the operations of the body" (p. 136), Sandra Lee Bartky (1988) has drawn on this notion to reveal "those disciplines that produce a modality of embodiment that is peculiarly feminine" outside—or alongside—the disciplinary institutions identified by the French philosopher (p. 64).

Brownmiller (1984) described it (p. 14)—prescribes bodies of "a certain size and general

configuration" from which it elicits "a specific repertoire of gestures, postures, and

movements" that have a particular impact on women's inhabitation of public space

(Bartky, 1988, p. 64).[175] As HarassMap's Safe Areas coordinator and WenDo trainer

Kamilia El-Kady (2015b) told me in an interview, Egyptian women learn at an early age

that "a good girl" should walk looking down on the ground—a deportment that once

ended up with her bumping her head against a wall while walking home. According to

WenDo trainer Miriam (2015), many women adopt this way of walking because they

"know that if they look at someone they may get a remark … so they try to disappear by

looking down." This strategy of "fictive invisibility" (Ardener, 1981, p. 13; Ilahi, 2008, p.

133) is, however, counterproductive, as it limits women's visual control of space and

their awareness of potentially threatening situations. Another element that contributes to

enhancing women's vulnerability in public space, as WenDo Egypt's founder Schirin

Salem (2015) notes, is the fact that a "decent" girl is not supposed to speak loudly or

scream, thus severely hindering her ability to confront a harasser or ask for help in case

of need.[176] Femininity's prescription of passive and compliant female bodies ultimately

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[175] As feminist scholars have noted, small and delicate female bodies are generally preferred over bigger frames and muscular anatomies. With regard to bodily comportment, motility and spatiality, women are encouraged to occupy a "constricted space," for example by sitting with their legs closed or walking with their arms close to their bodies (Young, 1980, p. 143). In their social interactions, women are not supposed to look at men or engage with them in any way, as they are the ones "looked at and acted upon" (Young, 1980, p. 148). Therefore, they should avoid eye contact and maintain a certain distance, albeit this restraint does not shield them from being the object of the male gaze nor from having their personal boundaries routinely crossed (Young, 1980, p. 154; Henley & Freeman, 1984, p. 395).

[176] Shilpa Phadke (2007) has identified a similar dynamic in Mumbai, where the risk to reputation women face when accessing public space limits their ability to protect themselves, as norms of respectable femininity compel them to prioritize sexual virtue over personal safety, while inhibiting them from responding to potential threats (p. 1512).

produces the "perfect victim of sexual aggression" (Griffin, 1971, p. 33; see also

Sheffield, 1984, p. 182).[177]

Women perform respectable femininity in public space by *making themselves*

vulnerable to sexual harassment and assault *while managing to successfully prevent and*

avoid sexual violence (Stanko, 1997, p. 489; Campbell, 2005, p. 130; Phadke et al., 2011,

p. 29; cf. Butler, 1990).[178] Within this logic, women are supposed to recognize

themselves as potential victims and to proactively, routinely and visibly adopt

precautionary and avoidance strategies to anticipate and avert this risk (Jamieson, 1994,

p. 100; Stanko, 1997, p. 488).[179] In this context, the idealized figure of *homo prudens*

(Adams, 1995, p. 16) acquires a markedly gendered character within a neoliberal

governmentality that renders private individuals responsible for ensuring—if necessary,

by purchasing in the market—their own security (O'Malley, 1992, pp. 201-202; Zaloom,

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[177] Young (1980) remarks that a feminine body "underuses its real capacity, both as the potentiality of its physical size and strength and as the real skills and coordination that are available to it" (p. 146). This pattern of (in)action inscribes a sense of vulnerability in women's bodies that thwarts their ability to defend themselves and renders them dependent on male figures and state agencies for protection (Young, 1980, p. 146; Brownmiller, 1984, p. 16; Searles & Follansbee, 1984, p. 66). Fear of rape, then, results not only from the belief that rape can happen to any woman but, more importantly, from the conviction that there is nothing a woman can do to stop it (Riger & Gordon, 1981, p. 81; McDaniel, 1993, p. 37; Stanko, 1997, p. 491).

[178] In *Gender trouble,* Judith Butler (1990) defines gender as "an enactment that performatively constitutes the appearance of its own interior fixity" (p. 89). It is through the "stylized repetition of acts," Butler (1990) argues, that gender reality is created; and it is through the proliferation of "gender configurations outside the restricting frames of masculinist domination and compulsory heterosexuality" that it can be disrupted (pp. 179-180). Building on these notions, other scholars like Stanko (1997), Campbell (2005) and Phadke et al. (2011) have discussed respectable femininity as a performance. From a different yet related perspective, L. L. Wynn and Saffaa Hassanein (2017) have described Egyptian women's respectability, drawing on Jean Baudrillard's work, as a "simulacrum [that] is produced in negotiation and is constantly being reconfigured based on a combination of a woman's social network and the way she moves through public space, the narratives established around her activities, and the influence of people in her network" (p. 908).

[179] Risk, as François Ewald (1993) remarks, "does not represent only a virtual threat or something that is merely possible, but is entirely real" (p. 227). As a result, risk management has come to be an "everyday practice of the self" that pervades all aspects of life (O'Malley, 1992, p. 200).

2004, p. 367).[180] Gender and risk, Kate Maclean (2013) remarks, are "entwined

constructions" whereby risk-taking and risk-averse behaviors are typically ascribed,

respectively, to normative expressions of masculinity and femininity (p. 460; see also

Phadke et al., 2011, p. 59). Women's failure to keep themselves safe by means of these

acts of self-governance signals a failure to successfully perform respectable femininity,

invoking notions of contributory negligence, recklessness and provocation (Jamieson,

1994, p. 99). It is only by means of self-regulation and the conspicuous adoption of

safekeeping strategies that women can claim their right to protection from sexual

violence—and yet if these preventative measures fail they are always at risk of "being

judged to be imprudent or to be exposed as being beyond prudence" and therefore

deemed undeserving of protection or redress (Stanko, 1997, p. 489). Thus, the

"imprudent woman" who misreads or disregards risks (Stanko, 1997, p. 486) is

considered as much responsible—and therefore to blame—for the sexual violence she

may encounter as the "loose woman" who transgresses norms of respectable femininity

and refuses to constrain her movements (Bartky, 1988, p. 66; see also Young, 1980, p.

154; Schur, 1984, p. 153).

These notions acquire a particular significance in relation to public sexual

violence. When sexual violence is performed in public—and thus in front of other

members of the community—it has a direct effect on a woman's self-image and social

standing, deliberately altering her—and by extension her family's—honor and

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[180] Building upon Foucault's work, Pat O'Malley (1992) identified *prudentialism* as a "technology of governance that removes the key conception of regulating individuals by collectivist risk management, and throws back upon the individual the responsibility for managing risk" (p. 197). It is within this framework that John Adams (1995) situated the figure of *homo prudens,* a "zero-risk man [who] personifies prudence, rationality and responsibility" (p. 16).

reputation.[181] In this sense, public sexual violence has a performative quality: it does not

only designate a woman as dishonorable and disreputable—hence, a deserving victim—

but, by means of her public "defilement," it *brings about* the dishonor and disrepute that

presumably characterized the woman in the first place (cf. Schröder & Schmidt, 2001, p.

5).[182] The devastating effects of public sexual violence are powerfully expressed by one

of the survivors of the collective sexual assaults of January 25, 2013: "I wish they had

killed me. How can I live like this? I cannot continue living after what happened" (El-

Nadeem et al., 2013, p. 34).[183] The implications of these words cannot be fully grasped

without acknowledging the social stigmatization that surrounds survivors of sexual

violence. Stigma, described by Erving Goffman (1963) as a "spoiled identity," has the

"effect of cutting [an individual] off from society" (p. 19). Public sexual violence

victimization has wide-ranging personal and social consequences, which can include "the

reduction of … social acceptability, a blocking of important social and economic

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[181] I understand both honor and reputation as social, rather than personal, attributes that "increase … in value as [they are] recognized publicly by others" (Chambers, 1999, p. 4). As Diane Singerman (1995) notes with regard to Būlāq ad-Dakrūr, in Cairo, respect for an individual reflects upon their family, which in turn increases one's (and their family's) status and position within the community (p. 53). Conversely, these social attributes decrease in value when said individual engages in acts considered dishonorable or disreputable by others and, more generally, by the community. Within a patriarchal logic, women's honor and reputation also decrease when dishonorable or disreputable acts (notably, sexual violence) are inflicted *upon them.*

[182] This process differs from, but is related to, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's (1993) discussion of the performative effect that the utterance "shame on you" has on the conferral of shame (p. 4). Building on John L. Austin's (1975) speech theory and Judith Butler's (1990) gender performativity theory, Sedgwick (1993) considers the illocutionary force of this admonition and examines the role that shame plays as "a permanent, structuring fact of identity" (p. 14). While agreeing with her conceptualization of shame as an affect that institutes "durable [and] structural changes in one's relational and interpretive strategies toward both self and others" (Sedgwick, 1993, p. 13), my focus is not on speech acts that bring these changes into being but on the effect that public sexual violence—understood as an instrument of public social communication (Skoda, 2013, p. 81)—has on how the self perceives itself and is perceived by the community.

[183] The idea that rape is "worse than death" is not particular to Egypt but resonates with understandings of sexual violence in other contexts (Kelly, 1988, p. 116).

opportunities, [and] a diminishing of overall life chances" (Schur, 1984, p. 38).[184]

Gendered notions of risk and its entanglement with honor and reputation make public

sexual violence doubly effective as a mechanism of sexual governmentality. On the one

hand, it has a punitive character that can be activated—both by state and nonstate

actors—to chastise those women who behave in ways deemed inappropriate. On the other

hand, it operates in an admonitory way vis-à-vis the wider community. By "taking a

living body and turning it into text—a cautionary 'message'" (Taylor, 1997, p. 152),

public sexual harassment and assault can be mobilized to deter other women from

following the victimized woman's path.[185] Underscoring this logic is the notion that

women in public space are simultaneously *at risk* and *a risk* for society, an idea that

gained a new relevance following women's massive participation in the protests that

filled Tahrir Square during the January 25 Revolution and its aftermath.

"Not Like Your Daughter or Mine"

The currency of the *at risk/as risk juncture* and its centrality to state governance

became evident shortly after Mubarak's ouster, as seventeen women in detention were

subjected to forced virginity checks in the presence of soldiers and threatened with

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[184] The social stigma around sexual violence partly explains the low rate of reporting to the police of instances of sexual harassment and assault in Egypt (Amnesty International, 2013, p. 9; El Deeb, 2013, p. 15; FIDH et al., 2014, p. 40).

[185] Feminist scholarship on rape and sexual violence more generally has examined how the use of force and its threat acts as a form of social control to ensure compliance and "keep women in their place" (Peterson, 1977, p. 363; Sheffield, 1984, p. 171; see also Hanmer, 1978; Hanmer & Maynard, 1987; Kelly, 1988). Radical feminist scholars have likened sexual violence to "terrorism" due to its indiscriminate character and the social and psychological impact it has on women (Griffin, 1971; Sheffield, 1984; MacKinnon, 1989; Card, 1996). While these authors examine forms of sexual violence that take place in public space, they do not discuss public performances of sexual violence, thus disregarding the function and significance of these "spectacular" forms of social communication (Blok, 2000, p. 31; Skoda, 2013, p. 3).

prostitution charges by the military authorities in power in March of 2011 (Amnesty International, 2011; Seikaly, 2013; Kandiyoti, 2013; Hafez, 2014b, p. 173-174; Wynn & Hassanein, 2017, pp. 895-897). In response to the allegations of sexual assault, military representatives highlighted the detainees' condition as *a risk,* asserting that "the girls who were detained were not like your daughter or mine, these were girls who had camped out in tents with male protesters in Tahrir Square, and we found in the tents Molotov cocktails and drugs" (Amin, 2011). In support of these statements, General Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, then-head of military intelligence, justified these sexual violations by arguing that the military conducted virginity checks on women protesters "in self-defense against potential rape allegations," and thus to protect the reputation of the state against the threat of the disreputable Others (Borkan, 2011).[186] While an Egyptian court ruled in 2011 that forced virginity checks on women detainees in military prisons are unlawful (Butt & Hussein, 2011), this practice continues to be part of the political discourse. This point is illustrated by the declarations, in October of 2016, of a member of the Egyptian parliament calling for the introduction of virginity checks as a condition for admission into university (Sirgany, 2016).

In the context of the collective sexual assaults that became common in protests after the January 25 Revolution, a discourse focused on risk has been articulated by both state and nonstate actors for various purposes. On the one hand, the multiplication of

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[186] This declaration was part of a broader public campaign to discredit revolutionary activists during the military rule that followed Mubarak's ouster. Through a discourse that mobilized patriarchal family values and morality codes, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) aimed at regaining control over public space after the revolution by casting women protesters as "sexually promiscuous," thus justifying the use of sexual violence against them (Hafez, 2014a, p. 27). As Sherene Seikaly (2013) has remarked with regard to Samira Ibrahim, the activist who sued the SCAF for sexual assault after being subjected to a virginity check, "Ahmed Adel [the military doctor who performed the virginity checks] punctured Samira's hymen to prove that it had (not) existed. For if it did not exist, and she was not a virgin, her rape would then be impossible. He raped her so that she could not claim that she was raped."

"circles of hell" in Tahrir Square was used to justify several attempts to safeguard women protesters by creating male-only human chains around them in political gatherings. This strategy of segregation in protests has been criticized by many women activists, who argue that it further emphasizes their presumed vulnerability and the exceptionality of their presence in the square while, at the same time, rendering them more vulnerable to sexual harassment from the men who integrate these human shields (El-Nadeem et al., 2013, pp. 15 & 17; Labib, 2012).[187] Further emphasizing women's *at risk* status, some male revolutionaries cited concern with women's physical integrity to discourage them from taking part in protests, while others framed women's presence in Tahrir Square as an unnecessary burden, claiming that they could not devote all their energies to fight the security forces if they were busy protecting women (El-Nadeem et al., 2013, pp. 32-33). In a context where the honor of women continues to function as a metonymy for the honor of the nation, women's experiences of public sexual violence were often silenced, as they were considered a source of shame that risked jeopardizing the reputation of the Revolution rather than a common cause to revolt for (El-Nadeem et al., 2013, pp. 15 & 32-33; Langohr, 2013, pp. 268-269).

In parallel, a number of political representatives accused women protesters of bringing sexual violence upon themselves by putting themselves *at unnecessary risk.* In February of 2013, shortly after nineteen women were sexually assaulted and injured with blades in Tahrir Square during the celebrations for the second anniversary of the

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[187] Activists like Sally Zohney have criticized the organization of male-only human chains to protect women protesters from public sexual violence because it "solidifies the notion that women cannot walk alone in the Square without protection, which is unnecessary and untrue" (El-Nadeem et al., 2013, p. 17). In several cases, survivors have denounced sexual harassment and assault by men who purportedly were part of these protective human chains (see, for example, Labib, 2012 and the testimony of R. in El-Nadeem et al., 2013, p. 15).

Revolution, several members of the Shura Council blamed collective sexual violence on

women's presence in "male spaces" (FIDH et al., 2014, p. 25). A member of the Muslim

Brotherhood-backed Freedom and Justice Party, for example, called on women "not to

stand next to men in protests," while a representative of the Salafi Asala Party noted that

"in some cases, the girl is a hundred percent responsible for her rape because she put

herself in that position" (FIDH et al., 2014, p. 25). It is in response to discourses like

these that independent initiatives against public sexual violence started to proliferate in

the aftermath of the January 25 Revolution. It is to these groups that I turn to in the next

two chapters.

Chapter Three

Care-full Interventions in Public Space

> I thought, initially, that, as men, we are going down the
> Square to protect the weak women who were being
> harassed … After the first sexual harassment incident,
> while we were getting an assaulted girl inside the
> ambulance, a great sense of despair overcame me; how can
> we overtake these people when we are only 10 individuals
> or so? … I saw the girl again, with 2 of my colleagues who
> had gotten into the ambulance with her, and she was
> smiling! I thought that if she was able to smile, then she has
> successfully defeated all of the sexual harassers on her
> own.
>   – Testimony of a male OpAntiSH volunteer.[188]

Early Responses

When Yasmine El-Baramawy was sexually assaulted in Tahrir Square, on

November 23, 2012, she felt that there was nobody to turn to for help. After Mubarak's

ouster, Tahrir Square had become, by all accounts, a place that was not safe for women.

The collective sexual assault against CBS correspondent Lara Logan on February 11,

2011, was followed by subsequent attacks against women protesters and journalists on

June 2, 8, and 26 of 2012.[189] The November 23 sexual assaults—where eight other

women and girls were also attacked—marked, however, a turning point in the way public

sexual violence in Tahrir Square was addressed. Only a week later, the volunteer-based

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[188] See El-Nadeem et al. (2013, pp. 42-43).
[189] On June 2, 2012, three women were attacked by a large group of men during a protest following the verdict in Hosni Mubarak's trial (Nazra for Feminist Studies, 2012). A demonstration organized on June 8 to condemn this violence also came under attack (Amnesty International, 2012; El-Nadeem et al., 2013, p. 16). On June 26, journalist Natasha Smith was sexually assaulted by hundreds of men during the celebrations of Mohamed Morsi's election as president (Smith, 2012).

initiative Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment/Assault—popularly known as OpAntiSH—

was created to prevent and stop the collective sexual assaults that proliferated in

protests.[190] Reflecting on the work of this group, El-Baramawy (2015) remarked:

"OpAntiSH was very important, because they helped you when [the attack] starts,"

putting an end to situations like hers, where sexual assaults stretched for more than an

hour. They also affectively—and at times effectively—countered the idea that women had

to fend for themselves in protests, articulating early discourses about collective

responsibility and care.

The urge to mobilize against and respond to the intensification of public sexual

violence in what had been the epicenter of the January 25 Revolution prompted many

young women and men to launch other initiatives that similarly tried to obstruct and

thwart the execution of collective sexual assaults. Around the same time, the groups

Harakat Bassma (Movement Imprint), Tahrir Bodyguard, Shoft Taharrush (I Saw

Harassment) and Dedd el-Taharrush (Against Harassment) started to operate in Tahrir

Square alongside OpAntiSH.[191] The effervescence of activism against public sexual

violence in protests was intimately linked to the dynamics of the 2011 uprisings. "During

the Revolution and in the different sit-ins, you had different encounters with the street,"

remarked Dalia Abd El-Hameed (2015), Gender and Women's Rights Officer at the

Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) and OpAntiSH volunteer, "[it] was

unprecedented, for men and women, to occupy the square and to have tents and to spend

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[190] For more information about OpAntiSH, see https://www.facebook.com/opantish.
[191] For more information about Harakat Bassma, see https://www.facebook.com/Imprint.Movement.eg.
       For more information about Tahrir Bodyguard, see https://www.facebook.com/Tahrir.Bodyguards. For
       more information about Shoft Taharrush, see https://www.facebook.com/Shoft.Ta7rosh. For more
       information about Dedd al-Taharrush, see https://www.facebook.com/AntiHarassmentMovement.

the night [in Tahrir Square]."[192] The multiplication of public sexual aggressions after

Mubarak's ouster threatened to jeopardize what for Abd El-Hameed was the "most

important civil and political right we gained throughout the revolution," women's right to

participate in protests and, through their participation, contribute to shaping the future of

Egypt. Moreover, the exacerbation of the attacks laid bare a bleak reality for women in

Egypt. According to Amal ElMohandes (2015), director of the Women Human Rights

Defenders Program at Nazra for Feminist Studies and OpAntiSH volunteer, it revealed

the extent to which "society does not really accept the existence of women in public

space."[193] The withdrawal of the police from the streets that followed the regime change

contributed to intensifying a generalized regime of impunity towards violence against

women; at the same time, however, the absence of the security forces from public space

enabled activist-led initiatives to experiment with novel forms of intervention without

state interference.

These actions were not limited to the spaces of protest but extended to other urban

spaces. Since the summer of 2012, Harakat Bassma, Shoft Taharrush and Dedd el-

Taharrush organized intervention teams that patrolled different areas of the city and a

number of central subway stations during Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha to prevent and stop

incidents of sexual harassment and assault during religious celebrations.[194] Across the

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[192] EIPR is an Egyptian human rights organization founded in 2002 to "strengthen and protect basic rights and freedoms in Egypt, through research, advocacy and supporting litigation in the fields of civil liberties, economic and social rights, and criminal justice" (for more information, see http://eipr.org/en).

[193] Nazra for Feminist Studies is an Egyptian group that works to further feminist ideas and movements in Egypt and at a regional level. Among their activities, Nazra provides support to women human rights defenders and politically-engaged women against all forms of violence and discrimination in the public sphere, and considers sexual violence against women a "threat to women's right to actively participate in a safe public sphere" (for more information, see http://nazra.org/en).

[194] Harakat Bassma pioneered these interventions with a small action to stop public sexual harassment in the Ramses subway station during Eid al-Fitr in August of 2012. In October of that same year, on the

city, the independent initiative HarassMap deployed community mobilization teams that engaged in conversations with passers-by to challenge widespread victim blaming rhetoric and preconceived notions about women and gender relations. In December of 2014, this group launched its Safe Areas program to recruit small business owners and employees to stand up against public sexual violence in their neighborhoods.[195] Despite the different—and oftentimes conflicting—political convictions, strategies and methods that animated these actions, common to all of these initiatives was a recognition of women's "right to the city" and a commitment to its realization through the collective transformation of public space (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 105). Central to these interventions was also an ethics and a politics of care that extended relationships of solidarity beyond family and kinship ties to known and unknown others (Massey, 2004, p. 9; Williams, 2017, p. 834).

> Care has been defined by Berenice Fisher and Joan Tronto (1990) as
>
> a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web (p. 40).

Countering (neo)liberal ideals of individualism, egalitarianism, and competition, an ethics of care understands human beings as necessarily connected and interdependent upon each other for their well-being (Lawson, 2007, p. 3; Williams, 2017, p. 827). An ethics and a politics of care is articulated around the feminist recognition that care is "absolutely central to our individual and collective survival" (Lawson, 2009, p. 210) and

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occasion of Eid al-Adha, Shoft Taharrush mobilized volunteers to intervene in sexual harassment incidents in downtown Cairo, an area known for the prevalence of public sexual violence during religious celebrations.

[195] HarassMap was created in 2010 to end the social acceptability of sexual harassment and assault in Egypt (for more information, see http://harassmap.org/en).

the notion that politics, far from being something that happens elsewhere, results from "the very relations and ethical interactions that constitute the fabric of everyday social life" (Shukaitis, 2011, p. 42). As an affective "orientation and embodied practice" (Conradson, 2011, p. 454), care has the potential to reframe social relations in unanticipated ways through the development of relations of empathy, responsiveness, attentiveness, and responsibility that sidestep traditional—mostly family and kin-based— patterns of cooperation and reciprocity. Thus, the enactment of forms of care that extend to known and unknown others across difference—what Victoria Lawson (2007) has termed the "spatial extensiveness of care ethics" (p. 3)—refashions community boundaries and promotes new ways of being together (Conradson, 2011, p. 454; Till, 2012, p. 8).

In this chapter, I focus on the work of initiatives that endeavored to transform public space into a safe space for women by means of care-full direct action interventions in the aftermath of the January 25 Revolution.[196] By *direct action,* I mean tactics articulated around the "rejection of a politics which appeals to governments to modify their behaviour, in favour of physical intervention against [or in parallel to] state power in a form that itself prefigures an alternative" (Graeber, 2002, p. 62, the addition is mine).[197] Such an approach sharply departs from previous ways of addressing public sexual

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[196] I purposefully use the term "initiative" (*mubādara* in Arabic) to reflect how many of their members referred to these collective projects. This appellative enabled these groups—at least temporarily, as I discuss later in this chapter—to eschew official registration and supervision from the state.

[197] Tactics of direct action have been traditionally ascribed to groups that identify as anarchists or partake of a libertarian tradition (Graeber, 2002, p. 62; Day, 2004, p. 731). However, Mohammed A. Bamyeh (2012) has convincingly argued that the anarchist features presented by forms of political organizing during the Arab uprisings did not emerge from a particular ideological project but were rather a reflection of "ordinary and familiar civic ethics" articulated around "long-standing traditions of self-organization" in Arab popular civic culture (p. 32). Among the initiatives that I discuss in this chapter, only OpAntiSH inscribes itself within a tradition of autonomous feminism, understood as "any feminist current focusing on the autonomous capacities of people to create self-determining forms of community without forms of hierarchy of political mediation and direction" (Shukaitis, 2011, p. 42).

harassment in particular, and sexual violence more generally, in Egypt. Early efforts in this direction championed by ECWR and the sixteen NGOs that integrated the Task Force Against Sexual Violence in the mid-2000s focused mainly on awareness-raising and advocacy work.[198] The revolutionary moment ignited by the 2011 uprisings had the effect of bringing activism against sexual violence to public space. As ElMohandes (2015) remarked, "the fact that people were constantly on the street, demonstrating and in protests, in [a] way gave some legitimacy for people to do something on the streets." The revolutionary impetus also prompted a shift from a "politics of demand" oriented towards the state in search of reform to a "politics of the act" that favored experimentation with alternative forms of social organization (Day, 2004, pp. 733-734).[199] As HarassMap's co-founder Rebecca Chiao (2015) noted in an interview, the post-Revolution period brought

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[198]   The activities of these groups were curtailed by the strict regulations that governed the activities of NGOs. Among other questions, the Law on Non-Governmental Societies and Organizations (Law 84 of 2002) allowed the Ministry of Social Affairs to reject the creation of an NGO that threatened public order or morality and to dissolve an NGO without court order, and required governmental approval to receive foreign funding and to present candidates to the board (El-Ghobashy, 2002; Moustafa, 2004). ECWR was founded in 1996 and has been a registered NGO with the Ministry of Social Affairs [now of Social Solidarity] since 2004 (for more information, see http://ecwronline.org). As part of their campaign "Making Our Streets Safer for Everyone," launched in 2005, ECWR organized activities to raise awareness about the pervasiveness of public sexual harassment, lobbied the Ministries of Tourism and Interior for institutional change, and drafted a law to criminalize sexual harassment (Hassan et al., 2008, p. 20; Rizzo et al., 2012, p. 473; Langohr, 2015, p. 132). The draft law was submitted to the Egyptian Parliament in 2008 but received no response; it was re-submitted to the Parliament in 2011 and to the Presidency in 2012 (FIDH et al., 2014, p. 74). The Task Force Against Sexual Violence was created in 2008 by sixteen NGOs under the coordination of the New Woman Foundation (for more information, see http://nwrcegypt.org/en). They drafted a law that proposed amendments to the articles on sexual violence in the penal code, including expanding the definition of rape from penile-vaginal penetration to include oral and anal rape, finger rape and rape with objects regardless of the gender of the survivor, the substitution of the term "violation of honor" for "sexual assault," and the inclusion of sexual harassment as a sexual crime (FIDH et al., 2014, pp. 67-68). The draft law was submitted to the Egyptian Parliament in 2010 and re-submitted in 2012, but it was never discussed (FIDH et al., 2014, p. 67).

[199]   According to Day (2004), the adoption of a politics of the act is characteristic of what he refers to as the "newest social movements" of the 1990s, such as the antiglobalization movement (p. 723). Similar to new social movements (NSMs), these political formations feature "decentralized and segmented organizational structures, diffuse boundaries and dependence on members rather than centralized leadership for initiating activities" (Abdelrahman, 2013, pp. 569-570; see also Snow, Zurcher & Ekland-Olson, 1980; Buechler, 2000; Morris, 2000; Tarrow, 2005). Contrary to them, however, they do not appeal to the state for reform.

about "a new spirit of voluntarism" that radically changed the features of activism against public sexual violence. "We had volunteers before, but this [was] different," she recalled, "people didn't ask for someone to change [things] for them … after the revolution, no way, people just did stuff."

Through interviews with members of these initiatives, workshop discussions, and participant observation of some of their activities, I examine the affective imprint of this activism at three scales: individual, collective, and social. In the first part of the chapter, I discuss scholarship on social movements and emotion/affect in relation to direct action interventions against public sexual violence in post-January 25 Egypt. I then focus on two case studies—OpAntiSH and HarassMap—to analyze these initiatives' practices and discourses at two levels. On the one hand, I explore how, through their work, they contested notions of feminine vulnerability and masculine protection while promoting forms of collective risk-taking that defied the entrenched idea that women in public space are both *at risk* and *a risk* for society. On the other hand, I examine how they developed horizontal forms of care and solidarity that challenged the logic of sexual governmentality that governs women's conduct in public space. In the second part of the chapter, I draw on conversations with activists who participated in these initiatives to explore the concurrences and dissensions that existed between the different groups that operated against public sexual violence, and analyze the emergence of a "convergence space" (Routledge, 2003, p. 345) from the entanglements and cross-fertilization of analyses and activities that ensued from their encounters in public space. I contend that, despite their differences and ideological disagreements, these initiatives created a network of "affective resistance" (Shukaitis, 2011, p. 33) through which new forms of

community and collectivity as well as new subjectivities could be imagined and

experimented with in the aftermath of the January 25 Revolution.

The Transformative Effects of Collective Action

Recent scholarship on collective action has investigated the relationship between

emotion/affect and political activism, highlighting how social movements "*move* people,

mobilizing them both physically and emotionally" (Arenas, 2015, p. 1122, italics in the

original). Early research in this direction overcame the collective behaviorist and rational-

actor models that dominated the social sciences until the 1990s to examine how

emotions—such as anger, outrage, or shame—prompted individuals to join groups,

sustained mobilization over time, or led to a movement's demise (Jasper, 1998, pp. 404-

405; see also Goodwin, Jasper & Polletta, 2000, p. 70).[200] For James M. Jasper (1998),

attention to reciprocal and shared emotions was necessary to understand the emergence,

growth, sustenance and decline of social movements (p. 417).[201] Subsequent scholarship

has identified the performance of "emotional labor" by means of individual and collective

expressions of shared and reciprocal affection (Bosco, 2006, p. 342) and the creation of

supportive spaces for "emotional reflexivity" where activists could share and process

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[200] Emotions featured prominently in nineteenth-century studies that, building upon Le Bon's (1897) work, pathologized crowds as irrational and violent masses of individuals dominated by instincts. Between the 1960s and the 1990s, sociologists countered this vision through the development of structural and organizational models that, dismissing the role of emotions in collective action, presented protesters as rational calculators pursuing their interests (Goodwin et al., 2000, p. 70; Jasper, 2011, p. 287). It was only in the 1990s that emotions returned with force to the study of social movements, a development that Goodwin et al. (2000) have characterized as the "return of the repressed" (see also Hercus, 1999, pp. 34-35).

[201] By reciprocal emotions, Jasper (1998) meant the affective ties of friendship and solidarity that emerged among social movements' participants (p. 417). By shared emotions, he referred to common feelings directed towards other persons or issues, such as anger or outrage over grievances. According to Jasper, reciprocal and shared emotions reinforced each other to build a movement's culture.

their emotional responses to collective action (Brown & Pickerill, 2009, p. 24; see also Barker, Martin & Zournazi, 2008, p. 423) as crucial for the sustainability of activist networks.

More recent research in this field has examined the "emotional dynamics" of political mobilization and their transformative effects on political subjectivities and social relations (Aminzade & McAdam, 2002, p. 109; Arenas, 2015, p. 1122). Activism, as Laura Pulido (2003) notes, is much more than "an effort to change the external world … it is also an exercise in creating and changing ourselves" (p. 51). The emotionally-charged and embodied character of protests—particularly those involving direct action, where "activists use their bodies to enact rituals of militant confrontation" (Juris, 2008, p. 66)—promotes the "dynamic formation" of political subjects who, together, bring into being a collective subject (Arenas, 2015, p. 1123; see also Bosco, 2006, p. 361). In the Arab world, the revolts that led to Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's removal in Tunisia and Mubarak's ouster in Egypt favored the articulation of a "new political subjectivity," whereby ordinary Tunisians and Egyptians reimagined themselves as *al-shaʿb* ("the people") and acted, in consequence, as a revolutionary subject to put an end to decades of authoritarianism (Challand, 2011, p. 271; Bamyeh, 2013, p. 190; Hasso & Salime, 2016, p. 4; see also Salime, 2016, pp. 154-155 with regard to the Feb20 movement in Morocco).[202] The performative and affective dimensions of political mobilizations—manifested through the rhythmic marching and chanting of thousands of protesters and their shared vulnerability to police and military repression, for example—also facilitate the emergence of a sense of solidarity and a collective sociality that "increases and

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[202] At the same time, however, Hasso and Salime (2016) have complicated this view by questioning whether "girls, women, and nonconformists [were] included in *the people*" (p. 2).

expands people's capacity to act" during—and at times beyond—the act of protest itself (Arenas, 2015, p. 1125; see also Juris, 2008, p. 65).

In the aftermath of the January 25 Revolution, activism against public sexual violence was galvanized by the "moral shock" that represented the multiplication and exacerbation of collective sexual assaults during protests (Jasper, 1998, p. 409).[203] Initiatives such as OpAntiSH and Tahrir Bodyguard were first conceived as *ad hoc* interventions integrated by volunteers who sought to respond to what was seen as an emergency. While in some cases—particularly with regard to male volunteers—empathy acted as a catalyst to political action (Wright, 2009, p. 216), in many others activism was built upon "preexisting patterns of affect" (Jasper, 1998, p. 409) that situated fear and shame at the center of women's experiences in public space. Many women saw in the increase of public sexual violence in Tahrir Square an opportunity to bring into public prominence an issue that had affected their lives long before the revolutionary time. "For a lot of women there was a sense of relief that [that problem] was being talked about and a sense of mobilization, like 'let's push this issue,' 'let's work on this issue,'" noted journalist and OpAntiSH volunteer El-Rifae (2015) in an interview. Within these groups, volunteers developed non-hierarchical relations of care based on mutuality and trust, and created sustaining spaces that fostered emotional reflexivity and the politicization of everyday relations (Brown & Pickerill, 2009, p. 33; Shukaitis, 2011, p. 42; Clough, 2012, p. 1673).

While the different initiatives created separate systems of volunteer recruitment, trainings, protocols, and forms of identification, on the ground their volunteers forged a

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[203] "Moral shocks" ensue, according to Jasper (1998), "when an unexpected event or piece of information raises such a sense of outrage in a person that she becomes inclined toward political action" (p. 409).

collective identity that affectively signaled their membership to a common movement (Jasper, 1989, p. 415). Despite explicit—and often public—disagreements regarding political convictions, strategies, and methods between the different initiatives, their members developed "forms of community and solidarity based on multiple identifications" (Hasso & Salime, 2016, p. 2) and weaved relations of respect through repeated encounters on the square. When the military returned to power after Morsi's removal, all the groups were coordinating their movements in Tahrir Square to respond to the record number of collective sexual assaults that took place between June 30 and July 3, 2013.[204] Spectacular forms of activism via direct action interventions on Tahrir Square and other public spaces were supplemented with everyday "implicit activisms" that in the form of "small acts, words and deeds" contributed to multiplying and reproducing affective bonds of care among volunteers and between these and their communities (Horton & Kraftl, 2009, p. 14). After the state's ban of intervention groups in protests, many of their members continued to work against public sexual violence in different capacities, extending the affective impact of their activism. The next sections examine the case studies of OpAntiSH and HarassMap, and discuss the transformative effects that direct action initiatives had on volunteers, the groups they joined, and Egyptian society more generally.

"Protection Came From Size"

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[204] Independent initiatives and feminist organizations documented more than hundred sexual assaults of varying intensity during the anti-Morsi protests that filled Tahrir square between June 30 and July 3, 2013 (Nazra for Feminist Studies et al., 2013).

OpAntiSH was launched on November 30, 2012, as an activist reaction to the collective sexual assaults of November 23, 2012. Abd El-Hameed (2015), one of its initiators, explained to me that the initiative developed "organically" after she and another EIPR member decided to set up a hotline where women subjected to collective sexual assaults in protests could obtain help. To that end, they bought two cell phones and disseminated the numbers among protesters in the square. They were rapidly joined in their efforts by members of the media collective Mosireen, who were very active documenting police and army abuses during demonstrations.[205] Together they launched a call for volunteers on Facebook, to which eighty women and men responded, many of whom were already active in protests and in groups like HarassMap or Nazra. Recalling that moment, Abd El-Hameed noted that it was "very inspiring and refreshing" to see a group of young women and men "willing to volunteer for long hours on the square" to counter collective sexual assaults. Many of those who attended the first meetings had witnessed the attacks firsthand and tried to intervene in an individual capacity to stop them. In this line, Mosireen member and OpAntiSH volunteer Sherief Gaber (2015) remarked: "I had seen just how difficult it was to deal with this stuff without any sense of organization and how difficult it was to even address the issue beforehand, and for both reasons I decided to join and participate." OpAntiSH resulted from a collective decision "to create a more organized means and a more coordinated means of dealing with harassment and sexual assault," noted Gaber. As El-Rifae (2015) remarked, it initially emerged as a provisional response that only "slowly became a bit more formalized" building upon the experience that volunteers gained while operating on the ground.

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[205] For more information about Mosireen, see http://mosireen.org.

The repertoire of tactics and techniques adopted by OpAntiSH was developed, as Abd El-Hameed (2015) remarked, "step by step." At the beginning the group was loosely organized and did not keep record of the cases they intervened in. Progressively, "through a process of several months of trial and error, figuring out what worked best and learning from our mistakes" (El-Rifae 2015), the initiative put in place and into practice a sophisticated system aimed at preventing and stopping collective sexual assaults and providing support to survivors. Every time there was a protest in Tahrir Square, the initiative deployed teams on the ground that patrolled the area and, when they spotted a sexual assault, stepped in to pull the women under attack from the "circle of hell." OpAntiSH members could be easily identified by their T-shirts with the text "Against Harassment" in the front and "A Safe Square for All" in the back. The *intervention teams* were assisted by *safety teams* that accompanied survivors, provided them with clothes and basic sanitary items, and brought them to their home, a safe house or the hospital. There were also *midan teams* that raised awareness against public sexual violence and distributed the hotline numbers on the square, and scouts that surveyed the area from balconies and rooftops, trying to identify an attack as soon as it started. The whole procedure was coordinated from an *operations room* where volunteers received the calls and sent instructions to the different teams. Notwithstanding the organizational structure, operations were often reliant on volunteers' capacity to respond to changing situations. "That's where the strength of OpAntiSH came from," remarked El-Rifae (2015), "in people's ability to be resourceful, adaptive, and to make quick decisions that were based on previous experiences." The group partnered with Nazra and El-Nadeem Center for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence to offer medical, legal, and psychological support

to survivors, and accompany them to the hospital, the police station and to court, if required. ElMohandes (2015), who volunteered with OpAntiSH's intervention team, explained to me that in periods of protests "the executive director and founder of Nazra, Mozn [Hassan] and the psychological consultant could be up for five nights in a row, going to hospitals, following up the survivors, … the lawyers would be [in the office, ready] to go to the police station and then to court."

OpAntiSH was created as a "leftist-feminist-revolutionary project" that very explicitly linked the fight against public sexual violence with the revolutionary cause (Abd El-Hameed, 2015). As Gaber emphasized, the group was composed of people who "shared particular ideas about the contemporary political situation and the need to make Tahrir [square] … safe for political participation." They questioned notions of female vulnerability and male protection and, from the outset, insisted on including women in the intervention teams responsible for 'rescuing' the women under assault. As Abd El-Hameed remarked, they wanted to challenge the "stereotypical division of labor" according to which men protected women, and refused to confine women volunteers to support and logistic tasks. She noted that this was an important battle because it challenged the figure of the "male hero" and helped initiate a broader discussion of gender roles. The group rejected narratives that mobilized notions of honor or that, adopting a protection discourse articulated around idioms of kinship, asked men to treat activist women as their mothers, sisters, and daughters. These questions were collectively discussed and agreed upon during the first meetings held by the group and constituted the core of the preparatory briefings and a way of "screening" new volunteers: "[In these meetings] they would find out that yes, girls will take part, this is unquestionable and

indisputable," recalled an OpAntiSH senior volunteer during a workshop I co-organized

with Abd El-Hameed and SOAS PhD Candidate Marta Agosti in May of 2015, "those

who did not like that would leave, and the ones who got bored after a twenty-minute

briefing would also leave." Another question that became the object of collective

deliberation was whether members of the intervention teams should use violence against

armed assailants. On this issue, El-Rifae recalled:

> Sometimes intervention volunteers would face knives, guns, in some cases they were
> beaten with sticks … some volunteers were offered self-defense training if they
> wanted in order to be better prepared, but we found that ultimately the best defense
> against this kind of violence was numbers, we found actually that the bigger an
> intervention was able to be, the safer; the main protection came from size.

Through their practices, OpAntiSH enacted an ethics and a politics of care that

extended both to the spaces of protest—transforming "regimes of distrust and fear into

support and care" (Salime, 2016, p. 154)—and to activist spaces themselves. In Tahrir

Square, the members' embodied resistance and willingness to risk their physical integrity

on behalf of women unknown to them disrupted normative "maps of loyalty and of

affect" prescribing familial and kinship notions of responsibility in favor of a "politics of

connectivity" organized around common political allegiances (Massey, 2004, pp. 9 & 17).

The boundaries of this solidarity became particularly relevant on the eve of Morsi's

ouster, as Abd El-Hameed (2015) noted:

> [O]ur intervention on June 30, [2013] was strongly debated inside the group … there
> were people who [were] saying, 'we are fighting sexual violence and this is our role
> and we should do this' … other people were saying that 'we are from intervention
> teams and we are being subjected to the danger of being beaten, harassed, whether
> we are men or women' …. many of them said that 'we don't want to jeopardize our
> safety in a pro-army protest.'

Care articulated around a "logic of affinity" built upon feelings of trust, closeness, and respect (Clough, 2012, p. 1673; see also Day, 2004, p. 716; Dahlgren, 2016, p. 90; Salime, 2016, p. 154) was key not only to OpAntiSH's external operations but also to its internal cohesion. Bonds of affection were forged during direct action interventions as volunteers relied on each other to secure the survivors' and their own safety, and they were sustained after the operations through collective storytelling and reflexive practices. After every protest, the group held evaluation sessions where volunteers could share their experiences on the square. Referring to this process of group-based "emotional self-management" (Barker et al., 2008, p. 423), a male OpAntiSH volunteer explained in the workshop: "Testimonies would be shared among members, … after a few days of work, there would be some homogeneity; therefore it would be easier to admit having been subjected to harassment within the group." Over time, as he recalled, the weaving of relations of trust among volunteers transformed these meetings into "supportive spaces for emotional reflexivity" (Brown & Pickerill, 2009, p. 33) where gendered notions of emotionality could be safely disrupted: "Those who spent some time [in OpAntiSH] … received support from the ones around them, because if they feel like crying at the end of the day, no one would say to [them] "Boys don't cry!"

OpAntiSH ultimately stopped intervening in protests after the July 3, 2013 coup, as mass gatherings in Tahrir Square acquired a pro-military character that clashed with the group's political convictions.[206] The "shrinking of public space" after El-Sisi's arrival

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[206] All of the other intervention initiatives left the area soon afterwards, as the military banned intervention groups from the square and later outlawed protests altogether. Following the collective sexual assault of a woman—captured on video and circulated widely online—during the celebrations for El-Sisi's inauguration on June 8, 2014, Tahrir Bodyguard published a statement on June 10, 2014, explaining that their absence from Tahrir square was motivated by "the risk of being arrested with charges of 'forming & training armed militias' according to statements of some officials from the Ministry of

to power put increasing pressure on the group to search for alternative spaces for activism

(Abd El-Hameed, 2015). After months of silence, in March of 2015, OpAntiSH members

mobilized in Twitter to denounce the state's crackdown on queer and gender non-

conforming people and launched a campaign to raise funds to cover the medical costs of

one of the detainees of the Cairo bathhouse raid of December of 2014.[207] Despite the

relative inactivity of the group, OpAntiSH's influence still looms large in activist circles

organizing against public sexual harassment and assault. As El-Rifae (2015) noted, after

volunteering with the initiative

> there were a lot of people who changed jobs and started working at places like Nazra
> and other women's groups in Egypt after their experiences with OpAntiSH, there
> were a lot of men whose views and understanding of sexual harassment were
> completely [changed] after working with OpAntiSH, and they began to talk to their
> friends about it.

The collective effort in autonomous self-organization that was OpAntiSH elicited,

for El-Rifae, a "social ripple effect" that affectively touched not only those who were

involved in the project but those in their social networks as well. Almost two years after

the group stopped operating in Tahrir Square, the personal connections that emerged from

this initiative continue to exist. Asked about future actions, Gaber (2015) shared with me

his conviction that the group could be re-activated on behalf of this and other struggles:

Interior Affairs." Harakat Bassma was also forced to discontinue their operations in Tahrir square as the Ministry of Interior threatened with detaining their volunteers (Zaghloul, 2015).

[207] In December of 2014, twenty-six men were filmed by controversial journalist Mona Iraqi while they were being arrested at a bathhouse in downtown Cairo during a police raid. Iraqi presented the images as part of an investigative report on the spreading of AIDS in Egypt (Kingsley, 2014b). This action inscribed itself within a larger history of state and media attacks against the LGBTQ community in the country. OpAntiSH's crowdfunding campaign sought to fund the medical costs of one of the detainees, who tried to burn himself to death after his acquittal. For more information, see https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/urgent-appeal-for-medical-costs.

"I'm sure that if needed they would assemble again, and meet up again, … in the same circumstances that you may find us all together on the street," he remarked.

"This is a Safe Area, We Don't Tolerate Harassment Here"

In September of 2014, more than a year after OpAntiSH's standstill, Gaber joined HarassMap as the head of their Safe Areas program. This independent, volunteer-based initiative was created in 2010 with the broad goal of ending the social acceptability of sexual harassment in Egypt. HarassMap is most well known for its interactive, crowd-sourced map, an online tool that enables women to anonymously report cases of sexual harassment and assault through text messages and social media, and maps these incidents to bring awareness to the pervasiveness of public sexual violence across the territory.[208] Since the January 25 Revolution, however, the initiative has strengthened its community-based work with the development of an integrated approach that seeks to "engage all of Egyptian society to create an environment that does not tolerate sexual harassment" (HarassMap, "Who We Are").[209] Within this schema, the Safe Areas program endeavored to transform an array of spaces of public use into spaces free of sexual harassment and assault.[210] The program was first launched in 2012 focusing on small businesses such as coffee shops, grocery fruit sellers, and kiosks, with the aim of persuading their owners and employees to stand up if they witnessed public sexual violence within their premises and on the street. The concept came up after a HarassMap volunteer was subjected to a

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[208] The map can be found at https://harassmap.org/en.
[209] See https://harassmap.org/en/who-we-are.
[210] For a description of HarassMap's Safe Areas program, see http://harassmap.org/en/what-we-do/safe-areas.

collective sexual assault in the neighborhood of Zamalek, in 2012. As Safe Areas unit

manager Ahmed Hegab (2015) recalled in an interview, the man responsible for a nearby

kiosk stopped the assault. Inspired by this intervention, the program began to target

similar businesses. After its official inauguration in December of 2014, the program

developed a three-pronged approach that also included the prevention of and

development of policies against sexual harassment and assault in educational institutions

(Safe Schools and Universities) and in the workplace (Safe Corporates).[211]

HarassMap's Safe Areas team on the ground was integrated by Gaber and Safe

Areas coordinator Kamilia el-Kady. Their work involved many hours of walking around

Cairo's central neighborhoods, reaching out to small business owners to convince them to

become part of HarassMap's Safe Areas network. This task was not always easy, as

Gaber noted: "They don't necessarily want involvement in something that will end up

taking their time or that may get them into trouble." By joining the program, businesses'

owners committed to treat public sexual violence with zero tolerance and to support

anyone who was sexually harassed or assaulted in their presence. If a business agreed to

participate, all employees received a one-day training that covered definitions and types

of sexual harassment and examined modes of intervention against these behaviors. At the

end of the training, the Safe Areas team provided them with a yellow, round sticker with

the text "makān amn" ("safe space") that certified that sexual harassment was not

accepted in that venue (see Image 5). According to El-Kady (2015a), this meant that "if

you get harassed you can ask [the owner or the employees] to get involved [and] … no

one [is] gonna blame you and no one [is] gonna say 'it's ok, he won't do [it] again,' no,

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[211]   For more information on Safe Schools and Universities, see https://harassmap.org/en/safe-schools-
        universities. For more information on Safe Corporates, see https://harassmap.org/en/safe-corporates.

[they will] take steps, if you wanna make a report in a police station they are gonna support you."

After a new business joined the program, the Safe Areas team tested whether owner and employees actually intervened in support of a person who was sexually harassed through a "mystery shopper"-like visit whereby HarassMap's volunteers staged a situation of harassment and evaluated the employees' responses to it (El-Kady, 2015a). If the workers failed to stand up in support of the harassed person, the business lost its status as a "safe space" and the sticker was removed. To optimize efforts, the Safe Areas team privileged working with businesses they had identified as potential allies, such as the Zamalek kiosk that already intervened on behalf of a HarassMap volunteer and the women-owned restaurants Om Dahab, Sumaya and Eish We Malh in downtown Cairo (El-Kady, 2015a). To expand the number of businesses, they collaborated with HarassMap's community mobilization unit and asked participant businesses to recommend other venues.

Image 4: The Zamalek kiosk whose owner (not in the picture) intervened to stop a collective sexual assault against a HarrasMap volunteer. Picture by the author.

Image 5: Omm Dahab's owner points at HarassMap's Safe Areas poster, certifying that her restaurant is free of public sexual harassment. Picture by the author.

One of the main obstacles faced by El-Kady (2015a) in her work was the pervasive denial about the existence of public sexual harassment in Egypt, a question commonly addressed in the first visit to a new business. "If you [don't] know there is a problem, you can't fix it, so they have to admit that there is harassment," she noted. Another difficulty encountered by the Safe Areas' team revolved around generalized misconceptions regarding what was—and was not—sexual harassment. It was not uncommon, El-Kady (2015a) remarked, to find employees that belittled the importance of verbal harassment by equating it to *muʿāksa* (flirtation) or that naturalized it as something intrinsic to Egyptian culture. On the other hand, when asked about the kind of situations in which they would intervene, El-Kady noted that employees often mentioned public displays of affection between young couples. During the training, the Safe Areas team emphasized that unwelcome sexual advances were unacceptable while highlighting that consensual expressions of intimacy should be respected (El-Kady, 2015a). Similarly, trainers drew on HarassMap's manual about "sexual harassment myths" to respond to the widely-held assumptions that women's clothes are to blame for sexual aggressions or that these result from men's sexual frustration.[212] By means of this dialectical exchange, the

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[212] According to HarassMap's materials, the most common myths are: 1. Sexual harassment only happens to unveiled and/or indecently dressed women – respectable women don't get harassed. 2. Sexual harassment is not a big problem – there are more important problems to worry about. 3. Sexual harassment only happens at night in dark, deserted places or 'bad areas.' 4. Women like the attention – they go out just to get harassed. 5. Boys will be boys! 6. If you ignore it, it will go away. 7. Only poor or uneducated men harass women. 8. Men can't help it: The bad economic situation is preventing young men from getting married and because their religion prohibits premarital sex, they are forced to become harassers. 9. Sexual harassment might be annoying, but it's not a crime! 10. Comments and whistling are compliments, not sexual harassment. 11. Only young and 'pretty' women get harassed. 12. Sexual harassment is the only way for youth to meet and interact. 13. Harassers are always strangers in the street. In its website, HarassMap responds to these myths with extensive documentation (see http://harassmap.org/en/resource-center/harassment-myths). In March of 2013, this initiative developed a campaign to debunk some of the most pervasive misconceptions (see http://harassmap.org/en/campaign-debunking-myths-about-sexual-harassment). Reflecting on the

Safe Areas team endeavored to refashion social norms in ways that enhanced women's

safety *and* their freedom in public. While recognizing that this was a "slow and

challenging" task, HarassMap's co-founder Chiao (2015) defended its mid-term validity:

"Over time people on the street, residents, *bawābīn* … are intervening, they're becoming

active bystanders … they're saying [things] like 'this is a safe area, we don't tolerate

harassment here' … so that's really nice," she noted.

Neighbors, *bawābīn* (sing. *bawāb,* doorman), cab drivers and other people who

regularly find themselves in public space are the "eyes upon the street" (Jacobs, 1961, p.

35) that have traditionally ensured the safety of both residents and strangers and

safeguarded social order. They also integrate the informal networks of surveillance and

control that contribute to the enforcement of mechanisms of sexual governmentality,

notably through the supervision of women's dress and their interactions with unrelated

men. In this regard, Gaber (2015) remarked that the Safe Areas team sought to "reach

those people who are already involved in some sort of monitoring of the street and

attempt to use that position for more progressive ends." To achieve that goal HarassMap's

efforts concentrated on modifying people's actions, not their beliefs: "I'm not changing

people's way of thinking, we are asking them to change their behavior … we ask people

to intervene to stop sexual harassment," emphasized Hegab. It was through the collective

practice of anti-harassment bystander intervention, he contended, that social values and

attitudes could start to change: "When [people] intervene [they] will start thinking

differently," he asserted. Hegab's argument—and HarrassMap's approach—relies on

scholarship on social norms, according to which these become internalized through

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pervasiveness of these myths, Hegab (2015) told me that HarassMap's community mobilization units encountered the same excuses across the territory, from Aswan in the South to Marsa Matruh in the North.

"iterated behavior and habit" until they acquire a taken-for-granted character (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998, pp. 904-905).[213] HarassMap's ultimate target was the community as a whole, upon which it conferred the moral obligation to take care of each other (Staeheli, 2013, p. 537).[214] Through the enactment of a "place-based ethics of care" (Till, 2012, p. 8), the Safe Areas team worked to engage those that inhabited the shared spaces of the neighborhood in durable relations of trust and solidarity—*caring with* and not only *about* or *for* each other (Tronto, 2017, p. 32).[215]

Increased securitization and militarization of public space in the aftermath of the July 2013 coup has also impacted HarassMap's activities, as any form of street intervention has become subject to prior police approval. While in the Spring of 2015 the Safe Areas team and the community mobilization unit were still working in public space through a joint street-centered pilot project, the bulk of HarassMap's actions have gradually moved to other spaces.[216] Most of all, the Safe Schools and Universities team has intensified its work in college campuses, notably in Cairo University through the

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[213] This theory posits that norms have a "life cycle" composed of three phases: emergence, cascade and internalization (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998, p. 895). It contends that norms are actively introduced by norm entrepreneurs who promote new forms of appropriate or desirable behavior in their community. After a "tipping point" is reached, the norm cascades through an "active process of … socialization intended to induce norm breakers to become norm followers" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998, p. 902).

[214] Drawing on critical mass theory, the initiative seeks to "motivate a critical mass of bystanders to stand up to harassers" and to "restore [a] sense of social responsibility and create zero tolerance for sexual harassment in Egypt" (HarassMap's website, "What Does HarassMap Do"). In social movement scholarship, critical mass theory argues that collective action requires the development of a critical mass, "a small segment of the population that chooses to make big contributions to the collective action while the majority do little or nothing" (Oliver, Marwell, and Teixeira, 1985, p. 524). When a threshold of participation is reached, the argument goes, "collective action will tend to snowball, drawing in more and more people until the maximum is reached" (Oliver et al., 1985, p. 535).

[215] In their seminal definition, Fisher and Tronto (1990) regarded care as a process with four intertwining phases: 1) *caring about,* attentiveness; 2) *taking care of,* responsibility; 3) *care-giving,* competence; and 4) *care-receiving,* responsiveness (p. 40; see also Tronto, 1995, p. 142). In 2013, Tronto (2017) added a fifth dimension, *caring with,* to refer to the forms of care that occur "when a group of people (from a family to a state) can rely upon an ongoing cycle of care to continue to meet their caring needs" (p. 32).

[216] As part of this approach, both teams focused on one street during six months, over the course of which they established partnerships with local businesses and organized awareness campaigns with residents, *bawābīn,* cab drivers, etc. (El-Kady, 2015a; Zeid, 2015).

creation of an anti-harassment policy—adopted in the Fall of 2014—and the establishment of an Anti-Harassment and Violence Against Women Unit (Hegab, 2015). A cooperation agreement with the ride-hailing platform Uber in October of 2015—a move that sparked criticism within HarassMap's ranks—has further signaled the initiative's distancing from public space through the promotion of privatized forms of safety against public sexual violence.[217] Moreover, following the amendment of article 306 of the penal code in June of 2014, HarassMap has joined the state's criminalization efforts through campaigns such as "*al-mutaḥarrish mugrim*" (The Harasser is a Criminal), thus departing from more autonomous and community-based forms of organization against public sexual harassment and assault.[218]

"An Inevitability of Feminist Consciousness"

Despite the common focus on public sexual violence, many of the initiatives that intervened against sexual harassment and assault in Tahrir Square and on the streets espoused different—when not opposed—ideological and methodological positions. Four years of activism, however, facilitated the convergence of analyses, techniques and actions, and the creation of alliances among the various groups. This process is best illustrated by the relationship between OpAntiSH and Tahrir Bodyguard, two initiatives launched almost simultaneously albeit championing very different discourses. From the beginning, Tahrir Bodyguard's initial restriction of women volunteers to support tasks was criticized by OpAntiSH volunteers like Gaber (2015), who found their emphasis on

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[217] See https://harassmap.org/en/news/uber-egypts-commitment-to-prevent-sexual-harassment.
[218] See https://harassmap.org/en/campaigns.

protecting women "very paternalistic." Tensions between the two groups escalated as

Tahrir Bodyguard published a tweet on November 27, 2012, urging women not to wear

"tight or flashy clothes" in protests as a defensive measure against public sexual

violence.[219] As the group faced backlash online, OpAntiSH responded through the

publication, on November 30, 2012, of another tweet that emphasized: "STRESSING:

Any assaulted woman is the victim of a criminal act - regardless of what she was

wearing, where she was, and what she was doing."[220] Shortly thereafter, Tahrir

Bodyguard changed its men-only policy yielding to some of their members' pressure. "I

challenged this approach because I have always been a hardcore feminist and I think that

when you want to work on a women's rights-related cause you cannot limit it to male

volunteers even when [there is] danger," explained co-founder Zeinab Sabet (2015) in an

interview. Progressively, the group adopted a more feminist discourse that explicitly

condemned victim-blaming rhetoric, in part responding to online criticism articulated,

among others, by OpAntiSH members.[221] Despite the political distance that separated the

two groups, volunteers from both initiatives collaborated on the ground and increasingly

coordinated their movements in Tahrir Square. In their interventions of June 30 to July 3,

2013, during the protests to demand Morsi's removal, Tahrir Bodyguard volunteers

staffed OpAntiSH's operations room, responding to the hotline calls and directing the

different teams (Sabet, 2015).

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[219] See https://twitter.com/TahrirBG_DWB/status/273379639467061248. Despite their mobilization in public space, all the initiatives had an important online component, as they relied on Facebook and Twitter for mobilization and organizational purposes.

[220] See https://twitter.com/OpAntiSH/status/274517788025053184.

[221] For example, in a tweet of January 23, 2013, the group wrote: "Why blaming #women for being sexually harassed? Think about it, they are victims and not criminals! #endSH." See https://twitter.com/TahrirBG_DWB/status/294149626687275009. Similarly, on March 19, 2013, they tweeted: "Dear all, remember #sexualharassment is a crime. You can not let it go; you can never blame the person harassed. Never. #endSH #Egypt." See https://twitter.com/TahrirBG_DWB/status/313983969265868800.

This collaborative dynamic extended to other intervention initiatives operating in Tahrir Square, resulting in what Harakat Bassma's co-founder Nihal Saad Zaghloul (2015) saw as "a new strategy of working together."[222] According to her, this approach markedly differed from previous forms of organizing against public sexual violence: "All of the old organizations," noted Zaghloul, "they never worked together, and we grew up with that, but then we realized … that this is not productive." Sharing this insight, Chiao—who worked for ECWR as International Relations Director between 2004 and 2008—remarked: "One of the reasons why … networks [against public sexual violence prior to the Revolution] [we]re never very successful … is that people ha[d] different opinions and they spen[t] a lot of time arguing about whose opinion is right." She noted that, conversely, after the January 25 Revolution "people cooperated *ad hoc,* so sometimes we would find like-minded people and we would do something [together], but we didn't sit around and try … to get consensus before doing something." On-the-ground collaboration, in turn, facilitated the forging of more sympathetic relations between the different groups, as Abd El-Hameed (2015) remarked:

> The field would make you cooperate many times, [people] would change their minds and we would reach the conclusion that maybe we are the leftist revolutionaries but we are not the only group who is fighting sexual violence … and it's all an added value to the movement and to the cause, and everybody is fighting from their position, and everybody has their role.

While the different initiatives worked independently of each other, at times they mobilized around concerted actions such as the campaign "*ṣaliḥha fi dimaghak*" (Get It Right) organized by Nazra, EIPR, HarassMap, OpAntiSH and Tahrir Bodyguard on the

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[222] Similar on-the-ground cooperation took place between OpAntiSH, Shoft Taharrush, Dedd al-Taharrush, and Harakat Bassma, even though the latter restricted participation in the intervention teams to men and favored hierarchical and military-like forms of organization that contrasted with the more horizontal structure adopted by OpAntiSH (Tadros, 2014b, p. 13; Zaghloul, 2015).

occasion of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence of 2013.[223] By

means of joint efforts and *ad hoc* cooperation, they projected an image of cohesion

"through a range of integrating, cross-cutting links, bonds, and operations, including ties

between members and group leaders" (Gerlach, 1971, p. 834). The amicable relations that

existed between members of the different initiatives was one of the factors that facilitated

these collaborations. "Everyone is friends with each other, we don't fight each other on

the same issue, we're not competitive but each one has its own objectives on how to

tackle this issue [and] sometimes we all participate in the same cause and have the same

objectives," noted Shoft Taharrush co-founder Fathi Farid (2015).

Despite the points of encounter shared by the different initiatives, other questions

distanced them. Two main controversial issues were the relationship with the state and

the sustainability of their activities. The first question became more pressing after July 3,

2013, as the military returned to power and moved to regain control over public space.

OpAntiSH was the only initiative that specifically identified as a revolutionary movement

and completely opposed working with state authorities; it was also the only group that

decided to stop operating in Tahrir Square after El-Sisi's takeover. Tahrir Bodyguard split

into two groups, one that continued intervening in protests until June of 2014 and

another—renamed Dignity Without Borders (DWB)—that, under Sabet's leadership,

endeavored to tackle questions of gender-based sexual violence by means of awareness-

raising, women's empowerment and education activities (Sabet, 2015). In the Spring of

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[223] The campaign was aimed at challenging misconceptions about sexual violence and included a forty-eight-hour tweeting event, stickers and posters with caricatures and comics that clarified definitions and addressed common excuses used to normalize sexual harassment, storytelling workshops, self-defense classes and an open mic session. This common effort contributed to streamlining discourses about public sexual violence and to reinforcing the ties between the different groups. See http://harassmap.org/en/campaign-sala7ha-x-dmaghak and http://nazra.org/sala7ha (in Arabic).

2015, under the pressure of increasing state control over the activities of civil society

organizations, particularly with regard to foreign funding, DWB and HarassMap were

undergoing the process of registering as NGOs with the Ministry of Social Solidarity,

while Harakat Bassma was filing the paperwork to become a foundation (Hegab, 2015;

Sabet, 2015; Zaghloul, 2015). In the meantime, those who continued working on the

streets increasingly opted for requesting permits from the police to avoid detention of

their volunteers. "At first it was difficult, but then [the authorities] became more

receptive, especially after the Violence Against Women (VAW) unit was established in

the Ministry of Interior," noted Zaghloul, "we mainly communicate with them, they are

the ones who facilitate our work on the ground."[224] From a more strategic perspective,

Hegab (2015) saw HarassMap's collaboration with the state as a necessary step in the

fight against public sexual violence:

> If you want to end [sexual violence] you have to work with everyone, you can't end
> it by yourself, you can't end it [through] Facebook, you can't end it by protesting,
> you can't end it by small groups of activists gathering in cafés and talking, it has to
> be from down to top and from top to down, and that's why we're working with the
> ministries … maybe politically we don't agree with them, but we need to end this,
> and that can't be ended only [by] NGOs.

The question of sustainability was another matter of contention within and among

the different initiatives. As El-Rifae (2015) remarked, "there were times when certain

organizers and volunteers within OpAntiSH had hopes of it becoming something bigger,

taking on the issue of sexual harassment more broadly and not just working on these

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[224] The VAW unit was initially created by the Morsi presidency in the Ministry of Interior in May of 2013
(ECWR, 2013; Marroushi, 2015, p. 7). On June 18, 2014, Interior Minister Mohamed Ibrahim
announced the establishment of VAW units in security directorates across Egypt (Marroushi, 2015, pp.
7-8). Besides Harakat Bassma, Dedd al-Taharrush and Shoft Taharrush also continued to organize anti-
harassment patrols during Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha with the authorization of the police and the
Ministry of Interior in 2015 (Farid, 2015).

attacks that were happening in the square." A desire for a more comprehensive approach to addressing sexual violence was also behind Tahrir Bodyguard's split: "We thought that the intervention that we were doing was very good but it was limited in the sense that it was only reacting to sexual harassment and rape but it was not providing any solution," explained Sabet (2015). Echoing these concerns, Zaghloul (2015) emphasized: "Intervention is not a solution, it's just a painkiller, you help somebody on the spot, you save them, and it's a great feeling, but it is not sustainable, you cannot do it for long and it's not safe." Moreover, as Abd El-Hameed (2015) remarked, under the current political situation "there is no opportunity to do the same kind of grassroots work that people used to do in the past few years, whether in Cairo or elsewhere, because of the hyper-securitized climate." It is for this reason that Harakat Bassma, as well as Shoft Taharrush and Dedd al-Taharrush, have expanded the scope of their work to include awareness-raising activities and workshops in a multiplicity of spaces, from schools and universities to social media. While these groups were still facing difficulties to enter educational centers by the Spring of 2015, Facebook and Twitter had become productive spaces where conversations and campaigns against public sexual violence continued to take place (ElMohandes, 2015; El-Rifae, 2015; Zaghloul, 2015).

On-the-ground activism as well as formal and informal discussions, exchanges, and collaborations among these groups between 2012 and 2015 nevertheless served as a ground to "cultivate affinity" (Clough, 2012, p. 1674) and, over time, facilitated the emergence of a "convergence space" (Routledge, 2003, p. 345) where an heterogeneous coalition against public sexual violence could start to take shape in the aftermath of the

January 25 Revolution.[225] These connections "interrupted politics conceived around *already given* identities, spaces, and strategies of mobilization" (Salime, 2016, p. 138) and favored the articulation of novel forms of being and doing in the aftermath of the January 25 Revolution. As Abd El-Hameed (2015) remarked, the initiatives had "different departure points but there [was] an inevitability of feminist consciousness" that arose from the interventions themselves and from the cooperation between the groups. Albeit conflictual and contingent, this space of encounter allowed for the different groups to "articulate collective visions, to generate sufficient common ground to generate a politics of solidarity" (Routledge, 2003, p. 345) and to enact these "imaginaries" in the present (Dahlgren, 2016, p. 97). In this regard, Abd El-Hameed (2015) highlighted the mobilization of this heterogeneous collectivity following a collective sexual assault in Cairo University in March of 2014. As she noted, the backlash sparked by comments voiced by Cairo University's president Gaber Nasser—who rendered the episode "exceptional" and suggested that the female student's attire was to blame for the attack (Mada Masr, 2014c)—revealed the growing public unacceptability of victim-blaming rhetoric that minimized the seriousness and pervasiveness of public sexual violence in Egypt (Langohr, 2015, pp. 132-133; see also Mackey, 2014; El-Fekki, 2015).[226] "In the

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[225] According to Paul Routledge (2003), convergence spaces foster the articulation of an "associational politics that constitutes a diverse, contested coalition of place-specific social movements" by means of communication, information sharing, solidarity, coordination and resource mobilization (p. 345).

[226] After sustained criticism against his declarations in television and social media, Gaber apologized and announced a cooperation agreement with Shoft Taharrush to prevent sexual harassment on campus (Langohr, 2015, p. 133). Cairo University adopted an anti-harassment policy drafted by HarassMap in July of 2014 and established an Anti-Harassment Unit in April of 2015 (see https://cu.edu.eg/anti-harassment). Other popular campaigns to render media figures accountable for their remarks about public sexual violence have targeted news anchor Maha Bahnassy (Youssef, 2014, see note 69) and TV host Reham Saeed. On October 30, 2015, Saeed interviewed a woman who had been sexually harassed in a shopping mall and assaulted by the harasser when she responded to his unwelcome sexual advances. In the show, she asked the interviewee: "Do you think you were dressed appropriately?" and showed on air pictures where the woman appeared on the beach and in other situations of her private life (BBC Trending, 2015). These images provoked widespread criticism and precipitated a boycott

past if a statement like [Nasser's] came out you would find one organization or two saying that this is unacceptable but now you have an army," she noted. Besides punctual moments of concerted action, the affinity shared by the different initiatives expressed itself through sustained efforts to experiment with new political subjectivities and models of community as an alternative to state-sanctioned forms of social organization.

Multi-Scalar Transformations and "Spillover Effects"

After four years of direct action interventions against public sexual violence, what has been the impact of this activism? There is consensus among the members of the initiatives I interviewed that, while their engagement did not bring an end to public sexual harassment and assault, their work produced substantial changes at the social, group, and personal level. There is also a shared perception that their accomplishments were only possible as a result of the collective effort of the different groups (Abd El-Hameed, 2015; Sabet, 2015; Zaghloul, 2015). The Egyptian government's decision to amend the penal code to criminalize sexual harassment in June of 2014, for example, was seen by Abd El-Hameed (2015) as forced by the "tremendous pressure created by those initiatives and civil society organizations." Nevertheless, activists concurred that their biggest success was opening a debate about public sexual violence—shattering the "public denial" that existed prior to 2011 (Hegab, 2015)—and re-framing the narrative around public sexual harassment and assault that pervaded media and political discourses.

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against the show and the TV channel demanding Saeed's firing. After several companies withdrew their advertisements, the channel canceled the show (El-Fekki, 2015). In February of 2016, Saeed was condemned to eighteen months in prison and a fine for violating the privacy of an assault victim (Mada Masr, 2016). Bahnassy's comments sparked outrage online and in television, and ultimately led to her suspension from work without pay (Ahram Online, 2014b; Mackey, 2014).

As Abd El-Hameed (2015) noted, media reporting on public sexual violence before the January 25 Revolution used to be "seasonal," restricted to the coverage of instances of collective sexual harassment during Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha. This perspective allowed media outlets to portray these attacks as a "strange phenomenon that is very alien to our culture" (Abd El-Hameed, 2015). Moreover, as ElMohandes (2015) remarked, media representations of sexual violence tended to "fetishize or focus on the sexual aspect of it and [didn't] highlight it as a crime of violence." They often included personal information about survivors, thus facilitating their identification (ElMohandes, 2015). Following Mubarak's ouster, discussions about state-sponsored sexualized violence such as the virginity tests of March of 2011 and the assault of *sitt el-banat* (popularly known as "the blue bra girl") in December of 2011 were couched in both state and revolutionary discourses in the language of honor, portraying the women—at the *at risk/as risk* juncture—as either dishonorable beings who deserved their predicament or as the embodiment of the honor of the Revolution in need of protection (Abd El-Hameed, 2015).

Through their analyses and practices, intervention initiatives developed a counter-narrative that dispelled the widespread notion that women were to blame for these attacks and reworked entrenched feelings of fear and shame around public sexual violence. "All of us, we really made a huge difference by changing the mentality of Egyptian women and making them understand that they are victims and not to be blamed," remarked Sabet (2015). This awareness, according to Zaghloul (2015), contributed to "ma[king] more women speak up against sexual harassment [and] more and more men support their sisters, mothers [and] partners … and [say] that they are not ashamed of what happened."

The participation of members of these initiatives in popular TV shows such as Bassem Youssef's *al-Birnamig* popularized their messages across Egyptian society (Langohr, 2013, p. 25 & 2015, p. 132).

The collaboration between newly created initiatives such as OpAntiSH, Tahrir Bodyguard, Shoft Taharrush and Harakat Bassma and more established organizations like EIPR, Nazra and El-Nadeem also proved beneficial for both sides. One the one hand, the latter provided venues and technical support, and offered legal, medical and psychological assistance to survivors of sexual violence referred by the teams that operated on Tahrir Square and on the streets (Abd El-Hameed, 2015). For ElMohandes (2015), this was "a good way to link activism from people who are not formally in NGOs with the capacities that we have for the provision of the kind of support needed for survivors." On the other hand, organizations like EIPR also benefited from the more direct approach adopted by the new initiatives, as Abd El-Hameed remarked: "[W]hat I learned from that [activism] is that there was a totally different potentiality to work with issues of sexual violence than what we used to do, there are innovative ways that we could use to deal with these issues." Similarly, El-Rifae (2015) noted that intervention groups "changed and expanded the way people think of grassroots organizing and extended the possibilities of what that could look like." While social movement scholars like Maha Abdelrahman (2013) have identified the "absence of sustainable organization structures" as "one of the main challenges to the prospects of genuine revolutionary change" in the aftermath of the January 25 Revolution (p. 569), the informal character of many of the direct action initiatives that operated in public space allowed them to develop their activities outside of the regimes of NGO-ization and state feminism that

characterized the Egyptian women's movement under Mubarak (Jad, 2007; Hatem, 1992). In the current political situation of military control and crackdown on civil society organizations, the administrative invisibility of these groups has enabled them—at least temporarily—to evade control and fend off state attempts at cooptation and repression.[227]

At the personal level, participation in direct action interventions had a transformative effect on those directly involved in them. Women's purposeful inhabitation of spaces and times deemed dangerous—notably Tahrir Square during protests and downtown Cairo during the celebration of religious festivities—to protect other women against sexual harassment and assault disrupted the social consensus about female vulnerability and respectability. By deliberately putting their bodies and reputations at risk through their appropriation of public space, female volunteers openly challenged the logic of sexual governmentality that governs women's conduct in Egypt, with consequences that extended beyond the urban realm. As Zaghloul (2015) remarked,

> a lot of girls … didn't believe they had rights, they believed that sexual harassment was their fault, and through being with us for a year or two they now believe that it is their right to walk safely on the streets, they are now campaigning … against sexual harassment in public spaces, in universities and others; they are [also] able to gain power into their own homes with their families.

Mixed-gender cooperation within and between the different initiatives fostered new ways of relating across gender lines. Shared exposure to violence during direct action interventions expanded relations of trust between volunteers, who relied on mutual care for their safety, and intensified feelings of empathy towards known and unknown

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[227] As Luther Gerlach (1971) argues, a "segmentary, policephalous, and reticulate" structure is "highly effective and adaptive in innovating and producing social change and in surviving in the fact of established order opposition" (p. 816). While groups like HarassMap and Harakat Bassma have been undergoing processes of professionalization, at the time of their creation they were self-funded, did not have paid positions or an office, and depended entirely on voluntary work (Chiao, 2015; Zaghloul, 2015). These initiatives, as well as many other civil society organizations, were forced to register with the Ministry of Social Solidarity by the end of 2014 (Daily News Egypt, 2014; Mada Masr, 2014b).

others. "[Male volunteers] understand that it's not only that they have to defend women, but also to stand with them," noted Zaghloul (2015), "now they realize that if [a space is] not safe for women, then it's not safe for everyone … it's either all of us or none of us." This collectively-lived experience became the ground for the emergence of a network of "affective resistance" that facilitated the experimentation with new ways of being together and new forms of community (Shukaitis, 2011, p. 32; see also Lefebvre, 1987; Dahlgren, 2016, p. 97).

The proliferation of activist initiatives against public sexual harassment and assault in Tahrir Square and on the streets of Cairo also had a "spillover effect" onto other gender-related issues as well as other places (Abd El-Hameed, 2015). As ElMohandes (2015) remarked, the aftermath of the January 25 Revolution saw the multiplication of feminist initiatives and groups in many governorates: "Most of them work on the issue of sexual harassment and violence against women whether it's the private sphere or the public sphere [but] there are also a lot of initiatives that work on female genital mutilation," she explained to me. Groups like HarassMap and Harakat Bassma have also expanded their work to other governorates with projects that tackle religion- and race-based public sexual harassment, among other questions (Zaghloul, 2015; also Chiao, 2015). For Abd El-Hameed (2015), public sexual violence provides a point of departure for addressing other gender-related questions:

> Some people would say that the heavy focus on sexual violence against women in public space constitutes a missed opportunity to work on other issues, like domestic violence, female circumcision … this is partially true, but it is also partially not true, because you have to have a starting point, if you want to engage the wider society in the discussion [of] an issue related to gender or women's rights you have to start somewhere, and then people will find themselves questioning the other stuff too.

Despite the political constraints that limit the work of these initiatives in the current political moment, El-Rifae (2015) believes that the "ripple-effect" created by their practices will continue to reverberate through the "individual transmission of knowledge and perspective[s] and experience … whether [it] is people doing that informally with their friends and their networks, or whether [it] is people working on women's rights organizations, or writing about their experience." It is to the multiplication of spaces of testimony about public sexual violence in the years that followed the January 25 Revolution that I turn to in the next chapter.

Chapter Four

Safe Spaces of Risk

> I know that many will not like that I wrote this about Tahrir square thinking I am trying to vandalize the image of the Egyptian revolution…but this is not my intention, I have participated in almost all the battles and marches since Jan28 2011 but sexual harassment in Egypt is growing and growing and we need to address it. We ignored it for too long and it is becoming a monster that is eating us all.
> — Testimony of Nihal Saad Zaghloul, survivor of a collective sexual assault on Tahrir Square on June 2, 2012.[228]

Who is Going to Confess?

The first time Yasmine El-Baramawy published an account of the collective

sexual assault she had been subjected to she used the Facebook page of a journalist friend

and posted her story anonymously (El-Baramawy, 2015). Shortly thereafter, her

testimonial appeared—identified with the initial Y.—in a compilation of cases of public

sexual violence in protests documented by El-Nadeem, Nazra and the New Woman

Foundation (El-Nadeem et al., 2013, pp. 19-21). It was not until the second anniversary

of the January 25 Revolution—when nineteen women were sexually assaulted during

celebrations in Tahrir Square, some of them injured with bladed weapons—that El-

Baramawy (2015) decided to speak publicly about the attack. "I thought of announcing

that because nobody believed [what was happening] and they needed to see it in a real

person, not in numbers," she told me during our interview. She also felt compelled to talk

about her experience to counter victim-blaming and -shaming discourses:

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[228] See Zaghloul (2012).

I was provoked because when a female suffers from such a violation she's supposed to be ashamed and I don't see it this way because I'm not a thief, I'm not a killer, I didn't do anything bad, something bad happened to me, and I was really angry from that perspective, that the victims be blamed for that.

On February 1, 2013, El-Baramawy appeared in the talk show *Akhir al-Nahar* of Al-Nahar TV channel and talked graphically about the collective sexual assault she had suffered, showing the clothes—slashed by knives—that she was wearing at the time of the attack.[229] Many people asked her why she had agreed to be part of the show, the first in the history of Egyptian television in which a survivor of a collective sexual assault spoke about this form of violence. On this question, she stressed:

I didn't agree, I *asked* [to go], nobody asked me to [appear showing] my face, or to go tell my story [with my face blurred,] I asked [the show] and they were hesitant about that, the anchor was afraid that he will be accused of ruining Egypt's reputation, he was really alert and cautious and he didn't say much, he just gave me the space to tell whatever I want[ed] to say, and he didn't even comment, nothing.

Despite her resolution, El-Baramawy recognized that she was afraid of the reactions that her public appearance might trigger. "Normally it's a scandal, the victim would rather hide it because she doesn't want to be victimized … or attacked or insulted," she noted, "there are many fears [related to speaking up,] for a girl maybe nobody will marry you or your family name will be [tarnished.]" She was therefore deeply moved when the most repeated comments posted by people who watched the video were "you're brave" and, from men who reacted to it, "I'm sorry." Recalling that moment, she told me that she did not expect most reactions to be positive: "I was really surprised because I was preparing myself for 'you're a liar' [and] 'you're a prostitute,' and I didn't receive that." The overwhelming messages of support garnered by her

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[229] The video is available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vZVNosY-2DA.

interview also contributed to change her family's initial opposition to her decision to go public: "My father didn't agree … I told him I'm going on TV and he … threatened [to] disown me [and asked me not to] mention our family, but when the reaction was like that he said 'you were right' and he's proud of me because people said that they respect me."

El-Baramawy's step forward also encouraged other survivors to speak up, creating a "solidarity of shared disclosure" (Nguyen, 2010, p. 9). "Many, many girls sent me their stories, and they were brave enough to tell what happened to them, many men even, they started talking about it or writing testimonies online," she recalled. According to El-Baramawy, countless people felt the need to share their experiences of sexual violence with her after she explained her story. Even journalists who came to interview her ended up confiding in her. "It was like a game for me, who is going to confess," she said, remembering what became a familiar scene,

> she or he [would take] slower steps because he *[sic]* want[ed] his colleagues to reach the door first, he [would] just [tell] me in thirty seconds, you know, 'don't tell my colleagues,' I [was] not going to see them again, but he [would be] really afraid, 'I was assaulted when I was a child' maybe, or something [else], and 'I didn't tell anyone' or 'I can't talk about it.'

In our conversation, El-Baramawy framed her decision to testify in therapeutic terms, noting that speaking about her personal experience of violence was "a big step for curing [my]self, [my] soul." She explained to me that "when you have pain inside and you can't take it out, you suffer." And yet her decision to speak up about this highly sensitive topic was also informed by an acute awareness of the social impact that her testimonial would have for other women in Egypt: "Going public was important [but] not in an official way, it was important for the people," she said. Her decision to appear on television and to render herself vulnerable to public commentary and insult was a

political one that recognized the commonality of experience regarding public sexual

violence: "We all have the same problem and we all have the same fear, it's just about

who takes the first step, and these people who supported me I think that they understand

what I've been through, even in a less[er] scale, but they know what I'm talking about."

The urge to "confess," to break the taboo and talk about present and past

experiences of sexual violence, to share these memories with sympathetic others—what

Vinh-Kim Nguyen (2010) has called "practices of disclosure"—became particularly

pressing in the years that followed the January 25 Revolution (p. 7).[230] Prior to 2011,

testimonies of public sexual harassment and assault were scarce and mostly anonymous,

mainly due to the stigma that generally surrounds survivors of sexual violence.[231] The

January 25 Revolution changed the way women talked about these sexual aggressions, as

the revolutionary context conferred upon these personal accounts of suffering a political

significance.[232] First-person reports of the virginity checks forced onto women activists in

detention in March of 2011 contributed to breaking the silence around this long-

established practice and, for the first time, turned sexual violence perpetrated by state

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[230] Similar initiatives proliferated both in virtual and in physical spaces across the region, reflecting what Salime (2016) has described as a "sexual turn" in the Arab Revolutions through the multiplication of testimonies of sexual violence and discussions about women's bodies and sexuality that disrupted the logics of respectability and shame (p. 157).

[231] For years, blogs were one of the few forums where Egyptians felt safe to address socially sensitive issues such as sexual harassment and assault, often taking advantage of the anonymity provided by the online medium (Otterman, 2007, pp. 15-16; Rifaat, 2008, pp. 58-60). The launching of HarassMap's interactive map in August of 2010 opened a new avenue for anonymously reporting and sharing experiences of public sexual violence (Peuchaud, 2014, pp. i115-i116; Skalli, 2014, p. 250). Nevertheless, concerns about identification and a general lack of access to the Internet for most Egyptians limited the potential of these tools (Fahmy et al., 2014, p. 51).

[232] An early example of the proliferation of such testimonies was Noha Radwan's (2011) first-person account of the verbal and sexual harassment she suffered at the hand of "Mubarak supporters" while she was trying to access Tahrir square on February 2, 2011. The verbal and physical attacks suffered by the participants in the International Women's Day event in March of 2011 were also captured in online personal testimonies that regarded this experience as paradigmatic of the post-Revolution moment (Emam, 2011; Sholkamy, 2011).

actors into a matter of public discussion.[233] The multiplication of collective sexual

assaults against women protesters in Tahrir Square in 2012 and 2013 generated a host of

testimonies that bore witness to what soon became known as the "circles of hell." These

narratives were often animated by the conviction that public sexual violence needed to be

brought to public attention after decades of invisibility (see epigraph at the beginning of

this chapter).[234] In the months and years that followed, feminist and human rights groups

engaged in a concerted effort to gather evidence about the extent of the collective sexual

assaults that proliferated in Tahrir Square during protests, overcoming an initial

reluctance among activists to publicize crimes that risked jeopardizing the image of the

Revolution (El-Nadeem et al., 2013, pp. 32 & 45).[235] This strategy sought to subvert the

notion that public sexual violence was "a source of shame for the victim of the crime"

and, by rendering women's narratives of sexual violence a public and collective

testimony, aimed to counter the belief that perpetrators were "safe from accountability"

(Magda Adly, in El-Nadeem et al., 2013, pp. 4-5). Alongside this organized memory

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[233] On March 17, 2011, Salwa El-Hosseiny testified in a press conference organized by the No To Military Trials for Civilians campaign about the virginity checks (see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ajCe1km7UFM). On November 15, 2011, the No To Military Trials initiative published the testimony of Samira Ibrahim, the protester who filed a lawsuit against the SCAF for sexual assault (see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c29CAXR141s). Other first-person accounts of the virginity checks can be found at https://tahrirdiaries.wordpress.com/2011/06/03/virginitytests-en.

[234] The first references to these attacks appeared in personal blogs, where the authors signed with their real names candid descriptions of the violence they had been subjected to. "I am angry but I am not broken," wrote Zaghloul (2012) in her testimony of the collective sexual assault of June 2, 2012, "I hope no one else will have to face that fear." Similarly, activist Reem Labib's (2012) and journalist Natasha Smith's (2012) first-person accounts of the collective sexual assaults they suffered on June 8 and June 26, 2012, respectively, reflect a similar urge to document this violence, as well as a manifest resistance to being defined by this experience.

[235] On June 13, 2012, Nazra for Feminist Studies (2012) published three testimonies—including Zaghloul's—of the attacks perpetrated against women protesters on June 2, 2012. On February of 2013, El-Nadeem, Nazra and the New Woman Foundation released a "compendium of sources" that documented collective sexual assaults perpetrated between January of 2012 and January of 2013 through testimonies of survivors and witnesses (El-Nadeem et al., 2013). In collaboration with initiatives like OpAntiSH and Tahrir Bodyguard, these organizations were able to document more than five hundred cases of collective sexual assault and gang rape between February of 2011 and January of 2014 (Nazra for Feminist Studies et al., 2014; ElMohandes, 2015).

work, the post-Revolution time also saw the proliferation of a multiplicity of spaces where Egyptians were invited to discuss and speak up about public sexual violence.

This chapter draws on literature on testimony, performance and storytelling to examine the articulation of spaces where survivors felt safe to testify to their experiences of sexual violence in the aftermath of the January 25 Revolution. The concept of *safe space* has been extensively mobilized in feminist and queer scholarship to refer to "the physical and metaphorical safety of separatist … spaces and cultures" (Hunter, 2008, p. 7). These are places free from violence and harassment where marginalized groups can "speak and act freely, form collective strength, and generate strategies for resistance" (Kenney, 2001, p. 24). More recently, this notion has been criticized for being exclusionary and underscoring an idea of safety "imagined as a condition of no challenge or stakes, a state of being that might be best described as protectionist (or, perhaps, isolationist)" (Hanhardt, 2013, p. 30; see also Duncan, 1996, p. 129; Hunter, 2008, p. 15; The Roestone Collective, 2014, p. 1352).[236] Reflecting these concerns, latter scholarly approaches have shied away from this concept or reimagined it to allow for more dynamic configurations. "There are no safe spaces," wrote Gloria E. Anzaldúa (2002) in her preface to *this bridge we call home,* "'[h]ome' can be unsafe and dangerous because it bears the likelihood of intimacy and thus thinner boundaries[, s]taying 'home' and not

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[236] In their study of lesbian and gay communities, for example, Gill Valentine and Tracey Skelton (2003) note that, while they "provide an alternative framework of identity, social allegiance and support" to young lesbians and gay men, they are often characterized by insularity and exclusion (i.e. of transsexual women or bisexual men) (p. 853). For Nancy Duncan (1996), the isolation that safe havens grant disempowered groups can contribute to the "naturalization, reification and ghettoization of differences" (p. 142). Similarly, The Free Association (2011) warns against the transformation of political safe spaces into "ghettos" in the following terms: "Rather than being doors to other worlds, they've become gated communities with limited horizons: 'safe' in the sense of 'sheltered' and 'risk-free.' The way to avoid this is to keep one face open to the outside, and to operate with a more fluid notion of boundaries" (p. 53). More generally, Iris Marion Young (1990) has rendered the ideal of community problematic because it "exhibits a totalizing impulse and denies difference" (p. 305).

venturing out from our own group comes from woundedness, and stagnates our growth"
(p. 3). Rather than seclusion in presumed safe spaces, Anzaldúa (2002) advocated
bridging, a process that required "step[ping] across the threshold … to be stripped of the
illusion of safety" (p. 3). To *bridge,* she remarked, is "to attempt community, and for that
we must risk being open to personal, political, and spiritual intimacy, to risk being
wounded" (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 3).[237] Other engagements with this concept have redefined
safe space as "relational work," a dynamic process through which unsafe spaces are
productively negotiated by means of transformative interventions (The Roestone
Collective, 2014, p. 1347). In this line, I am interested in the collective production of
spaces of testimony as a "processual act of ever-becoming, of messy negotiations—both
within collaborative actions of representation and ofttimes paradoxical presentations and
positionings of self" (Hunter, 2008, p. 16). Common to these theoretical engagements is
the centrality of risk, conceived not as threat but as possibility.

In what follows, I review scholarship on trauma and testimony within which I
situate the emergence of an array of spaces where survivors could share and rework their
experiences of sexual violence in post-Revolution Cairo. I then focus on two case studies,
WenDo Egypt's self-defense workshops and The BuSSy Project's performances, to
analyze the collective examination and productive transformation of experiences of
sexual harassment and assault in these spaces. For this purpose, I draw on interviews with
members of these groups and participant observation of three basic self-defense trainings

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[237] In this line, The Free Association (2011) described social centers as "places that aren't separate from
the rest of life, … that are never 'pure' but are constantly engaging with existing social relations
because they are part of them" (p. 75). It is from this position "in the middle" that these spaces could
"unravel existing social relations, collectively creating new worlds and all the time carving out
breathing spaces" (The Free Association, 2011, p. 75).

organized by WenDo Egypt and three of The BuSSy Project's performances.[238] In the last

part of the chapter, I focus on the online campaign Two Days of Blogging and Tweeting

for Human Dignity, launched by OpAntiSH, and the actions "We Will Wear Dresses" and

"We Will Ride Bicycles," organized by the Facebook group Thawrat El Banat (The Girls'

Revolution) to examine the imbrication of virtual and physical space for the collective

imagination and enactment of alternative presents in post-Revolution Egypt. For this

purpose, I draw on content analysis of tweets published with the campaigns' hashtags and

of Thawrat El Banat's Facebook page as well as on an interview with one of Thawrat El

Banat's founders. Situated at the intersection between memory work and world-making

practices, between virtual and physical space, I discuss how these initiatives opened up

avenues for testifying to the experience of sexual harassment while encouraging

alternative performances of femininity in public space, thus challenging the logic of

sexual governmentality that constrains women's inhabitation of public space in Egypt.

Trauma, Testimony, and the Ethical Witness

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[238] Regarding the WenDo Egypt's trainings, two of them were addressed to Egyptian and foreign women living in Cairo, and one was directed to refugee women. The first training took place on December 5 and 6, 2014, at the Swiss Club, in the neighborhood of Imbaba. It served as the final exam of the second Training of Trainers and was exceptionally co-trained by the new cohort of trainers, under the supervision of WenDo Egypt's founder Schirin Salem and Fatma Atef, who was part of the first cohort of trainers. The second training I participated in took place on February 13 and 14, 2015, at a private studio in the neighborhood of Zamalek. The training was led by Atef and Miriam. Both trainings lasted ten hours, divided into two days of five hours each. In both cases the participants were Egyptian and foreign women living in Cairo. The third training I was part of took place over the course of three days, on February 28, March 7 and March 14, divided into blocks of three hours per day. It was led by Miriam, organized by a religious institution (which requested to remain unnamed) that offers services to refugees and was addressed to refugee women from Sudan, Eritrea and Syria. All three trainings were led in English, albeit at times Arabic was used to facilitate the communication and comprehension of certain concepts and terms. At the beginning of each training, I introduced my research to the participants and asked them whether they agreed to my presence and participation in the exercises. During my fieldwork, I also attended The BuSSy Project's performances "ya ʾasal" in Darb 1718, in 2012; "ʿāsh yā waḥsh" in Townhouse Rawabet, in 2014; and "khumsumiyyat" in the Greek Campus, in 2015.

Traumatic memory, Judith Herman (1992) notes, is "wordless and static," encoded predominantly in fragmented images and bodily sensations (pp. 38 & 175). For the survivor, a traumatic event "has no beginning, no ending, no before, no during, no after" (Laub, 1992b, p. 69). Telling the story of the event—re-externalizing it by means of a narrative—is therefore an important part of the recovery process, as it allows for the "transform[ation of] the traumatic memory, so that it can be integrated into the survivor's life story" (Herman, 1992, p. 175). Moreover, it is by testifying—by bearing witness to a traumatic event—that a survivor "reclaims his *[sic]* position as a witness" (Laub, 1992b, p. 85) and, by positioning oneself as a speaking subject, can "begin to repair damaged subjectivity" (Oliver, 2001, p. 7).[239] The "dialogical process" that the testimonial act enables between what Dori Laub (1992b) has termed the "internal witness" and a listener, or external witness, facilitates the survivor's repossession of their story and the working-through of the traumatic experience (pp. 87-88; see also Oliver, 2001, p. 92).[240] Unlike other forms of memory work, a testimony does not offer "a totalizable account" of past events but rather provides "a mode of *truth's realization,"* as it is in the act of testifying that survivors get to "know"—and make sense of—the traumatic experience (Felman, 1992, pp. 5 & 15-16). Unlike an autobiography or a memoir, a testimony does not convey a discrete life experience but captures "a personal as well as collective story of

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[239] Kelly Oliver (2001) conceptualizes subjectivity as articulated around "the ability to respond to, and address, others" (p. 15). Within this framework, witnessing is the process through which othered subjects can restore their address-ability and response-ability vis-à-vis a responsible witness that fulfills the "ethical obligation to respond and to enable response-ability from others" (Oliver, 2001, p. 15).

[240] Writing about the Holocaust, Laub (1992b) discusses survivors' strategy of "establishing and maintaining an internal witness who substitutes for the lack of witnessing in real life" as a means of survival (p. 87). As he argues, it is ultimately the dialogue established between the internal witness and an "authentic listener" by means of testimony that enables the completion of the survival process and "makes the resumption of life … at all possible" (Laub, 1992b, p. 91).

experience" shared by people of a particular gender, race, ethnicity, etc. (Cubilié, 2005, p. 145), and thereby occupies an interstitial space between individual and communal experience. It is from this position that the act of bearing witness emerges as both "a personal and a political act" (Cubilié, 2005, p. 79) by means of which survivors can articulate collective experiences of domination and subordination.

Even when suffered by a sole person, traumatic experiences have an impact on social groups, as they "destroy the sustaining bonds between individual and community" (Herman, 1992, p. 214). Survivors bear the burden of shame, guilt, responsibility and silence associated with the traumatic events they have experienced (Felman, 1992, p. 46; Herman, 1992, p. 200; Jackson, 2002, p. 59). Particularly in cases of sexual violence, the stigma attached to these aggressions often results in the survivor's "social death," which deprives them from participating in social activity (Jackson, 2002, p. 44; Card, 2003, p. 76). Recovery, therefore, needs to take place within the context of social relationships and include a rebuilding of the connections with the community (Herman, 1992, p. 133). Testimony can play this bridging role as, by sharing their experience with an audience, survivors are "no longer condemned to singularity and silence" (Jackson, 2002, p. 59). Within this framework, testimonies are performative processes that can help restore communal identity and belonging (Felman, 1992, p. 5; Cubilié, 2005, p. 220). By means of an engaged relationship of "address and response" (Oliver, 2001, p. 2) between survivor and audience, the act of bearing witness functions as "a vehicle for [the survivor's] reentry into the arenas from which they have been excised" through violence (Cubilié, 2005, p. 154). The force of testimony as a speech act, Michael Jackson (2002) remarks, derives from the social context in which it is uttered, shared, received, and

recognized: "[T]here is no automatic or magical efficacy in speaking one's mind unless the institutional framework of a community … contextualises and recognises the act" (p. 40). Public forms of testimony can contribute to this process by providing a stage where the survivor's story can be publicly recognized, thus facilitating their "symbolic acceptance back into the body politic" (Jackson, 2002, p. 61).

The act of bearing witness to the testimony of others—serving as the witness/audience to a witness/survivor (Cubilié, 2005, p. 78)—is central to the process of testifying itself. In this regard, Laub (1992b) has argued that the listener functions as "the enabler of the testimony" by facilitating the survivor's recovery of the traumatic memory (p. 57). The absence of a listener, conversely, poses a danger to the survivor's healing: "[I]f one talks about the trauma without being truly heard or truly listened to, the telling might itself be lived as a return of the trauma—a *re-experiencing of the event itself*" (Laub, 1992b, p. 67). By listening to trauma, moreover, the external witness becomes "a participant and a co-owner of the traumatic event," thus sharing with the survivor the responsibility for bearing witness to the event (Laub, 1992a, p. 85 & 1992b, p. 57). On this subject, scholarship on trauma and testimony has emphasized the difference between spectatorship and active—or ethical—witnessing (Taylor, 1997, p. 25; Cubilié, 2005, p. 252; Pratt, 2009, p. 3). In radical opposition to a distanced and voyeuristic consumption of "atrocity-as-spectacle," scholars underscore the importance of an ethical engagement with the witness/survivor as an avenue for justice and reconciliation (Cubilié, 2005, pp. 11-12; see also Taylor, 1997, pp. 24-25). Spectatorship, Anne Cubilié (2005) remarks, "may engage our emotions, even our guilt, but … it does not impel us toward intervention" (p. 218). Ethical witnessing, on the contrary, forces the audience to

recognize their own complicity in the traumatic event and, by moving them from the

position of spectator to witness, it impels them to action—turning them into "spect-

actors" (Taylor, 1997, p. 265; see also Pratt, 2009, p. 3). Affect plays a crucial role in this

process, as the "intensity and intimacy of the testimonial encounter" can lead those

witnessing the act of bearing witness to feel touched and "*actively* addressed" in

particular ways (Felman, 1992, p. 48). The emergence of an "emotional bond" during the

testimonial transfer creates empathetic connections between survivors and audiences—

spectators turned witnesses turned care-givers, as Till (2012) notes (p. 13)—that can

serve as a catalyst for action in the quest for justice (Wright, 2009, pp. 219-220).

Performance and storytelling are powerful ways of conveying testimony. The

embodied character of plays, dance, and other performances creates a witnessing

dynamic that compels audience members to respond to the ethical demand of becoming

witness to—and bear responsibility for—the event (Cubilié, 2005, p. 77). When

performed by survivors themselves, the enactment of the traumatic experience can

contribute to their healing, as it becomes a way of "reconstructing the trauma story and

restoring the connection between survivors and their community" (Herman, 1992, p. 2).

By standing on stage in front of an audience, survivors invite a collective reframing of

their experiences of violence as they "offer … up the body for a different reading"

(Taylor, 1997, p. 161). Similarly, storytelling can be an empowering strategy for

survivors of violence as, through the reconstruction of the story, they can "actively

rework [the events], both in dialogue with others and within [their] own imagination"

(Jackson, 2002, p. 15). Telling stories—understood as "experience-rooted but creatively

reproduced narrative texts whose meaning is realized in their interpretation by specific

communities" (Stone-Mediatore, 2003, p. 4)—can have a therapeutic effect on trauma survivors, as they can open themselves "up to the stories of others and [see] that [they are] not alone in [their] pain" (Jackson, 2002, p. 59). The encounter with others who have undergone similar experiences of violence facilitates the overcoming of "feelings of isolation, shame, and stigma" (Herman, 1992, p. 215). It is through a dialogical process of meaning-making that storytellers "rework [their] experience and reclaim control over it" while, at the same time, they collectively reimagine social reality and redefine established norms in ways that may challenge the status quo (Jackson, 2002, pp. 64 & 132; see also Stone-Mediatore, 2003, pp. 12-13). Thus, as a "form of witness to ongoing crisis and a place of alternative knowledge and practice," storytelling can have personal and communal transformative effects (Houston, 2013, p. 423). In the sections that follow, I discuss two initiatives that have created spaces for the sharing and reworking of experiences of sexual violence through performance and storytelling in post-Revolution Cairo.

"Nobody Will Judge You"

The initiative WenDo Egypt was created in May of 2013 by Schirin Salem, a former Gender Project Manager at the German Development Agency (GIZ).[241] As Salem (2015) told me in an interview, she had learned of WenDo—a women's self-defense method created in Canada in the 1970s—at the age of thirteen, while living in

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[241] WenDo Egypt does not have a public online presence, but their members communicate and share information through a closed Facebook group. See https://www.facebook.com/groups/657609027587844. The GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit) is Germany's international cooperation agency.

Germany.[242] After returning to Egypt in the aftermath of the January 25 Revolution,

Salem decided to become certified as a WenDo trainer and to adapt this "Western

concept" to the safety concerns of girls and women in post-2011 Cairo (Salem, 2015).[243]

The main goal of WenDo's self-defense training is to increase women's self-confidence

and assertiveness in public space and to encourage them to react against everyday sexual

harassment through a wide range of strategies, including but not limited to physical self-

defense. The basic training lasts ten hours and is divided into two blocks: The first block

focuses on the look, voice and body posture to enact attitudes and behaviors that deviate

from the repertoire of bodily dispositions dictated by norms of respectable femininity.[244]

In the second block, participants practice easy-to-perform kicks and punches that target

vulnerable areas of a man's anatomy.[245] Salem offers workshops for individual women

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[242] The method of women's self-defense WenDo was developed in 1972 by martial art experts Ned and Ann Paige in Canada (Ottawa Citizen, 1984; see also Senn et al., 2013 and http://www.wendo.ca). Since then, WenDo groups have been created in different countries of the Americas and in Europe (Carrasco & Mina, 1997; Drwecki, 2010; Cardoso Monteiro & Gomes García, 2011). WenDo trainings are always taught by women and are open to girls and women of all ages (10 and up), shapes, sizes, abilities, and fitness levels. Drawing on Jocelyn A. Hollander's (2009) definition, I regard WenDo as a feminist method of self-defense because it "focus[es] on sexual violence against women, … teach[es] skills appropriate for women's bodies, for rapid learning, and for sexual assault situations, and … address[es] gender socialization and other psychological issues that make self-defense challenging for many women …[, it] teach[es] options rather than prescriptions for responding to assault and focus[es] on prevention and interruption of assault as well as physical self-defense" (pp. 590-591, note 3).

[243] I discuss the origins and development of WenDo Egypt more in depth in Abdelmonem and Galán (2017).

[244] Feminist scholarship on self-defense has extensively examined how norms of respectable femininity prescribe passive, helpless, compliant female bodies in need of male or state protection (Searles & Follansbee, 1984, p. 65; Guthrie, 1995, p. 118; McCaughey, 1997, p. 37; De Welde, 2003, p. 256; Hollander, 2004, pp. 227-229). I discuss this aspect of WenDo Egypt's training more in depth in Abdelmonem and Galán (2017).

[245] All of the physical techniques are effective regardless of the woman's shape and physical strength, as they target sensitive areas such as the eyes, the ears, the laryngeal prominence (or Adam's apple), the solar plexus, the genitals, the knees, and the toes. Nevertheless, trainers emphasize that some techniques may be better than others depending on the woman and the attacker, and present the repertoire of techniques as a "toolkit" from which participants can choose at any given moment. These include kicks and punches as well as release techniques by means of which women can free themselves from a grip. By focusing on developing simple moves for "real life" situations, WenDo differs from other martial arts—such as karate or kickboxing—that require the mastery of more sophisticated techniques (El-Kady, 2015b; see also De Welde, 2003, p. 251; Brecklin, 2008, p. 62). I discuss this aspect of WenDo Egypt's training more in depth in Abdelmonem and Galán (2017).

and organizes trainings of trainers. By May of 2015, she had trained twenty-six trainers—twenty-five women from Cairo and one from the Lower Egypt's city of Mansoura. They offer private self-defense courses to Egyptian and foreign women who can afford the two hundred Egyptian pounds (about twenty-six US dollars at the then-exchange rate) that the basic course costs, and train underprivileged women and girls on a voluntary basis in collaboration with children's organizations, refugee service centers, and youth centers.[246] Starting in May of 2015, WenDo courses were offered in youth centers across Egypt and new trainings of trainers had been planned in partnership with GIZ and Egypt's Ministry of Youth and Sports.

Basic workshops begin with a short talk where trainers introduce themselves and the WenDo method to the participants—sitting on the floor, forming a circle—and set out some basic rules about the space. They emphasize that all exercises are voluntary and that participants can at any time take a break in a "relax zone," a sitting area with pillows, snacks, juices, and reading material.[247] They stress that respect for everybody's limits as well as confidentiality ("whatever happens, stays in the group") are the basic principles of the course, and encourage participants to voice their concerns and doubts at any point ("there are no silly questions"). Before the start of the training, participants are invited to introduce themselves and share with the group how they feel, an exercise repeated at the beginning and end of each session. Central to the WenDo concept is the creation of a

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[246] At the time of our conversation, in May of 2015, Salem (2015) estimated that around one thousand women and girls had been trained by WenDo Egypt, about seven hundred of them for free. Additionally, WenDo Egypt regularly organized so-called *igmadi* ("be strong") events, which combined an introduction to self-defense, Zumba classes and awareness-raising sessions in cooperation with HarassMap, Nazra and El-Nadeem. These festive events were attended by an average of 325 women and girls (Salem, 2015).

[247] This reading material included studies about sexual harassment in Egypt (Ebaid, 2013; El Deeb, 2013) and research articles on the WenDo method (Drwecki, 2010), as well as US literature on women's self-defense, including Caignon and Groves' *Her Wits About Her: Self-Defense Success Stories by Women.*

women-only space where participants can talk freely about sensitive issues and share personal experiences with the group. As trainer Atef (2015) emphasized in an interview, trainees feel comfortable telling their stories because they "know that everybody in the room will understand … how you're feeling because they probably experience the same … and nobody will judge you." Subverting notions of feminine competition and judgment, women-only self-defense courses such as WenDo's promote cooperative learning as "students experience the power and support of working and growing with other women" (Searles & Follansbee, 1984, p. 66; see also McDaniel, 1993, p. 38; Guthrie, 1995, p. 110; Madden & Sokol, 1997, p. 144).[248] By providing ample time for group discussion between exercises, moreover, the WenDo classroom serves "consciousness-raising purposes" (Searles & Follansbee, 1984, p. 67) as participants become aware of their commonalities across difference and start thinking about gendered violence as "structural rather than incidental" (Ahmed, 2004b, p. 172).[249] During the workshop, trainer Miriam (2015) noted, trainees realize that "[they]'re … not alone … [they] have different backgrounds, story and culture, but at the end everyone goes through similar things and it's hard the same way for everyone."

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[248] In a related way, Searles and Follansbee (1984) have examined the limitations of self-defense courses led by male trainers or addressed to a mixed-gender audience. As they note, male instructors often have a "paternalistic attitude toward women and lack of sensitivity to women's concerns" and "women often have more difficulty moving beyond traditional gender-role expectations when men are present [,] … are more likely to become embarrassed or uncomfortable about exerting themselves physically, and … tend to assume a more passive, helpless role in order to not damage their feminine image [while men] tend to act as protectors of their female classmates, and they frequently have difficulty playing the 'defeated' role" (Searles & Follansbee, 1984, pp. 65-66; see also McCaughey, 1997, p. 79).

[249] It is precisely this space for (self-)reflection and exchange that distinguishes feminist self-defense training from other—more traditional—forms of self-defense centered exclusively on the development of physical skills (Searles & Follansbee, 1984, p. 67; Madden & Sokol, 1997, pp. 142-143; Hollander, 2004, p. 206).
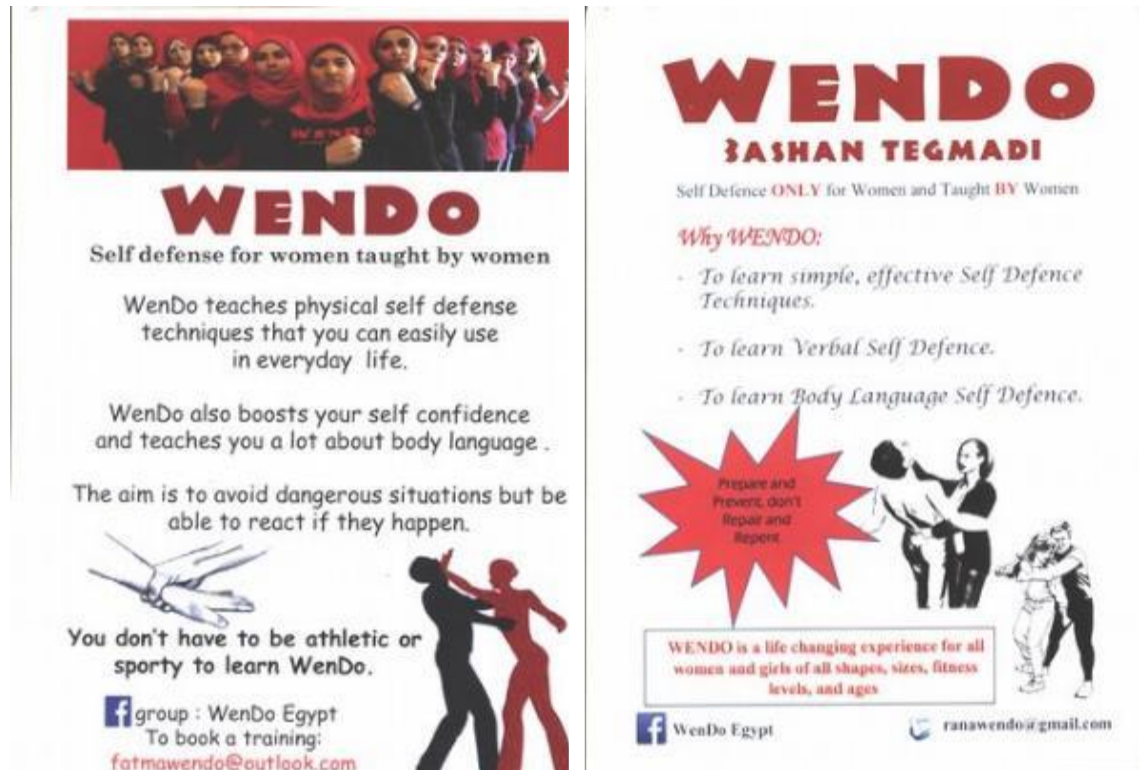
Image 6: Promotional material edited by WenDo trainers. Compiled by the author.

Fear and its transformation into a more productive emotion, anger, underlies the

WenDo training. The tension between these two opposed emotions—fear associated with

inhibition and containment (Ahmed, 2004b, p. 69), anger with movement and action

(Lorde, 1984, p. 84; Hercus, 1999, p. 36; Ahmed, 2004b, p. 176)—becomes more explicit

in the second part of the training through the enactment of role plays that recreate

situations of harassment while waiting for a cab, walking on the street, or sitting in the

bus.[250] The everyday quality of these scenarios for women living in Cairo renders these

performances a dynamic testimony to their daily inhabitation of the city—with a

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[250] These scenarios differ from those in the original WenDo method. As Salem (2015) explained to me, she chose situations "that happen to girls every day, so that they can relate to them." She noted that the German role plays could not be easily transferred, as they recreate scenes that are not that common in the Egyptian context (for example, a drunk man trying to get too close, or unwelcome sexual advances while dancing in a club).

difference. In this occasion, participants are invited to change the ending of the story. Instead of disregarding these sexual intrusions or fleeing the scene, they are encouraged—pushed even by the perseverance of the trainer-turned-harasser—to resist the act, using the techniques learned and practiced during the course. As a participant, I vividly recall the rapid heartbeat, the chills, and the bodily tension sparked by these mock interactions, and the satisfaction I felt when, forcing myself to confront the assailant with my body, my look and my voice, I managed to stop the harassment. Anger—a "deviant emotion" for women (Hercus, 1999, p. 37; see also Frye, 1983, p. 84)—has been found to be more conducive to rape avoidance than fear and shock in cases of both stranger and acquaintance sexual violence (Levine-MacCombie & Koss, 1986, p. 318; Selkin, 1978, p. 267).[251] Feminist self-defense, scholars remark, serves as an effective outlet to channel and express this emotion (Searles & Follansbee, 1984, p. 68; McDaniel, 1993, pp. 39-40; Madden & Sokol, 1997, p. 142; McCaughey, 1997, p. 109; Brecklin, 2008, p. 69). The resolution of the harassment scenario through the mobilization of anger is, for Salem (2015), "a very powerful moment … that changes something inside [the participants,] because most of them are very relieved to get out of the situation, and very happy, and very proud of themselves."

An ongoing WenDo class meets biweekly for those who have completed the basic training to continue practicing the acquired strategies and explore more advanced tools.[252]

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[251] In a study of women survivors and avoiders of acquaintance rape, Levine-MacCombie and Koss (1986) found that "[r]ape avoiders experienced less intense nonaggressive emotions (fear, guilt) during the assault than did rape victims" (p. 317). A research on rape victims and rape resisters conducted by Selkin (1978) revealed that "the majority of Victims experienced fear, startle, and shock during the assault, emotions which are less disposing to action than feelings such as anger which was identified more frequently by Resisters as a major response mode" (p. 266; see also Bart & O'Brien, 1985).

[252] Participation in the ongoing WenDo course costs thirty Egyptian pounds for a two-hour class (about four US dollars at the then-exchange rate). This price is meant as a contribution for the use of the training space, electricity, etc. This class was not meeting while I conducted my fieldwork.

This space also functions as a support group and a therapeutic community where participants can reenact actual experiences of sexual violence by means of collective role plays. As Atef (2015) told me, these exercises "take the whole training session … because it involves a lot of emotional and psychological preparation for the girl to set the scene, where did it happen, how did it happen, we play it one time, two times and three times until we explore all the possible solutions that she can do in this situation."

In these monographic sessions, trainees can have a trainer play their role while they direct the action offstage, or they can play themselves. Trauma scholars contend that exposure to danger in a planned manner and in a controlled environment can have a healing effect on survivors as they "attempt to master the traumatic experience" (Herman, 1992, p. 197). The feminist self-defense classroom is, in that regard, a productive space for such reenactments. "By choosing to 'taste fear' in … self-defense exercises," Herman (1992) argues, "survivors put themselves in a position to reconstruct the normal physiological responses to danger, to rebuild the 'action system' that was shattered and fragmented by the trauma" (p. 198). Similarly, Martha McCaughey (1997) has emphasized that feminist self-defense provides "a cathartic release when women fight through scenes similar to those they were subjected to in the past" (p. 125).[253] Within this testimonial framework, the rest of the class acts as a "community of witnesses" (Cubilié, 2005, p. 98) that helps the survivor restore her relationship to the traumatic experience,

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[253] WenDo Egypt has a protocol in place to deal with trauma in the classroom. "We should stop the exercise immediately, take a break and give her five minutes alone, maybe she can go to the bathroom [but] not more than five minutes because maybe she's gonna hurt herself," El-Kady (2015b) told me, "after that I'm going to her and hold her hands and say, trying to calm her down, 'I'm with you, I'm holding your hand and if you want to talk about it we can talk, if you don't want [we don't need to,'] so she can feel she's not alone." If the participant wishes to, WenDo trainers refer the case to organizations—like El-Nadeem, Nazra or the Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance (CEWLA)—that provide legal and psychological assistance to survivors of sexual violence (Atef, 2015; El-Kady, 2015b; Salem, 2015).

opening a space within which she can act differently. By bearing witness to the testimony, they "complete its meaning, … tie the pieces together and give them coherence" (Taylor, 1997, p. 207). By means of suggestions and verbal expressions of encouragement—such as cheering and clapping during the reenactment—they ultimately contribute to resolving the scene.

While the main focus of the WenDo training is on public sexual violence, the workshop facilitates the examination of situations of harassment and abuse at the hands of acquaintances and intimates. This aspect is more directly addressed in an exercise where participants reflect on how their boundaries are routinely crossed, and explore— together with the group—ways to enforce them.[254] WenDo's basic rule not to reveal the content of the course to men also blurs the stranger/familiar dichotomy. In a conversation with Miriam (2015), she linked this restriction to statistical evidence showing that most rapes and sexual assaults take place at home and are committed by acquaintances and intimates.[255] Justifying this directive, she noted that "you don't want this person who … is actually the most likely person to attack you … to exactly know where you're gonna

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[254] In this activity, trainees stand in opposite sides of the room, forming two lines that face each other. Those on one side let those on the other side approach them in four different scenarios: as a friend, as a stranger that elicits neutral feelings, as a stranger who provokes distrust or feelings of discomfort, and as a person who has actually hurt them. In each of the situations, those directing the action can invite the person in front of them to get closer, ordering them to stop to maintain a comfortable distance between them. If they wish, they have the option of not letting them advance at all, or sending them outside of the room. While the trainer does not specify the characteristics of the menacing fourth figure, it is clear from the conversation that ensues after the exercise that many participants imagine a known person, who often acquires the features of a coworker or a family member. Feminist literature on self-defense emphasizes the importance of exercises that help women recognize their "right to control their 'personal body space'" and "set limits on unwanted personal contact" (Searles & Follansbee, 1984, p. 68). As feminist scholars have extensively documented, women tend to be "approached more closely than men—i.e., their personal space [tends to be] smaller or more likely to be breached" (Henley & Freeman, 1984, p. 395).

[255] While data on acquaintance and intimate rape is scarce in Egypt, several reports suggest that "different forms of violence [including psychological, sexual, and physical violence] are often experienced by the same woman" and that "most forms of violence are perpetrated throughout the marital union" (Ambrosetti et al., 2013, p. 411, the addition is mine; see also Ammar, 2006, p. 246; El-Nadeem, 2015, pp. 3 & 12).

attack them, or where you're gonna hit them if they attack you" (Miriam, 2015). More than a technique to fend off public sexual harassment, WenDo trainers regard their method as "a lifestyle" that women can adopt to protect themselves from abuse by strangers, acquaintances, and intimates (El-Kady, 2015b). As feminist scholars have extensively documented, feminist self-defense can have a transformative impact on women's lives that extends beyond their inhabitation of public space (Guthrie, 1995, p. 119; McCaughey, 1997, p. 123; Hollander, 2004, p. 221). For Salem, the connections and imbrications between the 'public' and 'private' uses of WenDo happen "automatically" as trainees start to implement what they learned in the classroom and the philosophy of the training "trickles down to other spheres of life."

"They Get the Courage and Start Thinking 'I Have to Tell my Story'"

The BuSSy Project was born in 2006 as a theater group affiliated with the private American University in Cairo (AUC).[256] Its founders—AUC students Naz Khan, Mariham Iskander and Menan Omar—were inspired by Eve Ensler's "Vagina Monologues" to create a space where they could share Egyptian women's personal stories on stage. Between 2006 and 2009, they organized yearly performances at the university campus, then located in Tahrir Square.[257] At that point, The BuSSy Project severed ties with the university and, under the leadership of director Sondos Shabayek, became an

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[256] The BuSSy Project's website can be found at http://www.bussy.co/en. Their old blog can be still accessed at https://bussyblog.wordpress.com. "Bussy" means "look" in the imperative, feminine singular form, in Egyptian Arabic.

[257] AUC started to relocate to a new campus in New Cairo in 2008, albeit classes and university-related activities were still taking place in the old Tahrir campus and the adjacent Greek campus until after the January 25 Revolution.

independent theater group that sought to reach a broader public than the AUC and downtown-based intellectual elite that made the bulk of its audience (Soliman, 2015). After the January 25 Revolution, the group focused more explicitly on the stories that emerged from the revolutionary process through the creation of the sister initiative Tahrir Monologues in February of 2011.[258] Taking advantage of the openness of public space after Mubarak's ouster, they performed on Tahrir Square and other spaces of the city. Among others, they enacted a selection of their stories in the women-only carriages of the Cairo Metro in February of 2012. The BuSSy Project's performances and monologues are based on testimonies received anonymously by the group through their website or collected in workshops organized around different topics.[259] In the years that followed the January 25 Revolution, the group created performances about public sexual violence (*ya ʿasal,* "Hey Honey," 2012), women's bodies (2013), masculinity (*ʿāsh yā waḥsh,* "Long Live the Monster," 2014) and the experience of childhood and adolescence in Egypt (*khumsumiyyat,* "The 500s," 2015). Performances like *ya ʿasal, ʿāsh yā waḥsh* and *khumsumiyyat* are based on testimonies compiled in workshops organized in collaboration with other groups and institutions.[260]

Workshops are, in words of The BuSSy Project's coordinator Nahla Soliman (2015), "like a group therapy" where participants can find a place to talk openly and

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[258] Tahrir Monologues was created, as a video introducing the initiative explains, to share "stories to remember [and] remind those around us" of the revolutionary events (see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JtyhaPi3tsk). The monologues are based on testimonies of torture in detention, arrests, and participation in protests and evoke the atmosphere of Tahrir square during the eighteen revolutionary days. See https://www.youtube.com/user/TahrirMonologues/videos.

[259] The group invites people to share their stories at http://thebussyproject.weebly.com/share-1588157515851603.html.

[260] *Ya ʿasal* resulted from a cooperation between The BuSSy Project, HarassMap and the initiative Mashrouʿ El Mareekh; *ʿāsh yā waḥsh* was commissioned by Nazra; *khumsumiyyat* was based on testimonies collected during workshops organized in high schools in collaboration with the organization AFCA for Arts and Culture.

share stories that, at times, have never been voiced before. The independent theater group has a number of storytellers and performers, but they encourage workshop participants to tell their own stories. As Soliman recalled with regard to the *ya ʿasal* performance, "[w]hen someone goes on stage … telling people that those storytellers are telling their real stories and those stories are for real, and they start hearing about instances of harassment and sexual violence … they get the courage and start thinking 'I have to tell my story.'"

Yet speaking up about sexual violence is a risky practice that challenges established norms regarding appropriate conduct (Stone-Mediatore, 2003, p. 152; Ahmed, 2004b, p. 169). Those who voluntarily decide to share their personal stories of sexual harassment and assault do it by consciously and deliberately taking a risk—the risk of being judged or blamed for past behavior, the risk of "expressing open emotion to 'the other' [and] the risk of 'the other' belittling such emotion" (Hunter, 2008, p. 9). Particularly when performing in small communities outside of Cairo, Soliman remarked, some participants preferred not to present their own stories for fear of social reprisals. In these cases, the group had devised alternative strategies to maintain the testimonies while blurring their source, for example changing some details to make the protagonists unrecognizable or printing the stories and giving them to the public to read them aloud (Soliman, 2015), thus creating "communities of testimonial practice" that tie protagonists and audiences together (Nguyen, 2010, p. 9). In this respect, The BuSSy Project's storytelling is not so much invested in reflecting an 'original' or 'authentic' story but in

expressing how individual stories speak for collective experiences (Jackson, 2002, p. 294).[261]

Performances are often followed by "open mics," participatory events that facilitate the opening of a debate about the topic addressed on stage. Despite the norms of etiquette and civility that regulate these spaces, they are conflictual fora where opposing perspectives are confronted in a dynamic way, with unforeseeable consequences.[262] By rendering themselves vulnerable to public scrutiny through an intentional act of risk-taking, survivors reverse the "spectorial gaze" (Taylor, 1997, p. 261) and imbue the space with an affect that interpellates others, pushing them to intervene. "I was [part] of the audience one day," Soliman (2015) told me, "when I started listening to stories that happened to other people and they are not afraid to tell, I received the vibes, the courage from them, and I just go on stage and I tell my story." Listening to testimonies of violence, Felman and Laub (1992) remark, entails a risk as well, as it "might shake up one's whole grip on one's experience and one's life" (p. xvi). Faced with these testimonies, those who bear witness can no longer adopt the role of the passive bystander, and are forced to take sides and "share the burden of pain" (Herman, 1992, p. 7). This disposition can express itself in a variety of ways, ranging from empathetic expressions to admissions of responsibility, as Soliman noted with regard to a male friend who,

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[261] Similar strategies have been adopted by organizations working with survivors of torture, as Ian Alan Paul (2016) remarks: "The tactic of changing details in testimonies as a means of anonymization has been one of the effective ways of preserving memory under Sisi's regime. Altering details in this way resembles introducing noise into a signal, making it harder to individualize or identify survivors while still allowing their memory to circulate and resonate" (p. 115).

[262] The rules of open mics establish that anybody can take the microphone and talk for a maximum of five minutes, while the rest of the audience listens respectfully, regardless of whether they agree with the views exposed or not. It is for this reason that they are widely considered to be safe spaces for self-expression (Soliman, 2015). For Yasmine Zeid (2015), Operations Manager of HarassMap's Community Mobilization unit, these events are "useful [because] they give us space to talk openly, and share [our] mind …. because no one is responding to you after you give your speech … people are brave[r] to share their experiences and it is a way to know what people on the street [are] thinking."

following the *ya ʿasal* performance, "stood up and took the mic and told [the survivors] 'I'm sorry, I was a sexual harasser when I was in secondary school, and I'm really sorry if anybody felt bad because of me, because now I'm working on women's rights and I've changed.'"

Image 7: Programs of "ʿāsh yā waḥsh" ("Long Live the Monster"), organized with Nazra, and "khumsumiyyat" ("The 500s"). Material compiled by the author.

In this context, apologies can function as speech acts (Ahmed, 2004b, p. 114) within a restorative model of justice that favors community healing (White & Rastogi, 2009, p. 316). Open mics do not aim to reconcile opposing views but to compel the recognition of survivors' experiences of sexual violence. It is ultimately through recognition, Herman (1992) remarks, that the breach between survivor and community can be restored through the "public acknowledgment of the traumatic event and [the adoption of] some form of community action" (p. 70). On this point, Hegab (2015) noted that open mics function as "a therapy" where, despite differences, participants always end

up "encouraging everyone to take action." For Yasmine Zeid (2015), Operations Manager of HarassMap's Community Mobilization unit, these dialogues are useful because they open a space where those who excuse and justify sexual harassment are forced to confront the impact that these behaviors have on women's lives. "Not all men are aware of how much this is harming or hurting us," Zeid (2015) argued.

At its most elemental, such a recognition requires the acknowledgment that an injustice has taken place, a claim that for Ahmed (2004b) is "a radical one in the face of the forgetting of such injustices" (p. 200). The recuperation of memory by means of the memorialization of a 'forgotten' episode of public sexual violence is the focus of The BuSSy Project's 2015 performance, *khumsumiyyat*, which revolves around a collective sexual assault against a school student that happened in Cairo in 1994. As Soliman (2015) explained to me, the group decided to investigate the case after a student who had witnessed the assault firsthand wrote about it on Facebook to demonstrate that collective sexual assaults predated the January 25 Revolution. "We were very shocked that such a thing happened in 1994," recalled Soliman, "and we chose to bring it in the performance to tell people that such things [have been] happen[ing] since ever." The group did not find any written reference to the event, but could reconstruct the story with the help of this and other witnesses (Soliman, 2015).[263] The incident—with some identifying details

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[263] Soliman visited the archives of the journal *Akhbar Al-Youm* but could not find any report of the incident in the press. The group contacted the initial witness as well as other witnesses and, through friends of friends, reconstructed the following story: In 1994, a group of male students from a public school in the neighborhood of Doqqi sexually assaulted a female student from a neighboring international school while she was walking to the educational center to attend a concert. According to testimonies from alumni at both schools, the attackers created a circle around her similar to the "circles of hell" that proliferated in Tahrir square after Mubarak's ouster. The assault took place in front of the private school and lasted until the girl was rescued by the school's security guard. Soliman (2015) remarked that several students mentioned that the girl was wearing a mini skirt when she was attacked. Students of both educational centers noted that similar incidents had taken place in the past and that, following the incident, the direction of the private school forbade female students to exit the center

changed—is the backdrop against which the life of the school children featured in the performance takes place. Within this framework, the question "what happened in front of the school last Tuesday?," addressed by an unseen authoritative figure to each of the protagonists at several points during the play, exposes the "public secret" (Taussig, 1999; Mookherjee, 2006) that, while known to all, remains unspoken.[264] *Khumsumiyyat,* in this way, functions as creative praxis and intervention (Houston, 2013, p. 425), as it rewrites the story by introducing an investigation and the possibility that, unlike in the actual case, perpetrators are identified and rendered accountable for the assault. A mock news report—edited by The BuSSy Project with the compiled testimonies and distributed to the audience alongside the program of the play at the beginning of the performance—served to symbolically reinstate the facts to the public record (see Image 8).

Khumsumiyyat was originally intended to be performed in the Hanager Arts Centre, a cultural venue located at the Cairo Opera House that depends on the Ministry of Culture. Refusal from The BuSSy Project's team to censor parts of the play considered "inappropriate" by the direction of the center—particularly those that referred to masturbation and sex education—led to its cancellation shortly before its premiere on March 18, 2015 and its adjournment to mid-April, this time in the privately-owned

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between classes. Several female students reported leaving the premises with male company in order to avoid being sexually harassed by students of the neighboring school. Whether the violence was motivated by class-based rivalries between the two educational centers is unclear. The man who stopped the assault—who was sixty years old when Soliman contacted him—still guards the gates of the international school, but the administration refused to grant him permission to talk about the incident with The BuSSy Project, thus reflecting the continuity of norms of secrecy regarding public sexual violence in post-Revolution Egypt.

[264] In *Defacement: Public secrecy and the labor of the negative,* Michael Taussig (1999) defines a public secret as "that which is generally known, but cannot be articulated" (p. 5). This "social knowledge of knowing what not to know" is, as Nayanika Mookherjee (2006) further notes, "indispensable to the operation of power" (pp. 444-445). Her study of sexual violence in the Bangladesh war of 1971 examines memories of rape as public secrets subject to simultaneous revelation and concealment through the circulation of rumor and judgment, which ultimately function as a "controlling mechanism" that limits women's agency and the ability to talk about their experiences of violence (Mookherjee, 2006, p. 445).

GrEEK Campus.[265] Since its inception, the group has striven to remain faithful to the

testimonies they receive, maintaining insults and swear words when they appear in the

original. The use of profanity and the representation of acts deemed immoral has been a

contentious issue since the group started privileging Arabic over English in their

productions and performing outside of the university premises (Soliman, 2015).[266]

Similarly, attempts of censorship have remained constant when the group has tried to

perform in state-owned or -managed spaces.[267] Such restrictions severely constrain The

BuSSy Project's ability to perform in front of a more diverse audience (Soliman, 2015).

Outside of Cairo, the group has managed to reach a broader public, but the intensification

of governmental control over cultural productions under El-Sisi's regime has limited the

number of spaces where they can perform. In the Upper Egypt city of Minya, Soliman

told me, the direction of a Coptic theater asked the group "to send [a] formal letter … to

send it to the National Security so that they can review it." At the time of our interview, in

the Spring of 2015, the group had secured venues to perform *khumsumiyyat* in Port Said

and Assiut and was looking for similar spaces in other governorates. By then, however,

the project was mainly self-funded after co-sponsor AFCA for Arts and Culture had

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[265] The GrEEK Campus is a compound that used to belong to AUC and that—after the university's relocation to the desert—has now been repurposed into a Silicon Valley-like startup cluster and innovation hub (Ahram Online, 2015; El-Behary, 2015). I return to this space in the conclusions.

[266] During a performance in the Creativity Center at Cairo Opera House, in 2010, "a girl took off the veil on stage [as part of the performance] and they called the police, and they banned the performance saying that someone is stripping on stage," Soliman (2015) explained to me.

[267] Censorship has also been the topic of some of The BuSSy Project's performances. In 2010, for example, the group decided to make a statement against these restrictions by "going on stage and saying the parts that are not censored and just staying silent when there's something to be censored," Soliman (2015) recalled. In March of 2012, they reenacted these censored monologues by miming part of the dialogues followed by an uncensored performance of the same material in the framework of the D-CAF censorship festival, in Townhouse Rawabet. A video of this performance can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKaiiavzjJc.

withdrawn its financial support following the group's dispute with the Cairo Opera

House.[268]

Image 8: Mock news report edited by The BuSSy Project documenting the collective sexual assault of a student on March 11, 1994. The title reads: "High school students in a public school in Doqqi strip a girl from a neighboring school of her clothes after finishing an exam." Compiled by the author.

Imagining Egypt Without Sexual Harassment

Scholarship on the January 25 Revolution has emphasized—and at times

*over*emphasized (Salvatore, 2013, p. 219)—the role of social media in the protests that

led to Mubarak's ouster (see, for example, Hamdy & Gomaa, 2012; Khamis & Vaughn,

2013; AlSayyad & Guvenc, 2015). This literature overwhelmingly focuses on the use of

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[268] AFCA is the organizer of the Hakawy International Arts Festival, a festival for children celebrated yearly since 2011 in the Hanager Arts Centre, at the Cairo Opera House. See http://afca-arts.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=33&Itemid=383&lang=en.

online platforms for documentation, claim-making, deliberation, mobilization and organizational purposes, highlighting the "reciprocal interaction" between social media and urban protests (AlSayyad & Guvenc, 2015, p. 2018; see also Salvatore, 2013, p. 224). Earlier research on blogging in Egypt has also examined these virtual spaces as productive arenas for self-expression and testimony (Otterman, 2007; Weyman, 2007; Rifaat, 2008). Less attention has been devoted in academic literature to social media platforms as world-making cyberplaces where users engage with each other to collectively imagine different worlds (Wellman, 2001, p. 229; see also Pahwa, 2016, p. 46).[269] This was precisely the intent of the Two Days of Blogging and Tweeting for Human Dignity, organized by OpAntiSH on January 23 and 24, 2013. In anticipation of the second anniversary of the January 25 Revolution, this initiative asked online publics to remember the "feeling of safety, dignity and mutual respect" that pervaded Tahrir Square during the eighteen revolutionary days, and to imagine Egypt *as if* the revolutionary affect still permeated public space.[270] Collapsing recent revolutionary past, post-revolutionary present and the future to come, the campaign proposed the hashtag #مصر_من_غير_تحرش (Egypt Without Sexual Harassment) to "describe or capture fleeting intimations of a better world" (Dolan, 2010, p. 2) in Twitter, Facebook and blogs.

Contributions included the wide range of responses that discussions about public sexual harassment commonly elicit. One of the most elemental questions concerned the (im)possibility of even imagining Egypt without sexual harassment. Many tweets

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[269] Barry Wellman (2001) argues that community ties forged through the use of online technologies transform "cyber*space* into cyber*places,* as people connect online with kindred spirits, engage in supportive and sociable relationships with them, and imbue their activity online with meaning, belonging, and identity" (p. 229). In this regard, Sonali Pahwa (2016) has examined Egyptian women's personal blogs as "a space for reframing the performance of citizenship" in the aftermath of the January 25 Revolution (p. 46).

[270] See https://www.facebook.com/events/400348160054591.

described this scenario as "a dream" or "a paradise for girls" while others, adopting a sarcastic tone, responded that Egypt "won't be Egypt" without sexual harassment, that it could only happen "if all men vanish or women die" or, more imaginatively, that Egypt without sexual harassment would be "like Pepsi without soda … impossible."[271] Another set of tweets outrightly denied the existence of sexual harassment in Egypt in a way that reflected commonplace considerations of non-physical forms of public sexual harassment as *muʿāksa* or flirtation. By situating the possibility of an Egypt without sexual harassment beyond the realm of the possible or even imaginable, or discarding the premise as nonsensical due to the non-existence of sexual harassment, these tweets reflected the difficulty of envisioning alternative realities. Many of those who did conceive of an Egypt without sexual harassment echoed popular understandings of public sexual harassment as the result of economic, religious and moral decline, framed harassers within pathologizing and criminalizing discourses, or blamed women by regarding them as "a catalyst" or "assistant factor" in the perpetration of public sexual violence. Twitter provided a space where these claims could be presented as well as challenged with counterarguments asserting that "harassment has nothing to do with religion" or that women's bodies should not be used as a "justification" for public sexual violence.

The forty-eight-hour campaign also provided an opportunity for women to articulate micronarratives that testified to their everyday experiences of public sexual harassment and assault, and to fantasize about the many ways in which their inhabitation of public space would be transformed in an Egypt without sexual harassment. Within the spatial constraints of Twitter's hundred forty characters, they imagined themselves

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[271] See https://twitter.com/hashtag/مصر_من_غير_تحرش.

wearing dresses and smiling at strangers, riding bikes and going for a run, sleeping in the bus without fear, and returning home alone. This "aggregation of testimonial fragments" in virtual space evinced—while reinforcing—a "sense of shared vulnerability and connectedness" between Twitter users in the materiality of physical space (Papailias, 2016, p. 438). Positioned as witnesses to these testimonies, men participating in the campaign conceived of situations in which they did not have to accompany their sisters if they wanted to go somewhere or fear for their safety when they were out, and longed for a day when their presence on the streets would not cause discomfort to women walking alone, compelling them to preemptively cross the street "so that she is not afraid."[272] The recent experience of the January 25 Revolution and the memory of Tahrir Square during that period provided a concrete reference in the immediate past—recasting imagining as just a matter of remembering—that could be used as an entry point into this hypothetical present/future. By jointly articulating these dreams and images of change, the participants in the campaign produced a space that, in Deborah Gould's (2009) words, acted as a site of "collective world-making … in which the ongoing interactions of participants continually produce[d] sentiments, ideas, values, and practices that manifest[ed] and encourage[d] new modes of being" (p. 178). As Gould argues, these shared perceptions and interpretations can foster activism, as those who participate in this process envision together the possibility of a different world and organize to realize it.

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[272] One of the salient themes in the campaign was the contrast between a discourse of protection and a discourse of rights regarding women's presence in public space. In response to tweets promoting ideals of protective masculinity with phrases like "if you love her accompany her to her house" and promises to "protect any girl who is harassed," participants in the campaign reclaimed women's freedom and "right to walk on the street" without harassment, and rejected a rhetoric of protection that ultimately restricts women's mobility.

Bridging the "porous" boundaries between the safe space of social media and the 'unsafe' space of the street (The Roestone Collective, 2014, p. 1361), the Facebook group Thawrat El Banat called shortly thereafter for two direct actions whose focus was reminiscent of some of the issues raised during the campaign.[273] With "hanalbas fasātīn" (We Will Wear Dresses), they invited Egyptian women to exercise their right to choose whatever they wanted to wear in public space without fear of public sexual violence. On August 24, 2013, they organized a walk of women wearing dresses in downtown Cairo and asked other women to do the same in their neighborhoods, workplaces and academic institutions. The event was conceived as a decentralized action, and the organizers asked participants to post pictures of themselves wearing dresses on Facebook and Twitter using the hashtag #هنلبس_فساتين. In an interview, Thawrat El Banat's co-founder Ghadeer Ahmed (2015) noted that what women wear is a "strong battle" in Egypt, as women's clothes are often regarded as the reason behind harassment. Their decision to reclaim women's right to wear dresses was, therefore, for Ahmed (2015), not a celebration of femininity—as some mockingly commented online—but a feminist act. With "hanarkab ʿagal" (We Will Ride Bicycles), the initiative organized two cycling days in October of 2013 and January of 2014 "to defend women's right to public space and to fight sexual harassment."[274] The group framed this action, echoing some of the tweets discussed before, as the fulfillment of "one of our simplest dreams," riding a bicycle. The two events took place in Nasr City in cooperation with a bike team that provided bicycles for those who did not have one. In both occasions, men were allowed to participate, "not for security," as Ahmed (2015) remarked, but just for the sake of riding together.

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[273] For Thawrat El Banat's Facebook page, see https://www.facebook.com/EgyGirlsRev/?fref=ts.

[274] See https://www.facebook.com/events/439773806139586 and
https://www.facebook.com/events/565311236896150.

By wearing dresses and riding bicycles in public space, the participants in these events acted *as if* there was no public sexual harassment, in the process populating the streets with "micro-rebellious bodies" (Salime, 2016, p. 158) enacting unruly performances of femininity. The proliferation of individual instances of what Koskela (1997) has called "bold walk" (p. 304) and the collective navigation of threatening spaces in dresses and on bikes prompted the "productive negotiation of unsafe space" (The Roestone Collective, 2014, p. 1351) by means of the participants' affective and embodied interactions with, and within, public space. From this perspective, Rosi Braidotti's (1994) discussion of the practice of "as if" as a tactics for "opening up, through successive repetitions and mimetic strategies, spaces where forms of feminist agency can be engendered" can be a generative point of departure for thinking about the significance and potential of these actions (p. 7). And yet, deviating from Braidotti's examination— influenced by Judith Butler's performativity and Luce Irigaray's mimesis—of this practice as an "orchestrated form of provocation" animated by parody and irony, actions like "hanalbas fasātīn" and "hanarkab ʿagal," while sharing a playful and joyful tone, are not so much motivated by an attempt to mock or scorn dominant codes as they result from a desire to bring into being the imagined Egypt without sexual harassment. Akin to Jill Dolan's (2010) "utopian performatives," these are enactments that "in their doings, make palpable an affective vision of how the world might be better" (p. 6). Thus, symbolic and material at the same time, they perform in the present alternative ways of being and doing that challenge the entrenched notion of women in public space as simultaneously *at* risk and *a* risk, as both targets and agents of fear, as a liability and a threat for society. In the current moment of increased militarization and securitization of

public space, it is in these "productive and paradoxical" spaces (The Roestone Collective, 2014, p. 1348)—remembered while imagined, safe and simultaneously unsafe, virtual and physical—that the production of a public space free of sexual violence continues to take place in today's Egypt. It is to this question that I turn to in the conclusions.

Conclusions

After the Coup is Before the Revolution

> When the cynic affirms that "nothing happened here," what he really thinks is that thanks to the impunity enjoyed by the aggressors, "the same thing could happen all over again."
> – Ademar Olivera, "Forgetting and remembering," 1996.

Looking Back

I interviewed Yasmine El-Baramawy in late March of 2015. When we met, almost two years and a half had passed since the collective sexual assault she had suffered in Tahrir Square. It had also been more than a year and a half after the military deposed President Morsi and General El-Sisi took power. Recalling the past years, it struck me that El-Baramawy (2015) evoked this period with nostalgia, her recollections suffused by the memories of the January 25 Revolution and the post-Revolution time: "These three years [were] my personal fight, my country fight, my people fight, I don't see it in a sexual way, I don't see it in a bad way," she told me. "We had a cause that we believed in, and we did what we believed, and we were sincere, and I feel like it's an honor, I'm proud [that] I was there for all these years." Against the backdrop of Egyptians' collective struggle for bread, freedom, and human dignity, her experience of sexual violence appeared as little more than a painful episode that, in El-Baramawy's memory, blended with other episodes of violence that marked the revolutionary days. This affective connection was particularly manifest in El-Baramawy's music, as she explained to me:

I have a composition that I really love and I really hate because, when I play it, it's like talking about [the sexual assault,] it's like I'm telling the story, without lyrics, it's instrumental. But I hate it because, after I finish playing it, it's like I was running or doing rough sports, a lot of effort, maybe I'm sweating while playing it. Sometimes I feel like it's [like] tak[ing] out the negative energy, sometimes I feel like it's like living the … incident again … I want to tell you how painful it is, but I can't tell you with words so I tell you with music, I want to tell you how angry I am but I can't tell you, no words will describe how angry I am, so here it is, I can play it, music expresses how I feel more than words. But this composition, I composed it before the assault. It was a violent day, it was in the eighteen days during the camel battle, that was the day I composed it.

The Camel Battle has gone into history as the most violent event of the January 25 Revolution. On February 2, 2011, thugs affiliated with the Mubarak regime riding horses and camels stormed Tahrir Square and attacked the protesters, leaving eleven dead and over six hundred injured (Fathi, 2012). In Egyptians' collective memory, the battle is remembered by the brave resistance of the unarmed revolutionary activists. It is also considered to be the day when Mubarak's paternalist and benevolent mask fell for all to see, revealing the ruthlessness of the regime and sealing its fate forever.[275]

In El-Baramawy's narrative, there are continuities and reverberations between the two attacks: the violent onslaught of protesters and the collective sexual assault she was subjected to in Tahrir Square. First, there was the fighting back against an overwhelming and overpowering number of aggressors. In our conversation, El-Baramawy recounted to me how she had defended herself with tooth and nail—she remembered biting the tongue of an attacker, trying to grab the testicles of many others—and recalled with quiet pride that, despite the sustained violation, the assailants did not manage to strip her down:

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[275] The Camel Battle was preceded, on February 1, 2011, by an emotive speech given by Mubarak, in which he expressed his love for Egypt and promised not to run for office after the end of his presidential term, in September of 2011. Mubarak's statement created division among Egyptian publics, prompting some supporters to leave the sit-ins in Tahrir square (Fathi, 2012). The attack of February 2 reassured Egyptians about the necessity of ousting Mubarak and gave a definitive backing to the revolutionary struggle.

"They did rape me but they had to cut [the pants] from behind. I had one hand holding my pants … and many, many, many hands tried to get [them] down and [they] didn't go down." As El-Baramawy (2015) emphasized, this attitude of active resistance against public sexual violence was diametrically opposed to her previous responses to public sexual harassment: "I was weak before. When I was fifteen, I did nothing. And later, for all these years, I did nothing." Her renewed disposition was shaped by a second element that, at a personal level, mirrored the collective realization that the Camel Battle had represented for Egyptians. The violence of the public sexual assault laid bare for El-Baramawy the workings of the regime of sexual governmentality that dictates women's lives in Egypt. After that, she told me, there was no room left for fear, shame, or guilt:

> If someone harasses me now, I'm ready, I feel like I'm ready … I was manipulated when I was young, I couldn't see it the right way, I was affected by traditions, and by the masculinity that we have in the patriarchy we live in. And the assault … was really violent and unbelievable … but the positive side of it is that it killed any chance to say that I am wrong.

This concluding chapter builds upon El-Baramawy's reflections to explore the manifold—at times contradictory—ways in which the multiplication and exacerbation of public sexual violence in the post-Revolution years transformed how women in Egypt experienced public space and reclaimed their place in it. To that end, I return to the three conceptual themes proposed in the introduction—affective spatio-temporalities, public sexual violence, anti-sexual violence activism—and situate them within the social and political context that followed the military coup of July 3, 2013. First, I examine women's contested place in an increasingly securitized and militarized public space that still bears the traces of the January 25 Revolution. Second, I discuss the legal and policy changes adopted by El-Sisi's regime with regard to public sexual harassment and assault.

Third, I analyze the impact of increased state repression of human and women's rights activism on the initiatives that emerged in the post-Revolution period to counter public sexual violence. In these three sections, I draw on conversations with members of initiatives and organizations working against sexual violence, documents published by independent groups and governmental agencies, and media reports. I close this chapter by exploring possibilities for change within this constrained situation.

When, in March of 2015, I asked El-Baramawy about the future, she intimated "I'm not optimistic," citing the regime's attempt to erase the memory of the January 25 Revolution, its crackdown on revolutionaries, and its manifest inability to solve structural problems in Egyptian society: "The revolution was killed, erased, they are brainwashing people [telling them that] the revolution was on June 30 [in reference to the protests that led to the military coup] and not January 25." As El-Baramawy (2015) noted, it felt as if nothing had changed after Mubarak's ouster: "Corruption goes on, everything is the same … now we can't even [say] what we believe because it's dangerous … and nobody can fight, because we are all exhausted and we just want our friends to be free." Scholarly analyses have confirmed El-Baramawy's impression that *nothing has really changed* in Egypt after the January 25 Revolution (Abaza, 2017, p. 181). Despite abundant evidence, no representatives of the Ministry of Interior or police officers were convicted for the killing and injuring of protesters in 2011 (Abdelrahman, 2017, p. 191). After six years in custody, Mubarak was acquitted on all charges of conspiring to kill protesters and released on March 24, 2017 (Michaelson, 2017).[276] In the years that followed El-Sisi's rise to power, the economic situation worsened dramatically as a result of high

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[276] This verdict—issued by the Court of Cassation, Egypt's highest appeals court—overturned a sentence of June 2, 2012, that condemned Mubarak to life in prison (Shenker & Hussein, 2012).

unemployment, increasing inflation and the collapse of revenue from tourism (Cook, 2016; Michaelson, 2016; Raghavan & Mahfouz, 2016). In parallel, state repression has not only reached but surpassed pre-Revolution levels (Amnesty International, 2015b; FIDH, 2015; Shenker, 2016). In view of the major and turbulent political changes the country has undergone since January of 2011, with the downfall of the Mubarak regime, a period of interim military rule, an Islamist government and president, a military coup and the current El-Sisi's presidency (now in its second term, after his reelection in March of 2018), it is tempting to surmise—paraphrasing Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's *Il gattopardo*—that in Egypt *everything changed so that everything could remain the same.*

And yet, despite the soundness of this argument, this chapter refuses to subscribe to this circular logic. It does so by highlighting the important transformations that were brought into being by the occupation of Tahrir Square by Egyptian women and men during the eighteen revolutionary days, underscoring Abd El-Hameed's (2015) contention that people's everyday encounters with—and, I would add, on—the street were "the most precious gain" Egyptians had from the Revolution. It further does so by appraising the broad and far-reaching effects of the proliferation of direct action interventions against public sexual harassment and assault and the creation of spaces of testimony for the public discussion of personal experiences of sexual violence in the post-Revolution time, while also recognizing the precariousness of these projects in the current political moment. Drawing on these examples, I assert that with the January 25 Revolution *everything changed* in such a fundamental way that it jeopardized the logic of sexual governmentality that underlies the functioning of the Egyptian state. These initiatives, which threatened Egypt's (gender) order in the most radical manner, are now under

threat. I conclude this dissertation by examining the persistence of practices—cultivated

and implemented in a multiplicity of urban spaces by young women and men—that give

continuity to the revolutionary process. Drawing on María Lugones' (2003) figure of *the*

streetwalker/la callejera, I discuss women's everyday engagements with risk in public

space as a perseverant way of continuing to inhabit and producing spaces free of sexual

violence in Egypt.

Al-Shawāriʿ Limīn? **Whose Streets?**

On April 3, 2015, the initiative Women on Walls (WOW, *sitt el-ḥīṭa* in Arabic)

launched the street art workshop "Unchained" as part of the Downtown Contemporary

Arts Festival (D-CAF).[277] The fourth edition of this yearly cultural-artistic encounter—

known for its urban interventions in post-Revolution downtown Cairo's public spaces

(Jankowicz, 2014)—started with polemics due to the organizers' inability to secure

permits from the authorities to stage performances on the street and the forced relocation

of most of its performing arts program into the privately-owned GrEEK campus (El

Shimi, 2015b).[278] But it was the use of the GrEEK campus' exterior walls as the canvas

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[277] D-CAF was founded by playwright Ahmed El Attar in 2012 with the aim of repurposing streets, passageways, abandoned buildings and state theaters in downtown Cairo into stages for art, theater, music and performance (El Shimi, 2015a). The festival partners with Al-Ismailia for Real State Development, a consortium of Egyptian and Saudi investors that since 2008 has been acquiring and rehabilitating historical buildings in downtown Cairo (Berger, 2014; Awatta, 2015, p. 84). Espousing a strategy of "cultural gentrification," the company owns—and rents—the buildings that host key independent art spaces in the area, including Townhouse, the Contemporary Image Collective (CIC) and Hotel Viennoise, many of which are venues for D-CAF events (Berger, 2014; El Shimi, 2015a). For more information, see http://d-caf.org/2015/home.

[278] While in previous years several of the festival's performances had taken place in the Borsa—a pedestrian area located in front of the stock market—and in Alfy Bey street, by the spring of 2015 the police had reasserted its control over this area, most notably by shutting down the Borsa's street cafés in November of 2014 (Magid, 2014). The GrEEK campus is a compound that used to be part of the American University in Cairo (AUC). After the relocation of this academic institution to a campus in

for WOW's graffiti initiative that became a matter of dispute. The walls on Youssef El-Guindi and Mohamed Mahmoud street (see Map 4), while legally the property of the GrEEK campus, are two of the main spaces where street artists have been memorializing the January 25 Revolution and its aftermath by means of graffiti, stencils, and murals (Abaza, 2012 & 2013; El-Hawary, 2014). As soon as the project started, the rumor that WOW would be whitewashing revolutionary graffiti spread widely on social media, prompting backlash among street artists and revolutionaries.[279] Despite street artists' framing of the confrontation as a conflict between revolutionary and commercial art and the existence of a personal grudge between some of these artists and WOW's founder Mia Grondahl, the use of insults like *ḥaīzabūna* (old hag), *whore* and *sharmūṭa* (bitch) in online diatribes against Grondahl reveals a sexist subtext that hints at broader issues regarding women's use of public space.[280] The limited ways in which women have been represented in revolutionary graffiti is precisely at the core of WOW's project. As Grondahl (2015) told me in an interview, a search in her database of around 17,000 images of street art in Egypt produced only 250 women's representations and only a few


New Cairo, the 250,000 square-feet-complex has been turned into a technology and startup hub after venture capitalist Ahmed El Alfi signed in 2013 a ten-year lease agreement with AUC for its occupation (Salah-Ahmed, 2013; Awatta, 2015, p. 101).

[279] The authorities' whitewashing of graffiti in Mohamed Mahmoud street has been a constant since the appearance of the first murals during the January 25 Revolution (Abaza, 2012; Elshahed, 2014, p. 24). In response to these accusations, WOW's founder Mia Grondahl posted a Facebook note explaining that the participating artists were "painting on the free space ABOVE the old graffiti [with the help of cranes], and only one piece of WOW's street art has used a bit of the bottom part, where the graffiti already was ruined a year ago" (see
https://www.facebook.com/RevolutionGraffiti.StreetArtEgypt/posts/953059724718452).

[280] WOW was launched in 2013 by Swedish journalist and photographer Mia Grondhal, the author of the photography book *Revolution graffiti: Street art of the new Egypt.* Funded by the Danish Center for Culture and Development (CKU), the project aims at supporting women graffiti artists to discuss women's issues. When it launched in April of 2013, it had the support of prominent graffiti artists such as Mira Shihadeh and Zeft—who authored the mural "The Circle of Hell"—and Ammar Abo Bakr. Personal and political differences led to the distancing of Abo Bakr and other street artists from the project. In response to WOW's workshop, Abo Bakr and Le Saiko, among others, posted images of themselves in front of the graffiti in the making with the hashtag #الحيزبونه_لازم_ترحل (*al-ḥaīzabūna lāzem tirḥal,* "the old hag must go") and "Fuck #women_on_wall."

examples of artwork created by women artists. Moreover, as she noted, portrayals of women in graffiti and street art in Egypt often follow, with slight variations, the triad of the mother, the virgin and the whore.[281] Even examples of revolutionary street art that offered more assertive narratives, like the mural of women's self-defense that used to occupy a privileged space in Mohamed Mahmoud street (see image in Abaza, 2014, p. 250), sent mixed messages about women's bodies and their presence in public space, combining phrases like "my body is free" with more conventional calls to Egyptian men to "man up and protect her." These seemingly contradictory images perpetuate the conceptualization of women in public space as simultaneously *at risk* and *a risk*.
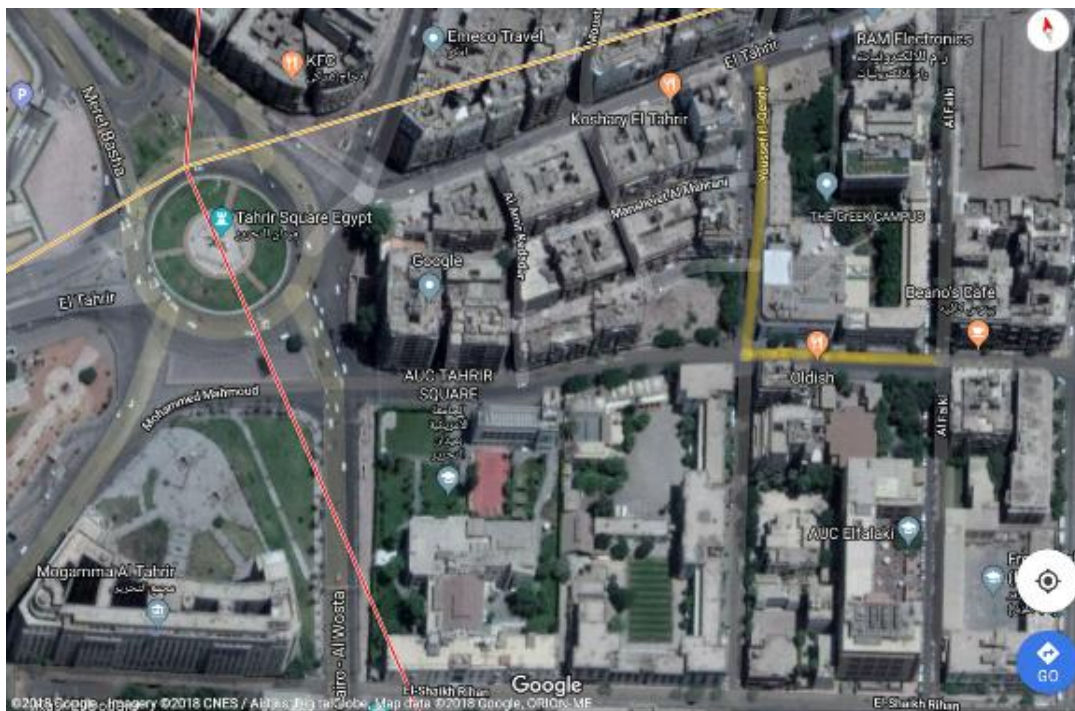
Map 4: Streets where the WOW workshop took place. Source: Google Maps.

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[281] In particular, Mohamed Mahmoud street became famous during the revolutionary period for its depiction of the mothers of the martyrs, shrouded in black next to the figures of their sons turned angels (see image in Hydlig Dal, 2014, pp. 244-245). The dichotomy between the virgin and the whore is best illustrated in a stencil authored by street artist Abo Bakr that represents Samira Ibrahim, the protester who was subjected to a forced virginity check by a military doctor while in detention, next to Alia al-Mahdy, popularly known as the naked blogger (see discussion in Kraidy, 2016, pp. 173-176).

It is within this framework that I situate the attacks that the participant artists suffered during the celebration of WOW's workshop, including threats and intimidation, verbal harassment, the mobilization of the security apparatus to stop the project, and the repeated defilement of their artwork. "The police came [on April 7] from the Abdeen station," Grondahl (2015) told me, "I wanted to know what's the problem and [the police officer] said 'we had an artist coming down and said that the GrEEK campus is ruining the walls.'" While a street artist resorting to the authorities may appear incongruous in the current moment of heightened repression, it evokes a long history of collaboration between social and state actors to discipline women's conduct in public space. Reflecting on the antagonistic reactions garnered by WOW's workshop, participant artist Ibtissam (2015) noted: "It's not the art they are concerned about, or the revolution itself, they are dominating and nothing more." Territorial claims were at the core of street artist Ahmed Naguib's complaints, who posted in Facebook on April 4: "Egypt is a big place and we support any project that brings art to the streets. But why in this street? Why in this shameful way? How can this be done *without the permission and against the will* of the artists who have painted this street for years during the revolution?" (italics are mine). Within this context, it is telling that the uproar caused by WOW's reported destruction of revolutionary graffiti has not been matched by similar reactions to the silent yet consistent erasure of the feminist graffiti that proliferated in the years following the January 25 Revolution (for a review of this artwork, see Abaza, 2014, pp. 249-255). Stencils of blue bras—in reference to *sitt el-banat*—and portraits of Samira Ibrahim that pervaded the walls of Mohamed Mahmoud street during my pre-dissertation visits to Cairo in the summers of 2012 and 2013 had disappeared by the spring of 2015 without

outcry of any kind. More recently, Shihadeh and Zeft's mural representing the "circles of hell" (see Image 1) was partly destroyed, the face of the woman in the center of the circle and the excuses voiced by the assailants covered with white paint.[282]

Asked about the future of the artwork created during the workshop amidst this confrontational atmosphere, Grondahl (2015) noted: "After the project, I think they will ruin it. We don't make this to stay. My hope is that this has opened up a discussion about who the walls really belong to and who owns the streets." Indeed, on the morning of April 7, the participant artists arrived to the graffiti site to find their work splashed with paint and the message "This street is a necropolis. Only here not commercial graffiti is allowed" (see Image 9, also Eickhof, 2015). Anticipating a second paint-splashing attack after the workshop concluded, Ibtissam (2015) told me: "We need to defend our right of even drawing in the walls, but I think we have accomplished that by just reaching the wall; so it's fine, even if they delete it later, we did it." It is precisely, as Mona Abaza (2012) remarks, these "ebbs and flows" in the creation and destruction of street art that reveal the dynamism of the revolutionary process.[283] Reflecting on the transformation of the street, Grondahl (2015) remarked:

> What's happening in these walls is an expression of people who want to move on, they have not forgotten what has happened here, but they don't want to stand still and keep repeating the same thing, they want to find a better way [of] chang[ing] their lives into something better, and this is also equality and women's rights.

The material and symbolic assertion of force by the more established street artists over Mohamed Mahmoud Street was also ephemeral, however. On September 17, 2015,

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[282] See https://www.facebook.com/grondahlmia/posts/10153819625295941.
[283] In this regard, Joscelyn Jurich (2014) has referred to Cairo's post-Revolution graffiti as a "palimpsest, … a parchment that has been written upon and erased and then written upon again but that still might possess traces of the original writing" (p. 270).

municipal workers started to tear down the wall featuring the martyrs' portraits, turning

revolutionary graffiti into debris in a matter of hours. According to governmental sources,

the removal of the wall—adjacent to AUC's Tahrir campus—was part of a beautification

project that included the demolition of the university's Science Building and the

construction of a garden (Mada Masr, 2015d).[284] These urban transformations inscribe

themselves within a broader plan to restore downtown Cairo to its glorious past, the

Khedival era when the Egyptian capital earned the appellative of "Paris along the Nile"

(Volait, 2013; Awatta, 2015, p. 10).[285] Nostalgia—as a cultural practice concerned with

"reconstruct[ing] the past as a means of establishing a point of critique in the present"

(Bissell, 2005, p. 239)—is at the center of urban projects aimed at recuperating belle-

époque architecture in Cairo (Kadi & ElKerdany, 2006, p. 346; Abaza, 2011, p. 1080 &

2017, pp. 182-183; Volait, 2013). Invocations of liberal and cosmopolitan days gone by

sustain the creation of a "present past" (Huyssen, 2000, p. 21) that can bridge the gap

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[284] In a press statement, AUC explained the destruction of the wall in the following terms: "In order to start the demolition process, the Mohamed Mahmoud wall had to be removed to allow for the entry of construction equipment. AUC has considered ways to preserve the wall, but that is not possible. Knowing the historic significance of the graffiti there, however, the University has carefully documented the successive paintings, drawing, writings and other works of art that have been displayed on the wall and plans to develop a permanent exhibition documenting the wall's role in modern Egyptian political life after the demolition of the Science Building is completed and the gardens that will replace it are planted" (News@AUC, 2015). The university situated the removal of the Science Building within "AUC's five-year strategic plan that calls for the revival of the Tahrir Square campus as a cultural center [as well] as the government's recent plans to renovate the downtown area" (News@AUC, 2015). The new 800-square-meter garden was officially inaugurated on October 29, 2016, coinciding with AUC's homecoming (News@AUC, 2016).

[285] Downtown Cairo, *wust al-balad* in Egyptian Arabic, refers to the area historically known as Al-Ismailia and Al-Tawfiqiyya, currently spanning between Tahrir, Abdeen, and Opera squares, and 26th of July and Ramses streets. Al-Ismailia was founded by the *khedive* Ismaʿil in the late 1860s as a modern city inspired by Haussmannian Paris. The new city—located west of the old, medieval core—was conceived to host the international personalities invited to Cairo on the occasion of the inauguration of the Suez Canal in 1869 (Abu-Lughod, 1971, p. 105). Al-Tawfiqiyya was a quarter created by Ismaʿil's son Tawfiq in the mid-1880s—already under British occupation—in the areas adjacent to Al-Ismailia (Abu-Lughod, 1971, p. 116). This area was home to Egyptian and foreign elites until Nasser's era (Awatta, 2015, pp. 41-42). Rent control legislation and state disinvestment in this area in favor of new developments—notably Madinat Nasr in the east and Mohandeseen in the west—changed the socio-economic composition of downtown Cairo, favoring the arrival of middle- and lower-class Egyptians who occupied the buildings in increasing disrepair left by the upper- and upper-middle classes (Awatta, 2015, p. 43).

between the (imagined) golden era and the current moment, obviating the presence of the

more recent (revolutionary and Islamist) past.[286]

Image 9: WOW graffiti after its defacement. Pictures taken by the author.

These projects—like the Khedival plans for Cairo and the Haussmannian designs

that inspired them in the late 19th century (Sennett, 1970, p. 89; Alsayyad, 2011, p.

183)—regard urbanism as a key site for the maintenance of control over public space by

means of the "flattening out, separating, and drawing boundaries around the complex

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[286] The importance of protecting architecture dating from the "belle époque"—a broad category that refers to buildings dated from the 1850s to the 1950s—entered the official discourse in the 1980s, when the Mubarak regime amended the heritage legislation to prohibit the demolition of buildings of historic or architectural value constructed after 1879 (Volait, 2013; Awatta, 2015, p. 48). Other measures followed, including the allocation in 2010 of 5.6 million Egyptian pounds to renovate historic buildings in downtown Cairo, partially used to whiten the façades of the buildings surrounding Tahrir and Talʿat Harb squares and pedestrianize the Borsa district in partnership with private investors (El Kadi & ElKerdani, 2006, p. 365; Awatta, 2015, pp. 55 & 62). The revitalization of downtown Cairo and the zone of the Nile Corniche prompted the displacement of informal-sector retail shops in the area, provoking "contested 'space wars' between a powerful presence of popular life in public spaces and the marching tycoons who ha[d] started to invest in 'revamping' the city" (Abaza, 2011, pp. 1075-1076). The 'cleansing' of urban space by the Mubarak regime echoed Sadat's forced relocation of the residents of ʿIshash Al-Turguman in the central area of Būlāq after the 1977 'food riots' as part of the regime's plans for the beautification of the area (Ghannam, 2002, p. 38; Abaza, 2011, p. 1978). Mubarak also followed Sadat in his endeavor to limit Egyptians' access to public space, for example through the subdivision and fencing off of areas of Tahrir square to hinder the congregation of crowds (Elshahed, 2014, p. 21).

spatialities, temporalities, and potentialities of the lived city" (Till, 2012, p. 5). The

revitalization of downtown Cairo launched by El-Sisi after his seizure of power in July of

2013, and particularly since the summer of 2014, thus needs to be understood as part of

the state's effort to restore order and security after four years of revolutionary 'disorder'

(Abdelrahman, 2017, pp. 185-186).[287] With the aim of putting an end to the recurrence of

political protests and the multiplication of manifold forms of informal encroachment on

public space, the authorities have launched a packet of measures for the beautification of

downtown Cairo, which include the landscaping of green areas and the whitening of the

façades surrounding Tahrir Square and Talʿat Harb square. These interventions are

nothing but the friendly face of a "military urbanism" (Graham, 2012, p. 137) that, since

the return to power of the military, has concentrated on restraining Egyptians' movements

through the city core by means of barbed-wire barricades, the erection of buffer-concrete

walls and the stationing of tanks (Abaza, 2013, p. 122 & 2017, p. 174), and on forcefully

removing those populations deemed unruly, notably protesters and street vendors.[288]

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[287] This plan depends, according to Maha Abdelrahman (2017), on the maintenance of a permanent state of emergency and the mobilization of ordinary citizens as willing informants against internal and external, real and imaginary threats (p. 187).

[288] What Stephen Graham (2012) has labeled "new military urbanism" refers to the "emerging constellation of military and security doctrine and practice which posits that they key 'security' challenges of our age now centre on everyday sites, spaces and circulations of cities" (p. 137). The erection of urban barriers for political containment in downtown Cairo precedes the military coup of July of 2013. Already between November of 2011 and February of 2012, the interim military government built eight walls blocking the streets surrounding the Ministry of Interior, located next to Mohamed Mahmoud street (Abaza, 2013, p. 126). In January of 2014, the temporary concrete wall that blocked Qasr al-Aini street was replaced by a—more permanent—towering metal gate, allowing for a more flexible closure of the main thoroughfare leading to Tahrir square (Perry, 2014). More generally, the state of emergency and night-time curfew declared by El-Sisi between August and November of 2013, and the promulgation of a law criminalizing free assembly and public expression in November of 2013 have both limited the presence of political activists in downtown Cairo and facilitated their detention and disappearance in the few occasions that protests have taken place (Al Jazeera, 2013a; Kirkpatrick, 2013). In August of 2014, the Cairo governorate launched a campaign to forcibly remove street vendors from downtown Cairo, a measure justified by the need "for order to return to the streets" (Awatta, 2015, pp. 52-53). In November of 2014, the police raided the unlicensed street cafés of the Borsa pedestrian area, a meeting point for activists and revolutionaries (Magid, 2014). For a discussion of these urban developments, see Abaza (2017).

Such strategies of securitization under the guise of urban renewal are not new. Instead, they represent a continuation of Mubarak's urbanism projects, put on hold by the advent of the January 25 Revolution (Abaza, 2011, pp. 1075-1076; Elshahed, 2014, pp. 20-21; Awatta, 2015, p. 55). In particular, the Cairo Strategic Urban Development Vision (CSUVD) and its Capital Cairo project—ceremoniously announced during the Egypt Economic Development Conference (EEDC) in March of 2015—is a revised version of Mubarak's controversial Cairo 2050 plan (Awatta, 2015, pp. 75-77). As part of this scheme, El-Sisi aims to actualize the old regime's dream of relocating the political and administrative center to the desert, moving the seat of power to "its own gated community," as architect and urban planner Ibrahim (2015) puts it, while divesting downtown Cairo of political and social significance.[289] The panoply of projects aimed at 'pacifying' the area have the unequivocal effect of emptying the city core of its vitality and popular life, enacting a form of "urbicide" that threatens to eradicate the abundant forms of sociability that proliferated in public space since the January 25 Revolution, while making space for commodified forms of tourist and cultural consumption (Graham, 2012, p. 147; see also Awatta, 2015, p. 74).[290]

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[289]   The Strategic Urban Development Plan for Greater Cairo (or Cairo 2050), announced in 2008, included the relocation of official buildings—such as the administrative Mogamma building and the Ministry of Interior—from downtown Cairo to a new government district (Abaza, 2011, p. 1076; Awatta, 2015, p. 71). This project was criticized by urban planners and experts for privileging real estate and investors' interests over the well-being of average Egyptians (Awatta, 2015, p. 71). El-Sisi's plan to establish a new capital city envisions the creation of a 270-square-mile administrative and business center located about thirty-seven miles away from Cairo (Salah-Ahmed, 2015; see http://thecapitalcairo.com for the official website of the project). This ambitious project has similarly received harsh criticism regarding its impact and sustainability (see, for example, Fahmy, 2015; Mada Masr, 2015c).

[290]   The term "urbicide" was coined in the 1990s to refer to "political violence intentionally designed to erase or 'kill' cities" (Graham, 2012, p. 148). More generally, Graham (2012) mobilizes this concept to discuss the "violent reconfiguration, or even erasure, of cities and urban spaces … as a means to allay purported threats, or as [a] way of clearing new space for the exigencies of global-city formation, neoliberal production, or as urban *tabula rasa* necessary for the most profitable bubbles of real estate speculation" (p. 147).

On a more symbolic level, these urban projects decisively contribute to consolidating the regime's strategy to regain control over the narrative of Egypt's recent past by means of the erasure of the material remnants of the January 25 Revolution and the imposition of appropriate forms of commemoration. A politics of memory is pivotal to El-Sisi's regime, an aspect illustrated by the authorities' attempt to co-opt practices of remembering around the January 25 Revolution through the construction of official sites of memory, i.e. the short-lived monument honoring those who died during Mubarak's and Morsi's ouster in November of 2013 and the installation of a twenty-meter pole carrying the Egyptian flag in February of 2015, both in the center of Tahrir Square (Kingsley, 2013; Fick, 2015). This impulse is also evidenced through the repression of any non-official initiatives aimed at memorializing the January 25 Revolution. The most tragic consequence of this state-led anti-memory work was the killing of activist Shaimaa el-Sabbagh when she and a group of friends were walking to Tahrir Square to lay a wreath in memory of the martyrs on the eve of the fourth anniversary of the revolution (Kirkpatrick, 2015).

The State as the Protector of Women

After four years of constitutional tug of war, women's rights organizations and advocates celebrated in January of 2014 the inclusion of a provision stating that "the State shall protect women against all forms of violence" in Article 11 of the Egyptian Constitution (Tadros, 2014a; Elsadda, 2015).[291] Alongside this amendment, El-Sisi's

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[291] The 2014 Constitution was approved on referendum on January 14-15, 2014 (Kingsley, 2014d). To read the full text, see https://www.egypt.gov.eg/arabic/laws/download/Constitution_2014.pdf (in

regime manifested its commitment to fighting violence against women and putting an end

to the prevalence of public sexual harassment and assault through a multiplicity of legal,

policy, and symbolic gestures. Certainly one of the most significant measures was the

amendment of the penal code to criminalize verbal, behavioral, phone and online sexual

harassment, on June 5, 2014 (Ahram Online, 2014a; El-Rifae, 2014; Nazra et al.,

2014).[292] The collective sexual assaults against at least nine women during the

celebrations for El-Sisi's presidential inauguration only three days after the enactment of

this legal reform—and the viral circulation of a YouTube video capturing one of the

attacks (Kirkpatrick & El Sheikh, 2014)—prompted the newly elected chief of state to

condemn these acts and demand the Minister of Interior to "vigorously enforce the law

and take all necessary measures to combat sexual harassment" (cited in Marroushi, 2015,

p. 1).[293] In a highly publicized move, El-Sisi visited one of the survivors of the collective

sexual assaults—the woman who appeared in the viral video—in the hospital, presenting

her with a bouquet of flowers as a token of apology and a promise that the state will "get

[her her] rights" (Mada Masr, 2014a; see also Ahmed Zaki, 2015, p. 3). This promise of

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Arabic) and http://www.sis.gov.eg/Newvr/Dustor-en001.pdf (unofficial translation in English). The 2014 Constitution amended the suspended 2012 Constitution, drafted under the Morsi regime and approved on referendum on December 15-22, 2012. The 2012 Constitution was criticized by women's and human rights organizations because it did not explicitly prohibit discrimination on the grounds of gender and defined the principles of *sharī'a* law as the "fundamental rules of jurisprudence," a provision that is nevertheless retained in the 2014 Constitution (FIDH et al., 2014, p. 48; Amnesty International, 2015a, p. 18). The 2012 Constitution, in turn, replaced the Constitutional Declaration of 2011, adopted by the SCAF on March 30, 2011, and amended on June 18, 2012 (see http://www.egypt.gov.eg/english/laws/constitution/default.aspx and Ahram Online, 2012). Prior to Mubarak's ouster, the 1971 Constitution—drafted under Sadat's rule, approved on referendum on September 11, 1971, and amended in 1980, 2005 and 2007—was in force.

[292] The amended articles, issued through Decree No. 50 of 2014 by interim president Adly Mansour, define sexual harassment as a crime with prison sentences of between six months and five years and fines of up to 50,000 Egyptian pounds (about 7,000 dollars at the then-exchange rate; see Abdelaziz, 2014).

[293] On March 26, 2014, El-Sisi resigned as commander-in-chief of the armed forces and announced his candidacy for president (Tawfeeq & Gumuchian, 2014). The presidential elections took place on May 26-28, 2014, and resulted in El-Sisi's victory with 96.91 percent of the vote (Saleh & Kalin, 2014).

redress swiftly materialized in the detention of nine men, who were convicted and

received exemplary sentences in record time (Kingsley, 2014a).[294]

Such a rapid and severe response markedly contrasts with the lack of attention

received by the more than five hundred cases of collective sexual assault and gang rape

documented by women's and human rights organizations between February of 2011 and

January of 2014 (Nazra et al., 2014; ElMohandes, 2015). Among them, El-Baramawy's

case remains open although at the time of our conversation—more than two years after

the fact—nothing had been done about it. Similarly, the speedy resolution of the June 8

collective sexual assaults has not found continuity in subsequent cases of public sexual

violence, and state action on behalf of survivors has remained an exception rather than

the norm (ElMohandes, 2015; FIDH, 2015, p. 7).[295] For El-Baramawy (2015), the state's

urgency in prosecuting some cases of sexual violence and not others raises "a question

mark" about the regime's actual commitment to protecting women against all forms of

violence. Reflecting on this lack of consistency, human and women's rights organizations

have warned against the perpetuation of a "culture of impunity" with regard to acts of

public sexual violence perpetrated by ordinary men as well as by members of the security

forces (Amnesty International, 2013, pp. 8-9; El-Nadeem et al., 2013, p. 59; FIDH et al.,

2014, p. 35; FIDH, 2015, p. 7).

Impunity, defined in international law and human rights literature as "the means

by which persons accused of crimes against humanity escape being charged, tried and

punished for criminal acts committed with official sanction," typically results from

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[294] Shortly a month after the collective sexual assaults, seven men were sentenced to life in prison and two men received sentences of twenty years imprisonment on July 16, 2014 (Kingsley, 2014c).

[295] As FIDH (2015) remarks, after the "symbolic trials" for the collective sexual assaults of June 8, 2014, there have been no other judicial processes for past or subsequent collective sexual assaults, including those that took place during the Eid al-Fitr celebrations of July of 2014 (p. 7).

amnesty laws and presidential pardons but can also take place *by default,* as a result of "the deliberate lack of any action at all" (Harper, 1996, p. ix; see also Viñuales, 2007, p. 134).[296] This inaction is for Paz Rojas Baeza (1996) an "act of violence" itself (p. 75). Within this context, partial action in the form of *selective accountability* functions as a mechanism of sexual governmentality that—through its discriminating and differential deployment—singles out some bodies as worthy of protection and redress while it marks all other bodies as undeserving of care, when not in need of discipline.[297] The legal and policy changes adopted by El-Sisi's regime in relation to public sexual violence have thus not disrupted the widespread regimes of impunity that allowed the practice of public sexual harassment and assault to escalate in the post-Revolution years, nor have they assuaged its effects on the individual women that suffer from these acts.[298] Instead, these developments have intensified the distinction between the figures of the *woman at risk* and the *woman as risk,* articulated—after the fact—through the discretionary

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[296] In this line, United Nations' documents define impunity as "the impossibility, de jure or de facto, of bringing the perpetrators of violations to account—whether in criminal, civil, administrative or disciplinary proceedings—since they are not subject to any inquiry that might lead to their being accused, arrested, tried and, if found guilty, sentenced to appropriate penalties, and to making reparations to their victims" (UN, 2005, p. 6). Legal scholars like Jorge E. Viñuales (2007) have expanded the narrow boundaries of the concept of impunity to include crimes perpetrated by non-state actors and individuals that are not linked to the state apparatus, and to acknowledge violations commonly regarded as "ordinary criminality," such as gender-related abuses perpetrated by ordinary individuals, that have generally fallen outside the purview of international law (p. 134).

[297] Accountability is generally understood, in international law and human rights literature, as the "antithesis" of impunity (Penrose, 1999, p. 272). In the case of Egypt, however, I suggest that impunity and accountability are mutually imbricated and operate in tandem in cases of public sexual violence to conduct women's conduct.

[298] Public sexual harassment and assault continue to take place in Egypt despite the amendment of the penal code. Following the collective sexual assault of a university student in the Lower Egypt city of Zagazig on March 31, 2017, Nazra and twenty-eight organizations, political parties and initiatives released a joint statement denouncing the "shortcomings" of recent legal and policy developments and calling for a "revision of the state's strategies to combat violence against women" in conversation with civil society groups (Nazra for Feminist Studies et al., 2017). While the state-led National Council for Women reported a decrease of public sexual harassment during Eid al-Fitr of 2016, no independent sources confirmed this information (Ahram Online, 2016b). During Eid al-Adha of 2016, anti-sexual harassment initiatives were not allowed to patrol the streets, as they were unable to secure permits from the Ministry of Interior (Abaza, 2016). Nevertheless, the anti-sexual harassment Aman initiative documented one-hundred-seventy-four cases of public sexual harassment, thus contradicting official statements that reported a decline of this phenomenon (El-Sheikh, 2016).

mobilization of the state apparatus to investigate some cases of public sexual violence

and not others, to detain and convict some perpetrators and not others, and to protect

some women while many others—those that are deemed *a risk* by the authorities—are

subjected to sexual torture in detention in the name of national security.[299]

The state's self-proclamation as the protector of women and its regaining of

initiative with regard to public sexual violence, moreover, has forced human and

women's rights groups into a "devil's bargain" (Hasso, 2014, p. 107) that threatens to

dismantle the advances made by four years of activism against public sexual harassment

and assault in the aftermath of the January 25 Revolution.[300] This setback derives in part

from the emphasis on order and security that infuses the entirety of measures adopted by

El-Sisi's regime in this realm.[301] While human and women's rights organizations have

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[299] A report published by the International Federation for Human Rights in May of 2015 documented the widespread use of sexual violence perpetrated by the security forces against regime dissidents in detention, including "NGO representatives, protesters, individuals perceived as going against the moral order, as well as common-law detainees," in the aftermath of the July 3 military coup (FIDH, 2015, p. 4). The paper reflects the systematic use of 'virginity tests' as well as numerous cases of rape and sexual assault against women detainees (FIDH, 2015, p. 19). In addition to political prisoners, a report released by Amnesty International (2015a) documented the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence committed against "women accused of so-called 'moral' crimes, such as adultery and prostitution" (pp. 58-59).

[300] Drawing on Deniz Kandiyoti's (1988 & 1998) concept of "patriarchal bargain," Hasso (2014) argues that "[r]eliance on states as the primary sources of protection and support in intimate life has largely worked to rearticulate gendered, economic, and other inequitable power relations, bolster states, reconstitute state authority over intimate domains, and limit possibilities for gendered, sexual, and kin subjectivities and affinities" (p. 107). While this dynamic—described as "a devil's bargain"—can have some positive impact on women's rights and resources, it ultimately has repressive consequences for women (Hasso, 2014, p. 127).

[301] In addition to the amendment of the penal code in June of 2014, the government activated a unit responsible for monitoring violence against women in the Ministry of Interior in September of 2013 and deployed an anti-harassment police force integrated by female police officers during religious celebrations in October of 2014 (ECWR, 2013; Hassanein, 2014; Mada Masr, 2015a; Marroushi, 2015). The Violence Against Women (VAW) unit was originally established during the Morsi presidency, under the newly created Human Rights department, in May of 2013 (ECWR, 2013; Marroushi, 2015, p. 7). It was initially integrated by ten officers—four women—charged with offering social and psychological support to women survivors of violence, albeit this assistance was described as merely symbolic and not "helpful in practical ways" by some of the survivors of the June 8 collective sexual assaults (Marroushi, 2015, pp. 8-9). Following these attacks, Interior minister Mohamed Ibrahim announced the government's decision to establish VAW units across all of Egypt's directorates (Marroushi, 2015, p. 8). By June of 2015, these units were not yet fully operational,

welcomed the state's interest in combating sexual violence—which they see as the direct

result of the "tremendous pressure" exerted by independent initiatives and activists after

2011 (Abd El-Hameed, 2015)—, they have also called attention to the dangers of

adopting "cosmetic changes" that do not address the structural sexism that underlies the

police, legal and judicial systems (Nazra et al., 2014; Abd El-Hameed, 2015;

ElMohandes, 2015).[302] These organizations have also denounced that these measures lead

to a heightened securitization of public space and the containment—when not the

detention—of activists working on the ground (Abd El-Hameed, 2015; El-Rifae, 2014;

see also Mada Masr, 2015a). In response to these shortcomings, human and women's

rights groups have called for the adoption of a "holistic strategy" that does not regard

public sexual violence as a mere security concern but recognizes the necessity of

developing interventions at all levels of government, including health, education, and

religion (Abd El-Hameed, 2015; ElMohandes, 2015; Nazra for Feminist Studies et al.,

2014).[303]

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pending the training of the officers ascribed to them (Marroushi, 2015, p. 8). In relation to the activities of these units, activists have denounced the lack of transparency that surrounds their work: "[W]e don't know what their mandate is exactly, they don't publish any information on, for instance, the number of cases that they work on," ElMohandes (2015) noted in an interview.

[302] In particular, activists have expressed concern that the penal code's definition of sexual harassment is "tied to the intention of the perpetrator to receive benefit of a sexual nature," a condition that is difficult to prove and depends on the judge's discretion (Nazra for Feminist Studies, 2014; ElMohandes, 2015; see also El-Rifae, 2014). It is also worth mentioning that the amendment of the penal code situates sexual harassment under article 306, "the scandalous breach of modesty," and thus positions it as a moral crime instead of a crime of sexual violence. Human and women's rights activists have also denounced that, under the Egyptian law, police reports that are accessible to the defendant's lawyer include the plaintiff's contact information, which often appears in the media. As a result, the family of the defendant will often find the woman who brings the claim and "either threaten her or emotionally blackmail her," leading most survivors to drop the case (ElMohandes, 2015; see also El-Rifae, 2014; Nazra for Feminist Studies et al., 2014).

[303] Among other questions, human and women's rights organizations have emphasized the importance of developing appropriate medical protocols to assist rape and sexual assault survivors (Abd El-Hameed, 2015; ElMohandes, 2015; see also Marroushi, 2015, p. 12). More generally, they have called for more transparency of state institutions' work, the publication of gender-segregated data and the implementation of gender budgeting in state programs (ElMohandes, 2015).

The state's response to these demands arrived on May 7, 2015, when the official National Council for Women (NCW) proudly launched its "National Strategy for the Elimination of Violence Against Women 2015-2020" (NSVAW), a nearly 200-page document that presents Egypt's integrated approach to combat violence against women in the public and the private spheres (NCW, 2015).[304] While welcoming these advances, human and women's rights organizations have deplored the absence of a feminist perspective and rights-based language in the document (EIPR, 2015; Nazra for Feminist Studies, 2015). As these groups have noted, the NSVAW adopts "problematic definitions" of sexual violence, notably with regard to rape and sexual assault (EIPR, 2015; see also Nazra for Feminist Studies, 2015). Reproducing the wording outlined in the Egyptian penal code, the document limits rape to penile-vaginal penetration, thus ruling out oral and anal rape, as well as rape with fingers and objects regardless of gender (EIPR, 2015; ElMohandes, 2015; Nazra for Feminist Studies, 2015). Moreover, it continues to use a "morally charged language" linked to women's chastity and modesty by referring to sexual assault as *hatk ʿird,* literally violation of honor (EIPR, 2015; also ElMohandes, 2015; Nazra for Feminist Studies, 2015; Shash, 2015). Finally, it does not make any reference to collective sexual assaults or to sexual violence perpetrated by state actors—including virginity tests—and therefore fails to devise mechanisms to hold perpetrators accountable for these crimes (EIPR, 2015; Nazra for Feminist Studies, 2015). Human and women's rights organizations have also denounced the absence of independent groups in the committees responsible for developing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the

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[304] The NSVAW outlines a protocol for cooperation and coordination around four axes—prevention, protection, interventions, and prosecution—that encompasses twelve ministries and governmental units, including the Ministries of Interior, Justice, Health, Social Solidarity, Education, Religious Endowments, and Youth as well as the National Council for Women, the National Council for Human Rights, and the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCW, 2015, pp. 22-29).

NSVAW (EIPR, 2015; ElMohandes, 2015; Nazra for Feminist Studies, 2015 & 2016b). The sidestepping of actors with on-the-ground expertise in the fight against public sexual violence has coincided with the state's crackdown on NGOs, the hardening of legislation regarding the right to assembly and association, and the closure of public space (Abd El-Hameed, 2015; Nazra for Feminist Studies, 2016a).

"Between a Rock and a Hard Place"

Human and women's rights organizations provided medical, psychological, and legal support to the women who suffered the collective sexual assaults of June 8, 2014. Following their intervention protocols, members of these groups reached out to the survivors in the Qasr al-Aini police station and offered them their services for free. According to one of the professionals who worked with the survivors, they accompanied them through the forensic examination and, in the course of the following three days, made sure they had appropriate medical, legal and psychological assistance to facilitate the recovery process.[305] At one point, however, several of the women expressed their suspicion about the motives behind this help. Reportedly, one of the survivors asked a member of these organizations:

> I don't know who you are, I don't know why you're doing this, why are you supporting us? You're a human rights organization and we know through the media that you take money from other governments to destroy our country, and we appreciate that you want to support us but I won't take your services and destroy other Egyptian girls or help you destroy my country.

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[305] The following description is based on an interview with a member of one of the organizations who provided assistance to the survivors of the June 8 collective sexual assaults. Due to the regime's increased repression of human and women's rights activists, their identity has been anonymized to avoid recognition.

Later on, some of these women appeared on TV to talk about their experience. In their public appearance, they emphasized that they had received support from the Ministry of Interior, the National Council for Human Rights, and NCW. To the explicit inquiries of the host, they made clear that they had not got any help from human and women's rights organizations. On the contrary, they remarked, they had not seen any of their representatives.

The demonization of human and women's rights organizations in state and media discourse has gone hand in hand with the regime's renewed establishment of cooperation with international organizations and corporate stakeholders to address sexual violence in the public and the private sphere. An example of these alliances was the celebration, in February of 2015, of the first "Violence Against Women Youth Innovation Camp," a workshop organized by NCW in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Egypt and the Vodafone Foundation.[306] The "camp," aimed at developing apps and other technological solutions to address the underreporting of violence against women, advanced forms of governmental-corporate partnership already initiated by NGOs like ECWR in the late 2000s (Abu-Lughod, 2010, p. 14). Unlike in Mubarak times, however, El-Sisi's regime does not relinquish space to the third sector but, instead, works decidedly to consolidate its position as the only interlocutor in matters of sexual violence. Within this context, the burgeoning anti-sexual violence movement that emerged in the aftermath of the January 25 Revolution is facing one of its most difficult moments. "The movement is really between a rock and a hard place," an activist remarked, "the state is trying to co-opt the movement, and it is hard to work with the state

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[306] For more information about this event, see UNDP (2015).

[but] it is hard not to work with the state."[307] While most of the human and women's rights activists I interviewed were eager to attend consultative meetings organized by this state entity and contribute to inform policy in progressive ways, they felt trapped—caught in a "Faustian deal," as one of them put it—between the state's double attempt to co-opt and contain independent forms of activism against public sexual violence.

The aftermath of the July 3, 2013 coup gave way to an orchestrated attack against human and women's rights organizations at different scales, from smear campaigns in government media and enhanced supervision to outright repression by the security apparatus. As a result of state propaganda, human and women's rights organizations faced increasing hostility from the public, which partially led to the reduction of their outreach activities. "Naturally, if we're being portrayed as traitors and agents trying to corrupt national security … people are not gonna be very trusting or welcoming of our presence," a member of one of these groups remarked in an interview. In the spring of 2015, when I was concluding my fieldwork, many organizations reported having problems finding venues where they could organize activities. "If we need to hold an event anywhere we cannot take any hotel … because the state security [has] ask[ed them] not to host us," a member of another group explained to me. Other forms of state control included unannounced visits from the tourist police or state security to their events, a practice that was already common under Mubarak. In addition, interventions in public space were subjected to the granting of government permits, and those initiatives that refused to subordinate their activities to the authority of the Ministry of Interior and the police had been forced to stop operating on the streets. Within this context, some groups were privileging their online presence. "Our main tool is social media," a member of a human

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[307]   All names in this section have been anonymized to protect informants against state reprisals.

rights organization confided to me, "we're actually in contact with a lot of [women] through Facebook and through emails … I don't think that's effective … but sometimes it's the only thing that you can do because they can't come, and you need flexibility."

Since El-Sisi's rise to power, NGOs have become the target of intense state surveillance and control. Between the end of 2014 and the beginning of 2015 an ultimatum for the registration of NGOs and the Egyptian presidency's draft of a new—and stricter—NGO law (finally approved in May of 2017) kept human and women's rights organizations in a state of tension and anxiety, which inevitably had an impact on their organization and functioning.[308] In response to the state's growing pressure, human and women's rights organizations—many of which were previously registered as law firms or non-profit companies to circumvent government's control (Mada Masr, 2014b)—were obliged to look for alternative strategies, from downsizing their operations to, in the most extreme cases, definitive closure. In relation to these impending legal changes, a member of a women's rights organization told me:

> We keep doing activities, we keep providing the kind of support we do, but definitely, we always feel threatened, to be honest, and also the ultimatum, the deadline, that was given for the 10th of November, nothing happened but we believe there is an imminent threat … the NGO community as a whole keeps getting these indirect messages, we never know … We don't feel safe having feminist initiatives or women from governorates outside of Cairo come [to our office] because we feel

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[308]   In July of 2014, the Egyptian government announced that "all civil society organisations must register under law 84/2002 by 2 September, or 'be held accountable according to the law'" (Daily News Egypt, 2014). The deadline was later extended to November 10, 2014 (Mada Masr, 2014b). In May of 2013, El-Sisi presented a draft for a new Law on Non-Governmental Societies and Organizations to the country's legislature. According to human rights organizations, the revised version would "allow the government and its security agencies to arbitrarily restrict the funding and operation of independent groups" (Human Rights Watch, 2013). A new draft of the NGO law was made public in September of 2016 (Shams El-Din, 2016). The new legal norm, Law 70/2017, was finally issued on May 29, 2017 (Reuters, 2017). According to Amnesty International (2017), this legislative piece could mean the "death sentence for human rights groups in the country," as it confers extraordinary powers to the state to oversee and regulate NGOs and imposes severe penalties for any—even minor—violation of its provisions.

responsible and we don't want to take the risk that they will be here and then something happens.

After I left Cairo—in early June of 2015—the Egyptian state started to enforce harsher punitive measures against human and women's rights organizations and their representatives. In the framework of Case 173 (the so-called "NGO Foreign Funding" case), thirty-seven human and women's rights organizations—including EIPR, El-Nadeem and Nazra—were under investigation for allegedly receiving unauthorized foreign funding (Nazra for Feminist Studies, 2016c).[309] As a result, the Cairo Criminal Court ordered a series of actions, including the freezing of the organizations' and their representatives' assets as well as travel bans against some of their members.[310] In February of 2017, the police shut down El-Nadeem's offices after two closure attempts and the Ministry of Health's revocation of their license to operate as a clinic (Najjar, 2017; Noureldin, 2017; see also Nazra for Feminist Studies et al., 2016). As independent forms of anti-sexual violence activism are being forced into disappearance by increasing state scrutiny and restraint, the memory of their collective accomplishments erased from

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[309] Criminal case No. 173/2011 was opened based on a report regarding compliance with Law 84/2002 and NGO funding elaborated by a fact-finding committee appointed by the Ministerial Cabinet on July 3, 2011 (Nazra for Feminist Studies, 2016b). Besides EIPR, El-Nadeem and Nazra, the investigation targeted other prominent human rights organizations, including the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), the Arab Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI) and the Hisham Mubarak Law Center (HMLC). Prior to the most recent developments, in June of 2013, a Cairo Criminal Court sentenced forty-three employees of foreign NGOs to sentences of one to five years in prison (mostly in absentia) and ordered the closure of these organizations under the same case (Nazra for Feminist Studies, 2016c). In September of 2014, President El-Sisi amended article 78 of the penal code to increase the penalty for receiving foreign funding "with the aim of pursuing acts harmful to national interests or destabilizing general peace or the country's independence and its unity" to life imprisonment (Nazra for Feminist Studies, 2016c). In parallel to these developments, by September of 2015 almost five hundred NGOs had been shut down by the Ministry of Social Solidarity due to alleged connections to the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood (Mada Masr, 2015e).

[310] The court ordered the freezing of the personal assets of EIPR founder Hossam Bahgat and Nazra executive director Mozn Hassan, as well as those of the organizations they represent (FIDH, 2016; Mada Masr, 2017). Bahgat and Hassan, as well as El-Nadeem's co-founder Aida Seif el-Dawla and many other prominent human and women rights defenders, have also received travel bans and cannot leave the country (FIDH, 2016; Nazra for Feminist Studies, 2016a & 2016c).

the official narrative, I want to reflect on the importance of the tentative and experimental

practices they brought into being for the production of spaces free of sexual violence in

post-Revolution Cairo.

Experimental Utopias in Tahrir Square

In "The everyday and everydayness," Lefebvre (1987) examined the interplay

between repetition and change in quotidian relations:

> In the study of the everyday we discover the great problem of repetition, one of the
> most difficult problems facing us … The everyday implies on the one hand cycles,
> nights and days, seasons and harvests, activity and rest, hunger and satisfaction,
> desire and its fulfillment, life and death, and it implies on the other hand the
> repetitive gestures of work and consumption. In modern life, the repetitive gestures
> tend to mask and to crush the cycles. The everyday imposes its monotony. It is the
> invariable constant of the variations it envelops. The days follow one after another
> and resemble one another, and yet—here lies the contradiction at the heart of
> everydayness—everything changes (p. 10).

For Lefebvre (1987), the transformation of the everyday was a slow and gradual

process that could not result from rapid or sudden developments, such as revolutions (p.

11).[311] "A break with the everyday by means of festival—violent or peaceful—cannot

endure," he remarked, "[i]n order to change life, society, space, architecture, even the city

must change" (Lefebvre, 1987, p. 11).[312] It was through the introduction of temporal and

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[311] Despite his skepticism about the radical effectiveness of revolutions, Lefebvre's thought was
revolutionary in its goals and scope. As he wrote in *Space and politics,* "it's impossible to change
anything without changing everything; but how to change everything without beginning with a
beginning, without calling into question the structural keystone of a society, thus without throwing
oneself not without risks into a revolutionary enterprise?" (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 199).

[312] *Festival* refers in Lefebvre's work to "'intense moments' of everyday life" (Simonsen, 2005, p. 4). In
the autobiographical *La Somme et le reste,* he described *moments* as reflecting "a certain consistency
over time, an element common to a number of instants, events, situations and dialectical movements"
(Elden et al., 2003, p. 170). The everyday, for Lefebvre (1996), was thus "composed of a multiplicity
of moments" (p. 30).

spatial discontinuities and the succession of differential repetitions that, according to the French philosopher, the polyrhythmy of the city could be reconfigured (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 105). Despite the repetitious nature of the everyday, Lefebvre's (1987) interest in everydayness resided in its potential to "reveal the extraordinary in the ordinary" (p. 9).[313] It was in the "holes and chasms" that plagued structures and systems that he saw the "places of the possible" from which change could emerge (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 156). Political action was for Lefebvre (1996) the move from "what is possible here and now, to what is impossible today, but will become possible tomorrow in the course of this very action" (p. 164). It was, for him, in the exploration of the "possible-impossible" that u-topia—a "place that does not yet exist" in Lefebvre's work (Kofman & Lebas, 1996, p. 21)—could be enacted (Elden, Lebas & Kofman, 2003, p. 186).[314] In his writing, the realization of this possibility takes on a very practical meaning, as it has to literally *take place* by means of what Lefebvre (1996) called "experimental utopia" (p. 15, see also Lefebvre, 1961).[315]

The January 25 Revolution can be seen as such an experimental utopia. As Mohammed A. Bamyeh (2013) remarks, the uprisings that ultimately forced Mubarak's removal from power were "caused not by an act of tyranny, since such acts were common

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[313] It was in this sense that, for Lefebvre (1987), the everyday was "the most universal and the most unique condition, the most social and the most individuated, the most obvious and the best hidden" (p. 9).

[314] Lefebvre conceived the relation between the possible and the impossible in dialectical terms: "It is not a question of the trivial distinction between what may (be done, happen, etc.) and what may not (happen, come about, etc.). In a more profoundly dialectical way, the impossible arises and shows itself in the heart of the possible. And conversely, of course" (Elden et al., 2003, p. 186). Lefebvre's discussion of the "possible-impossible" was mainly developed in his books *La fin de l'histoire,* published in 1970, and *De l'Etat, Vol. IV: Les contradictions de l'Etat moderne,* published in 1978.

[315] An "experimental utopia" was for Lefebvre (1996) "the exploration of what is humanly possible based upon the image and the imaginary, constantly subjected to critique and referring to a problematic derived from the real" (p. 15). Within this formulation, theory and practice interacted in a dynamic way: "Theory opens the road, makes a new way; practice takes it, it produces the road and the space," Lefebvre wrote in *De l'Etat, Vol. IV* (Elden et al., 2003, p. 205).

enough and quite expected" (p. 189). It was, he argues, "an unusual reaction" to these ordinary acts of oppression that conveyed the collective impression that the events taking place in Tahrir Square were extraordinary (Bamyeh, 2013, p. 189). During the occupation of the square, in the course of the eighteen revolutionary days, Egyptians of all walks of life converged there to hang out, converse, eat, pray and sleep, together. This *presence* in physical space, Bamyeh (2013) notes, facilitated the circulation of "new knowledge and new sensibilities"—a new affect—that, in turn, led to the spontaneous adoption of decisions that furthered the revolutionary process (p. 188). As a result, Bamyeh (2013) suggests, the January 25 Revolution should be regarded as "a profound experience in its own right," and not merely as a means to an end (p. 194). Indeed, the cross-class, cross-gender, multigenerational, and interfaith encounters in public space enabled by the revolutionary process opened spaces for the collective experimentation with new forms of organization and socialization that transcended class, gender, age, and religious lines. While the revolution was a "decision without guarantees of success," the revolutionary period succeeded in questioning what until then had been regarded as "immutable and unchanging reality" (Bamyeh, 2013, pp. 190-192). With all its faults and limitations, it accomplished the more transformative goal of revealing the "presence of the possible" (Lefebvre in Elden et al., 2003, p. 178). When the revolutionary affect winded down, the reminiscence of these multiple encounters on the square did not disappear without a trace, but provided "a grand reservoir of memory of what is possible" (Bamyeh, 2013, p. 200).[316]

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[316] In his commentary of Immanuel Kant's *The Contest of the Faculties,* Foucault (2010) characterized the Revolution similarly as "a sort of event whose content is unimportant, but whose existence in the past constitutes a permanent virtuality, the guarantee for future history of the non-forgetfulness and continuity of a movement towards progress" (p. 19).

As the multiplication of collective sexual assaults in Tahrir Square after Mubarak's ouster rapidly revealed the frailty of these temporary coalitions, laying bare the gender norms that continued to operate behind the revolutionary rhetoric, the memory of the Revolution prefigured new ways of addressing an old problem. Building upon the notion of "the people" (*al-sha'b*) as a revolutionary political subject (Challand, 2011, p. 272; Hasso & Salime, 2016, p. 4; Marfleet, 2016), independent initiatives and groups articulated discourses of collective responsibility and care to elucidate every people's part in the perpetuation of public sexual harassment and assault—either by commission or by omission through their decision "not to see" (De Rocchietti, 1996, p. 49)—as well as to indicate the role they could play in a political project geared towards its eradication.[317] Grounded on Tahrir Square, OpAntiSH enlisted hundreds of young women and men in volunteer tasks of prevention and intervention against collective sexual assaults in protests. With a community focus, HarassMap engaged bystanders and those who occupy the streets on a regular basis in the fight against the normalized practice of public sexual harassment. By means of storytelling and workshops, The BuSSy Project and WenDo Egypt created spaces where women and men could share their experiences of sexual violence, confronting their audiences with the physical, psychological and emotional impact of such acts and compelling them to respond to these violations. Through the production of safe spaces for discussion, reflection, and action, these initiatives claimed

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[317] It is worth noting that such activist discourses do not shy away from demands for state accountability. On the contrary, Nazra's "Position Paper on Sexual Violence Against Women and the Increasing Frequency of Gang Rape in Tahrir Square and its Environs," published in February of 2013, for example, emphasized the state's obligation to investigate crimes of sexual violence, identify the perpetrators, and hold them accountable, while it also urged political and social forces to develop a discourse of collective responsibility that "goes beyond the dichotomy of protecting women or blaming them for their predicament" and asked them to actively engage in securing protests and other political gatherings against public sexual violence (Nazra for Feminist Studies, 2013).

women's "right to the city" (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 147)—with its pleasures as well as with its risks.[318]

In an article titled "To willingly enter the circles of hell," Wiam El-Tamami (2013) wrote her impressions about a post-operation briefing she attended as an OpAntiSH volunteer. Referring to the intervention teams responsible for pulling the assaulted women out of the "circles of hell," she noted:

> Some of the young women involved were themselves survivors of mob attacks. At the meeting they spoke of the risk of being dragged into the maelstrom during an intervention, and how what they were subjected to in these moments did not feel like the violation of their earlier experiences, but like battle wounds they were impervious to … I could not possibly understand what it feels like to be there, though the idea haunts me: to hold your hammering heart in your hand and willingly enter these circles of hell—to enter this roaring, airless mass of sweat and bodies and blood, carnage and unheard screams. To put your own body there, your own flesh and bones, at the risk of being groped, beaten, stabbed, or worse.

These volunteers' deliberate acceptance—and defiance—of risk represents a direct challenge to the mechanisms of social governmentality that regulate gender relations in Egypt, as it shatters the notions of protective masculinity and respectable femininity that structure social life. Women's participation in such initiatives renders obsolete the *at risk/as risk* juncture as they refuse to accept their assigned part in the protector/protected couple and, instead, reclaim a defender role—"equally liable to experience violence and equally responsible for exercising society's violence" (Stiehm,

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[318] In *The right to the city,* originally published in French in 1968, Lefebvre referred to the city as an *ouvre* to highlight its use value, as opposed to the exchange value that resulted from its transformation into a product as "place of consumption and consumption of place" (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 73). Within this framework, the right to the city was understood as "[t]he right to the oeuvre, to participation and appropriation" (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 174). Conflict was central to this process, as Lefebvre remarked in *Space and politics:* "The right to the city therefore signifies the constitution or reconstitution of a spatial-temporal unit, of a gathering together instead of a fragmentation. It does not abolish confrontations and struggles. On the contrary!" (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 195). The city, Lefebvre (1996) remarked, needed to respond to a multiplicity of "[o]pposed and complimentary" social needs, including "the need for security and opening, the need for certainty and adventure, … the needs for the predictable and the unpredictable, of similiarity and difference, of isolation and encounter" (p. 147).

1982, p. 367)—on behalf of themselves and other women.[319] Through direct action and

the creation of communities of solidarity, these practices transform women's experiences

of their bodies, public space, and their relationship with others and, in so doing,

contribute to the creation of horizontal structures of care that cut across kinship, social

and political ties. Contrary to top-down approaches to public sexual violence privileged

by the state, these autonomous ways of organizing undermine—instead of reinforcing—

the logic of sexual governmentality that ultimately justifies public sexual harassment and

assault against those women who pose a threat to social order.

Lefebvre wrote in 1974 that "a revolution that does not produce a new space has

not realized its full potential; indeed it has failed in that it has not changed life itself, but

has merely changed ideological superstructures, institutions or political apparatuses"

(Lefebvre, 1991, p. 54). The project to create spaces free of sexual violence in Egypt is

thus a collective endeavor to "change life itself" along the lines of the promises born out

of the January 25 Revolution. Its radical potential resides in envisioning alternative

futures and enacting them "in the here and now" through a multiplicity of practices

undertaken *as if* the imagined future were already there (Williams, 2017, p. 2219). The

return to power of the military in July of 2013 has meant the progressive eradication of

these promising spaces, as the specter of detention, torture and disappearance has cast a

shadow on all independent forms of activism and social mobilization, even those that do

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[319] In "The protected, the protector, the defender," Judith Stiehm (1982) analyzed the different attributions that society confers onto "protectors"—mostly individual men and those that represent the authority of the state—and "protected"—generally women and children, elderly people, the infirm, etc. (p. 367). As she noted, upon the former was bestowed the legitimate use of physical force on behalf of themselves and their "dependents" (Stiehm, 1982, p. 372). In a way that feminist scholars have likened to a protection racket, the latter were accorded protection under certain conditions, which ranged from the imperative of obedience to a wide spectrum of—personal, social, spatial—restrictions (Stiehm, 1982, p. 373; see also Griffin, 1971; Peterson, 1977; Card, 1996; Young, 2003). As a corrective to this asymmetric relation, Stiehm (1982) advocated for a society of defenders where "the roles of the protector and the protected cease to exist" (p. 374).

not directly confront the state. Nevertheless, these past practices point the way towards futures where public sexual violence is increasingly challenged by the feminist praxis of organized communities. Meanwhile, in the present, personal initiatives and individual gestures that insist on inhabiting public space despite the intense militarization and securitization of the streets carry on the memory of the January 25 Revolution in post-coup Egypt. It is in the "interstices of everyday urban practice" that the Revolution continues (Swyngedouw & Kaïka, 2003, p. 12).

Everyday Practices of Risk

The images of the fifth anniversary of the January 25 Revolution, in 2016, revealed a desolate Tahrir Square, preemptively emptied and secured by the police and the military, amidst constant reports of arrests of activists, intellectuals and artists. The memory of the Revolution was largely sustained, far from the square, in online spaces like Twitter, where the hashtag أنا_شاركت_في_ثورة_يناير# ("I participated in the January Revolution") went viral. Among the profusion of digital commemorations and tributes, one action stood out: Activist Sanaa Seif posted on Facebook a photograph of herself walking alone in downtown Cairo, wearing a sweater with the text "It is still the January Revolution" (Ahram Online, 2016a). The image had the caption:

> Since 2011, I have walked in a rally from Mostafa Mahmoud Square to Tahrir Square on 25 January. The last time I did it was in 2014, and despite the security crackdown this year I decided to stick to my routine and do it again. I am alone but I am sure that next year thousands will return to walk again from Mostafa Mahmoud to Tahrir Square.

By returning to Tahrir Square on the anniversary of the January 25 Revolution *as if* the security forces had not seized it and behaving *as if* the revolution continued, Seif re-created the space of the Revolution, keeping it open for others to occupy in the years to come. Without her referencing it, her action resonated with similar activisms in other places and other times. Notably, it echoed the decades-long struggle of the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, condensed at times onto the body of a single *madre* circling alone the square "driven by her active remembering of the passion and emotions of past activism" (Bosco, 2006, p. 356). Moreover, this performance called into being the memory of more recent practices intimately linked to the revolutionary process. Reflecting on this gesture, Sara Fakhry Ismail (2017) wrote one year later:

> Walking in a group [during the January 25 Revolution and its aftermath] was an act of taking control over your city—your steps, the turns you took, the kiosks were a part of your ritual. Shared by many, it was stored in your muscle memory. These were moments where you felt the streets open up to you. You called out to city dwellers to come join you as you moved away from the margins into the heart of the city … A world of dreams and hopes of a less bleak future became possible through the repetitive act of putting one foot in front of the other … Today the collective walkers, now individuals, separately ask ourselves: What remains of that walk? Where do the traces left in each of our bodies lead? Maybe they remain stored in our muscle memory, even if they escape our memory itself … By walking, [Seif] is reviving a past ritual into a present moment.

"Walking as a ritual of resistance," as Ismail (2017) puts it, is an embodied and affective means of reclaiming the streets, of taking over the urban geography through the routinized aggregation of steps and interactions with(in) public space. Mirroring the Situationists' use of the *dérive* (drift) for its "subversive potential" (Ferrell, 2012, p. 1694), the proliferation of these individual walks in the everyday constitutes a form of

collective political action that defies spatial closure and the contention and control of bodies enforced by military and neoliberal governance (see also Debord, 1958).[320]

Within the regime of sexual governmentality at work in Egypt, women's steadfast inhabitation of public space—through walking, strolling, wandering, rambling, and loitering on the streets, squares, and public parks—is in itself already a political act. Loitering, Phadke et al. (2011) note with regard to Mumbai, "has the potential to create a new sense of everyday embodiment" as this aimless idling exceeds the strictures of normative performances of respectability and purpose (p. 179). It is therefore women's right to loiter—and more generally their "right to take risks" as opposed to greater protection (Phadke et al., 2011, p. 60)—that, according to these authors, should be at the center of feminist strategies aimed at improving women's access to public space. As Hille Koskela (1997) remarks, women play an active role in the production of the city "through everyday practices and routinised uses of space" (p. 316). Through the multiplication and normalization of these practices, Koskela (1997) suggests, "women produce space that is more available for other women" (p. 316). In Egypt, the manifold activist initiatives that emerged to respond to the proliferation of instances of public sexual harassment and assault following Mubarak's ouster reshaped urban space by transforming the rhythms of post-January 25 Revolution Cairo. On the one hand, they provided an opportunity for a sizable number of young women to regularly take over public space and engage risks with a legitimate reason—defending other women against public sexual violence. On the other hand, the visibility of their bodies in otherwise male-dominated spaces challenged

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[320] In "Theory of the dérive," Guy Debord (1958) described a *drift* as "a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances [that] involve[s] playful-constructive behavior and awareness of psychogeographical effects, and [is] thus quite different from the classic notions of journey or stroll" (p. 62).

the idea that the streets are no place for women. By "decolonizing public spaces through embodied dissent and bodily performance" (Salime, 2016, p. 159), their actions encouraged other women to occupy—and thereby to collectively *de-mystify* (Koskela, 1997, p. 308)—urban space.

Active, voluntary engagement with risk represents, as Caitlin Zaloom (2004) remarks, a "locus of production of self and space" (p. 384) that, in the case of Egypt, has the potential of producing new subjectivities and radically reconfiguring gender and spatial relations. In their work, Phadke et al. (2011) propose *the loiterer* as the embodiment of a feminist subjectivity that "maps her own path, often errant, arbitrary, and circuitous, marking out a dynamic personal map of pleasure" (p. 179). From a decolonial perspective, Lugones (2003) has mobilized the figure of *the streetwalker/la callejera* to conceptualize an "active subjectivity" that recognizes the dispersed, complex, and multiple ways in which individuals and groups resist intermeshed oppressions (p. 210).[321] Streetwalkers include, in Lugones' (2003) figuration, "women who are at odds with 'home'" and for whom "[h]ome is lived as a place inseparable from other places of violence, including the street" (p. 209).[322] Building upon Michel De Certeau's (1984) distinction between *strategy* and *tactic* (p. xix), Lugones' (2003) notion of *tactical strategies* seeks to disrupt this dichotomy by shedding light onto the sensorial, embodied, and relational modes by means of which the oppressed defy logics and structures of

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[321] Lugones (2003) proposes the concept of *active subjectivity* as an alternative to the notion of agency, which she regards as a "mirage of individual autonomous intentional action" (p. 211). For Lugones (2003), theorizations of agency reduce everyday acts of resistance by the oppressed to "haphazard, happenstance, disjointed intrusions" by individuals (p. 211). A focus on active subjectivity should instead, according to her, contribute to illuminate the "collectivity of active subjects—however dispersed—backing up one's active subjectivity as one makes sense among and with others" (Lugones, 2003, p. 219).

[322] It is this "circle, trajectory of violence" that, according to Lugones (2003), renders visible the illusion of the public/private dichotomy and signals the need for its disruption (p. 209).

domination (p. 208).[323] As a tactical strategy, the streetwalker/la callejera's practice of *hanging out with/among others* is deemed emancipatory as its face-to-face, street-level performance accomplishes a "persistent 'appropriation of space'" while sustaining an alternative sociality made up of countless spontaneous, open-ended everyday interactions, or *encuentros,* in public space (Lugones, 2003, p. 220). Common to Phadke et al. and Lugones' conception is the illegitimacy of these acts, located at the margins of social, political, and moral configurations (Lugones, 2003, p. 229; Phadke et al., 2011, p. 185). It is the liminality of these interventions that makes everyday practices of risk potentially liberating.

Amidst the "collective feeling of hopelessness" that pervades and threatens to suffocate non-sanctioned ways of being(-together) in post-coup Egypt (Abaza, 2017, p. 172), such small-scale risk-taking practices outline new geographies of affinity and belonging affectively shaped by the experiences and the memory of the January 25 Revolution. Their enactment in the present holds the promise of surprise through the introduction of dissonance in the polyrhythmy of the city. Wonder, as Ahmed (2004b) remarks, "opens up a collective space" where bodies unfold to affect and being affected by others (p. 183). This opening up is not devoid of risks, as it involves uncertainty and the possibility of loss (Ahmed, 2004b, p. 180). In response to this incertitude, affects of

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[323] In *The practice of everyday life,* De Certeau (1984) differentiated between *strategies,* understood as "the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an 'environment,'" and *tactics,* defined as the "calculus which cannot count on a 'proper' (a spatial or institutional localization), nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality" (p. xix). In his model, strategies were sustained by the power that emanated from political, economic and scientific rationality, while tactics emerged from the everyday practices—or "microbe-like operations" in De Certeau's (1984) formulation—by means of which individuals and groups reappropriated space within the constraints of disciplinary power (p. xiv). Among these practices, De Certeau (1984) conceptualized walking as one of the "multiform, resistance, tricky and stubborn procedures that elude discipline without being outside the field in which it is exercised" (p. 96). It was "the chorus of idle footsteps," as De Certeau (1984) put it, that ultimately shaped space and weaved places together (p. 97).

fear and shame foster containment while, Ahmed (2004b) suggests, hope "may expand the contours of bodies, as they reach towards what is possible" (p. 185). The reappropriation of spaces and bodies through the exploration of and experimentation with this "risk-full sense of opportunities, of possibilities" (Lugones, 2003, p. 229) at street level is the ground on which the revolutionary project—a project that envisions a public space free of sexual violence—continues to take place in Egypt.

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