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THE ARAB UPRISINGS AND THE POLITICS OF CONTENTION BEYOND BORDERS: THE CASE OF EGYPTIAN COMMUNIITES IN THE UNITED STATES*

Abstract

The article draws on the case of the Egyptian uprising between 25 January and 11 February 2011, and maps the transnational practices in which Egyptians in the United States engaged to sustain political ties with Egypt during this period and its direct aftermath. Tracking the involvement of US-based Egyptians through the lens of digital, civic, and epistemic fields, it relates how US-based Egyptians wove a transnational field of contention to boost the uprising's momentum and renegotiate understandings of political participation. While transnational engagement is credited for refashioning the politics of participation and expanding it beyond territorial sites of governance, it has not had concrete implications for Egypt's political transition. Transnational non-state activism lost much of its appeal in the US-Egyptian transnational space with the return of the so-called "deep state" after 2013 and the fear of repression. By relating activist strategies to shifting political opportunities, the article provides a broader understanding of the complex interrelationships between emigration and political dynamics within the Arab state.

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INTRODUCTION

The field of transnational migrant activism[1] has generated important insights into the ways in which Arab communities around the world have used exilic spheres to transnationalize dissent and mobilize against their authoritarian homelands.[2] Still, migration scholars do not so far dispose of sufficient cross-comparative data to assess the impact of Arab emigration waves on Arab political systems.[3] In 2011, the anti-regime uprisings, which have spurred Arab communities abroad to participate in their homeland's affairs,[4] provide exceptional terrain to study Arab transnational politics and their effects.[5] This article seeks to advance understanding of the participation of Arab migrant communities in the 2011 anti-regime uprisings and the interactive processes that impact their mobilization on the ground. Building on the 'iconic' Egyptian uprising that inspired contention in other Arab polities,[6] it draws on the case study of Egyptian communities in the United States and maps the transnational practices in which Egyptians in the US engaged to sustain political ties with Egypt in the period between 25 January and 11 February 2011 and its direct aftermath.

    Though the majority of Egyptian expatriates live in the Arab world, approximately twenty-six percent reside in Europe and North America, and the majority of Egyptians who live in the West may be found in the US.[7] While the number of first and second generation Egyptian immigrants in the US is estimated to be 240,000,[8] some argue that it exceeds half a million.[9] Egyptians residing in the US tend to be both more highly skilled than those living in other migrant destinations and relatively more mobilized. A plethora of Egyptian-American associations have been established throughout the years, with a view to maintaining links with Egypt and promoting integration in the US.[10] Still, the US-based Egyptian community is subject to factions. Right before the onset of the 2011 uprising, one could, broadly speaking, categorize these factions as comprising three dominant groups: supporters of former president Hosni Mubarak, secular-leaning democrats in favor of dismantling the Mubarak regime, and Muslim Brotherhood sympathizers.[11] Drawing on qualitative research, proven an effective methodology to examine the embodiment of transnationalism,[12] from 2011 until 2013 I conducted twenty-five semi-structured interviews with US-based Egyptians who participated in the 2011 uprising. The interviews included a focus on California, which hosts the largest Egyptian American community.[13] Due to my knowledge of the Arab community in

this area, I was able to tap into networks that referred me to activists and scholars living in Massachusetts, Washington, Texas, and Florida. In 2012, 2015, and 2016, I conducted five follow-up interviews with some of my key respondents.

The article argues that the 2011 Egyptian uprising provided an opportunity for US-based Egyptian activists to craft a transnational politics of claims-making with a view to boosting the uprising's momentum, spreading it to broader audiences, and renegotiating conceptions of political participation. Still, transnational non-state activism lost much of its appeal after 2013 for the US-based Egyptian community. This loss was due to the return of the so-called "deep state" after General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's rise to power, and in light of Egyptians' clashing perceptions of the military ouster of the Muslim Brotherhood's leader Mohamed Morsi in July 2013.[14] Within this climate, US-based activists' dispersed loyalties, the sending context's unresponsiveness to crossborder activism, and the activists' fear of "transnational repression"[15] proved decisive to weakening the politics of dissent. Against this backdrop, I track their political engagement through the lens of the 'transnational social field.'[16] The aim is to acquire sharper insight into the mechanisms through which US-based Egyptian activists participated in the 2011 uprising and to explore how their actions interacted with shifting political opportunities, or the set of external factors that "enhance or inhibit prospects for mobilization."[17]

Transnational social fields within the US-Egyptian geographical field are defined herein as "interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices and resources" are exchanged across borders.[18] I categorize these fields into digital, epistemic, and associational clusters, and show that they have played varied functions in renegotiating Egypt's political sphere. First, they constituted conduits for information dissemination and access to broader public and policymaking audiences. Further, they broadened the politics of contention beyond the Egyptian state. They also acted as 'safety valves' that helped to evade repressive conditions in Egypt. Most importantly, they constituted deliberative spheres to reflect on the politics of participation beyond territoriality. While these transnational social fields give insights into the expansion of the political beyond territorial confines, I show that they remained unstructured and have not, to date, yielded noticeable effects on policy in Egypt. Against this backdrop, the study

makes a two-fold contribution. It probes the forms of contention that communities abroad use to mobilize for political change. Furthermore, it shows how the interaction between actor strategies and political opportunities shapes the "timing" and "episodes" of "claims-making."[19]

The article proceeds as follows. First, I discuss why mapping transnational social fields is a promising strategy to studying the web of political linkages between migrant communities and their home settings. Second, after situating the case of US-Egyptian mobilization in the context of Egypt's protest dynamics in 2011, I lay out my research methodology and data. Then, I map out key fields of action that frame the ways in which US-based activists participated in the uprising and in its direct aftermath. I describe the types of political transnationalism that exist in the fields, and analyze their functions and relevance for the Egyptian political sphere in relation to shifting political opportunities. I conclude by discussing some implications of this case study for Arab immigrant transnationalism.

THE RESEARCH STRATEGY OF TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL FIELDS
Mapping out transnational social fields is an established methodology that tracks the forms and flows of emigrant engagement in the country of origin.[20] While scholars initially used the concept to track border-crossing sociocultural linkages, it can also capture methods of political action.[21] This research strategy has however only been sparingly applied to the Arab world. Nonetheless, it is a powerful tool for the study of Arab immigrant engagement in homeland politics. Spanning both sending and receiving contexts, transnational social fields give grounded insights into the types of collective projects that communities weave transnationally. This research strategy has been credited for conceptualizing how the 'agency of collectivities' could be studied beyond borders, transgressing nationally bound definitions of politics.[22] It allows for charting an unbounded geographical terrain focused on tracing the web of linkages and 'in-between places' rather than migration flows and stocks.[23] It can be useful for capturing transnational practices in cases for which data on migration stocks and categories is scarce, as in the case studied here.[24] Shifting the scale of analysis to nodes of interaction helps, moreover, to evade the binary between sending and receiving communities; incorporation in the host land and attachment to the 'homeland' are not perceived here as dichotomous.[25]

Mapping transnational social fields also allows us to look beyond the question of which communities should be conceptualized as Diasporas.[26] Through this lens, diasporas are not envisaged as the primary unit of analysis. Rather, locals in the sending countries and various categories of temporary or permanent immigrants are embedded within a social field whose contours are not co-terminous with state boundaries. Hence, this research strategy allows us to take into account the plurality of Arab world migrant categories. Indeed, myriad categories of Arab transnationals—such as international students, returnees, refugees, and political dissenters who were forced to flee—participated in their homeland's transitions in 2011, both digitally and on the ground.[27] In mapping their concrete projects and how they are produced within crossborder fields, we avoid "the decontextualized use of terms such as hybridity and diaspora."[28] This research strategy also has implications for understanding the dynamics of mobilization. Transnational social fields capture interactions across spatial contexts, embedding forms of political engagement in a continuum in which activists interact with contextual factors. Adopting this methodology allows us to develop a broader understanding of how activist forms of contention and structures of power speak to each other. In doing so, we avoid a perspective that gives prominence to the ways 'the structure of political opportunities' determines mobilization. The latter approach has drawn criticism for downplaying the interrelationships between actor strategies and policy contexts.[29]

TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL FIELDS IN THE EGYPTIAN-US SPACE
The eighteen-day Egyptian uprising that started on 25 January 2011 has occupied a central place in the body of literature on the Arab transformations and on protest diffusion tactics within and beyond the Arab world. Egypt is considered to be a pivotal case when it comes to the replicability of protests from one Arab country to another. Events there ostensibly accelerated the diffusion of protests to other Arab countries.[30] Egypt's 2011 uprising was, however, no accidental outburst of political outrage. When it came to the 2011 episode of contention, prior local (albeit non-formalized) networks of dissent had laid the ground for the uprising.[31] Activists have used digital platforms as early as the 1990s to mobilize and circulate their narratives. [32] Groups and a myriad of informal coalitions have sought to reach out to transnational communities and widen their constituency.[33] Credited with crafting a precursory movement of contention, these include groups such as

Kefaya, the Egyptian Movement for Change established in 2004 to decry Mubarak's politics of corruption, and the April 6 youth-based activist movement, which has since 2008 heavily drawn on digital activism to criticize Egypt's politics of repression.

When it comes to US-based transnational political action, the Egyptian uprising represented an iconic moment for general Arab diasporic involvement and for Egyptians in particular.[34] In the eighteen-day episode preceding the fall of Mubarak, US-based Egyptian activists coordinated efforts with other communities to disseminate the Egyptian uprising to broader audiences, organize protests, lobby US policy makers, and establish associational initiatives to influence governance.[35] Still, Egyptians' engagement in their homeland's politics from the US, is nothing new and needs to be contextualized within a broader understanding of Egyptian diasporas' patterns of politicization which go back as early as the 1950s under president Gamal Abdel Nasser.[36] While the US-based Coptic diasporic community has had a longstanding involvement in Egypt's politics,[37] various Egyptian-American groups have expressed their disapproval of the authoritarian regime.[38] In the instance of the 2011 uprising, many of my key respondents alluded to the existence of precursory mobilization in which Egyptian academics and activists in the US had deliberated on political change with Egyptian locals in the 2000s, and had worked to raise Americans' awareness about the lack of civil and political rights in Egypt.[39] In 2010, their mobilization was brought to the foreground as the diasporic figure Mohamad el-Baradei campaigned for the Egyptian presidency from Vienna and launched the National Association for Change, which later on established a US-based counterpart, the Egyptian Association for Change.[40]

While scholars have tackled Egyptian migrant communities' involvement in the 2011 uprising through the lens of diaspora studies[41] and digital activism,[42] a paucity of research has approached the issue from the perspective of what Kevin Dunn frames as 'embodied transnationalism.'[43] Indeed, Egyptian transnational activism poses some challenges to the latter research field. Egyptian communities abroad exhibit traits of heterogeneity,[44] and beyond certain works,[45] informal expatriate networks of dissent—including secular and Islamist ones—remain under researched. Furthermore, Egyptian activism from abroad has lacked a strategic vision and has remained weakly institutionalized—partly because authoritarian politics in Egypt has

framed external and domestic contention as disloyal.[46] The 2011 uprising provides ideal empirical terrain to reconstitute these groups' collective action dynamics and gain insights into their dispersed loyalties.

As my aim was to map nodes of encounter between expatriates and their homeland, I included in my interview design both Egyptians who can be categorized as 'international sojourners'—such as international students—and 'permanent migrants'.[47] Aged between nineteen and seventy-five, my interviewees were students, academics, professionals, and representatives of Egyptian transnational social movements and Egyptian-American associations who participated in the Egyptian protests either digitally, on the ground, or through advocacy. While approximately ten were Egyptian students and scholars who have lived in the US for several years, the rest were both first- and second-generation Egyptian-Americans. I found most of my interviewees through a snowball sampling process. Most of the respondents resided in California and more specifically in the San Francisco area. Still some of my key informants were dispersed across the US, namely in Chicago, Washington D.C., Boston, and Dallas. Most of them have a secular and liberal background, and favored the dismantling of the Mubarak regime in 2011, yet adopted conflicting visions after the June 2013 coup that heightened polarization between the Muslim Brotherhood and the military-backed Sisi regime. The majority of my interviewees expressed a preference for anonymized interviews in light of the uncertain transition in Egypt at the time and the potential costs of repression in the homeland.

In my interview design, I asked them about their views on the broader nature and purpose of transnational exchanges with the homeland, about the 'transnational' aspects of their practices, and about the methods they used to establish cross-spatial linkages. I then inquired about particular cases that they thought exemplified such fields of interaction. I emphasized questions relating to why Egyptians abroad have sought to forge links with political spheres in Egypt, and the extent to which these linkages were relevant to political change. Moreover, I inquired into the shifting set of political opportunities and constraints that have shaped their actions over time. In assessing the transcripts, I focused on the types of collective projects that involved instances of interaction within the US-Egyptian transnational field. Hence, the national terrain is not framed as my unit of analysis. Rather, emphasis is laid on the connective actions woven beyond territoriality.

As underscored, US-based Egyptians' transnational political practices are embedded, according to my field research, within three overarching types of social fields: digital, civic or associational, and epistemic. In these three types, which I do not claim to be exhaustive, I seek to map out the forms of political transnationalism that these fields capitalized on during and directly after the 2011 uprising. In doing so, I adopt a conception of the political that is not confined to the exercise of authority by policymaking spheres, but rather trickles down to "transnational publics"[48] and to a continuum of economic, civil society, and epistemic instances and actors. It is worth noting that such fields overlap and fulfill intersecting functions—some respondents engage in activities that may be part of all three categories. Yet for analytical clarity, I delineate categories of transnationalism to better discern methods of involvement.

In focusing on mapping the forms and functions of cross-border activism between Egypt and the US, the research did not probe the extent to which the Egyptian transnational political field is spread out across the US. Furthermore, although all of my respondents describe circular interactions between themselves and locals, there is little certainty about the extent to which those in Egypt—on the other side of these transnational exchanges—have at one point or another perceived such interactions as meaningful. Refining our understanding of these fields of interaction requires studying their inclusiveness and the extent to which people in Egypt have engaged themselves across territorial boundaries. It further requires a study of the heterogeneous political projects in which Egyptians in the US were engaged. Almost all of my interviewees, as underscored, had a secular or liberal background, siding in 2011 with the dismantling of the Mubarak regime. My findings capture broad patterns in transnational practices and point to how these trends can inspire further specialized research.

DIGITIAL FIELDS OF TRANSNATIONALISM

Much has been written on the function of information technology in the Egyptian uprising,[49] but little work has been done on framing its impact on transnational political engagement. Predating the 2011 period of contention, digital activism was key to internationalizing the momentum of the impending uprising and to 'curating' networks discussing political change.[50] During the uprising and its direct aftermath, digital links carved circular

geographies in which both local and US-based Egyptians deliberated on strategies of collective action. As I shall demonstrate, the main functions of the digital transnational sphere revolved around co-organizing protests, negotiating various methods of political participation beyond the Egyptian territorial state, and circumventing state repression in Egypt.

Building on regular virtual exchanges and episodic visits to Tahrir Square, US-based and local activists co-organized direct action either in the US or in Egypt.[51] One of my respondents, an activist and professional based at the time in the San Francisco Bay Area, emphasized in particular how Egyptian activists in the US forged a transnational space of mobilization drawing concomitantly at the outset of the uprising on digital and physical forms of activism:

> On January 26, 2011, there was an unprecedented outpouring of solidarity on the streets in San Francisco. We were simultaneously posting on Facebook and chatting with Egyptians both in Egypt and in the USA. Then on the 29th of January, another protest took place at the UN Plaza, attracting a thousand of people […] Connections with Egyptian communities on Facebook intensified. We created pages announcing and coordinating protests in the US […] We shared Google documents and Facebook posts. People started translating tweets from Arabic to English to share messages from Egypt's Tahrir Square with international audiences […] Our protest footage at the UN Plaza made it into an Egyptian music documentary. Transnational connections of solidarity seeking to promote the Egyptian uprising were strong.[52]

Through such virtual domains of encounter, communities in the US and their counterparts in Egypt exchanged information that helped maintain the uprising's momentum. With a view to documenting the Tahrir Square events, Egyptian activists in the US disseminated images and videos on blogs. They further sought to improve Western media coverage by diffusing alternative narratives to US audiences on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube.[53] In addition to coordinating direct action, activists capitalized on digital links to sustain coordination between activist movements in Egypt and their counterparts in the US. For instance, as Mohammed el-Baradei returned to

Egypt in February 2010 and launched the Association for Change—with the aim of collecting signatures allowing for constitutional reforms that would enable him to run for the presidency—his association relied on social media tools to relay information to the locals and Egyptians abroad.[54] The association's American counterpart—the Egyptian Association for Change—equally capitalized on internet-based modes of activism to sustain networks of communication with local Egyptians. Similarly, the April 6 Movement, which spread from Egypt to the US in the wake of the January 25 uprising, has heavily relied on digital exchanges to invigorate cross-spatial discussions, solidarity networks, and protest actions. One of the representatives of the April 6 Movement in the US described the intense and regular digital interactions that characterized the Egyptian-US transnational field: "We publish on local websites such as the 'We are all Khaled Said,' run a Facebook page and curate the local April 6th movement's webpage. We maintain regular transnational exchanges through Viber, Whatsapp, and e-mail with our counterparts in Egypt."[55]

As underscored, digital forms of connectivity primarily aimed at coordinating protests and disseminating information. Still, US-based Egyptian activists were concerned with whether and if so, how, Egypt's politics of democratization could be expanded beyond borders through the lens of digital activities. Many of my interviewees stressed that digital activism allowed for broadening Egypt's political sphere and deliberating on 'extraterritorial' conceptions of political engagement. Some of my respondents argued that the uprising provided an opportunity to address through social media channels a 'transnational Egyptian community.' According to one of my key respondents, a scholar and activist based at the time in the state of Florida, some US-based initiatives such as the Alliance of Egyptian-Americans, Democracy for Egypt, and the American-Egyptian Strategic Alliance (AESA) started giving greater importance, in the wake of el-Baradei's campaign for presidency, to binational exchanges in their internet-based writings. The aim was to bridge the gap between Egyptian 'citizens' and 'expatriates.'[56]

One important instance of political transnationalism from this time period that was mainly orchestrated online was the global Egyptian campaign for out-of-country voting (OCV) rights.[57] Through regular online interactions, US-based Egyptians emphasized the importance of a

transnational conception of political participation, one that would allow Egyptians outside Egypt's borders to participate in electoral politics. They further mobilized across the US to press for their voting rights. A point relayed by one key respondent, an activist and professional based at the time in the San Francisco Bay area, stands out in particular:

> We digitally coordinated with several groups across the globe. The campaign for Egyptians Voting Abroad expanded back then to Canada, the US, Qatar, Japan, etc. We held Skype calls and had online discussions. We produced several clips, used Twitter, and conveyed information to TV outlets debunking the story of how difficult it is to vote from abroad. We also pressured the government in Egypt at the time. We sought to 'institutionalize' the outpouring of solidarity through digital networks.[58]

Beyond transnational mobilization, locals and expatriates drew on the digital space as a conduit to avert state repression and bolster the politics of contention.[59] On 28 January 2011, Egyptian authorities disabled the internet for five days. During this period, US-based activists contributed to circumventing the crackdown on social media. Maintaining contact with those in Egypt through landlines or satellite telephones, they continued to diffuse information as events took place. As the internet was shut down, April 6 Movement activists in the US, according to my respondents, kept in touch with locals through satellite phones, and shared with media outlets videos that helped expose human rights violations. One of my respondents, an Egyptian scholar based at the time in the San Francisco Bay area, emphasized that it was at moments like these that transnational social networks embodied through blogs and websites acquire political agency.[60] Some of my respondents pointed furthermore to the 'We Are All Khaled Said' online campaign as an example that attests to the embeddedness of the politics of dissent in the digital.

The killing of the young activist Khaled Said by the Egyptian police is widely seen as one of the triggers of the January 25 revolution. The Facebook page that was created after Said's death in the summer of 2010 has been credited for evolving into a major mobilization platform that galvanized Egyptians into action.[61] The online platform had two aims: to disseminate

information on the repressive actions of the Mubarak regime and to internationalize contention. According to my key respondents, this particular network of dissent drew on US-based Egyptians' involvement to elude the government's repressive capacity. Some of my respondents refer to this case to highlight the direct impact of transnational digital involvement on the 2011 uprising. Before Wael Ghonim—the then-secret administrator of the 'We are All Khaled Said' Facebook group—was held in detention on 28 January 2011, he had established connections with Egyptians residing in the US to make sure that the online platform would still function irrespective of conditions on the ground. Throughout the period of his detention, the administration of the site was thus left unaffected, confusing authorities and locals about whether he was the real administrator.[62]

Tracing these digital conduits informs us of the functions that the transnational political field played in Egypt's 2011 uprising. Internet-based linkages acted as avenues for broadening dissent and renegotiating the understanding of politics beyond conventional ways of engagement such as participation in the government apparatus. With the consolidation of the Sisi regime in Egypt and the crackdown on local protests since 2013, one of the representatives of the April 6 Movement in the US claimed that while street politics had lost its appeal, online activism remained one impactful way to alter perceptions and disseminate political narratives.[63]

ASSOCIATIONAL OR CIVIC FIELDS

While digital activism served to bolster cross-border exchanges at the height of the uprising, transnational political engagement in its direct aftermath mainly articulated itself through the lens of the civic sphere. The elation that resulted from Mubarak's demise prompted Egyptians in the US to set up civic networks and organizations seeking to participate in Egypt's post-Mubarak governance. Such initiatives (which have, according to my field research, proliferated post 2011), have sought to mobilize financial funds and human resources to bolster transnational partnerships in the fields of post-authoritarian governance, development, and education. Although I was not able to quantify the scale and intensity of Egyptian American involvement in the US, it emerges from my research that the transnational civic associations in question have their roots in either the opportune political context that emerged directly after January 2011, or are extensions of preexistent

networks that have sought to reinvent themselves. Two main types of associational spheres can be identified: those of a non-formalized, fluid nature, and those that have sought to achieve higher degrees of institutionalization.

A phenomenon worth noting, according to my interviewees, was the extension of activist movements from Egypt to the US. Egyptian activist movements swiftly established various chapters in the US and other Western countries, reappropriating local issues in Egypt and diffusing them abroad. Key examples that many of my respondents brought up were the transnationalization of the el-Baradei Movement represented through the National Association for Change and the April 6 Movement in 2011/2012. At the outset, the US-based Egyptian Association for Change had a dual purpose. It served as a platform of mobilization to press for reforming the Egyptian constitution and achieving OCV rights.[64] It also aimed at promoting grassroots discussions on political governance, at both local and transnational levels.[65] In the aftermath of the 2011 uprising, the association became active in organizing meetings in various US cities to discuss issues such as voting rights beyond territoriality. One of their main projects aimed at sharing with Egyptian locals a vision for a parallel constitution draft after Mubarak's overthrow.[66] Already operating behind the scenes several years prior to the 2011 events, the April 6 Movement took advantage of the uprising to establish official chapters in several American cities. According to my respondents, the movement's American offshoot played a multifaceted role in supporting the uprising and its aftermath. Methods ranged from disseminating information to wider audiences to lobbying congressmen and senators. April 6 Movement supporters sought, for instance, to dissuade their American representatives from siding with the Mubarak regime. They furthermore collected expatriates' suggestions for the constitutional drafting process and conveyed them to their counterparts in Egypt. They were also active in lobbying consulates in the US to issue identification to Egyptians so as to ensure that the external voting process in November 2011 took place smoothly. To spur transnational exchanges with Egyptians in the US and beyond, the US-based April 6 Movement frequently posted in digital discussion forums and co-organized protests with other chapters in Europe that emerged after 2011.[67]

Adding to transnational formations that remained uninstitutionalized, in the aftermath of the January 25 uprising, Egyptians established various US-based organizations that they intended to play a role in Egypt. Examples that my respondents brought up are the US-based Tahrir Square Foundation, the American-Egyptian Star Alliance, Al Negma association, and the American Chapter of Nebny Foundation, which mobilized funding to provide humanitarian, economic and educational assistance to Egypt. It emerges from my field research that the 2011 juncture provided a new political consciousness to some American-Egyptian societies that had previously framed themselves as merely cultural.[68] My respondents argued that at the time there was a growing awareness among Egyptian activists in the US that participating in local governance in Egypt first required improved access to the US political system. A myriad of previously established US-based Egyptian organizations wrote, in the direct aftermath of the uprising, to congressmen and senators to influence US policies towards Egypt's transformations.[69]

Among the organizations that have sought to establish a more institutionalized and unified Egyptian-American-lobby in the US, we might mention the American-Egyptian Strategic Alliance (AESA).[70] Founded at the end of 2011 and registered as a social welfare organization in Washington DC, the organization capitalized on its founding members' prior networks with US policy spheres stretching back to the era of former president Bill Clinton. It has pushed for strengthening the institutionalized presence of Egyptian-American interests in the US, perceiving such a presence as a prerequisite for activism influencing the homeland. Immediately after the 2011 uprising, the organization aimed to acquire a more prominent mediating and advisory role in both the sending and receiving contexts. It sought to mediate among splintered Egyptian communities in the US, seeking to transmit a unified vision of desired policy change to Egyptian policymakers. It also sought to influence US policy towards the ongoing transformations in Egypt. One central challenge they faced, according to one of its founders, was mending the rifts between the Republican and Democratic parties in the US over their views of post-Mubarak Egypt.[71] Recognizing that pressuring the American government to stop military aid to Egypt was a far-fetched objective, the organization engaged in the aftermath of the uprising in what it framed as more 'practical' forms of activism. In addition to attempting to dissuade US public opinion from supporting the

Mubarak regime, it sought to raise funds to boost educational mobility partnerships between Egypt and the US.[72]

Beyond such initiatives, detecting civic transnationalism requires taking stock of the myriad platforms that Egyptians in the US drew on to mobilize during the 2011 uprising and its direct aftermath. According to my respondents, Egyptians were involved in broader Arab and Muslim organizational platforms, such as the Council on American-Islamic relations, Arab Muslims for Palestine, and smaller organizations concerned with Arab community organizing. They moreover mobilized as part of broader American coalitions that were receptive to their plight. Such platforms helped, according to my respondents, to sustain the momentum of the uprising through the coordination of protests and dissemination of online posts. Some informal activist networks specifically concentrated their efforts on lobbying their congressional representatives to stop selling tear gas and sending US military aid to Egypt.[73]

EPISTEMIC FIELDS

Another key field of political transnationalism that gained prominence in the direct aftermath of the 2011 uprising revolves around the weaving of cross-border epistemic networks. Defined as "exemplary instances of transnational social formations in social space without geographical propinquity," epistemic communities include scientists, academics, and experts who exchange ideas and resources.[74] According to some of my respondents, such knowledge-based interactions—which stem from relatively high rates of migration by highly skilled Egyptians to the US—intensified between 2011 and 2013. Epistemic transnational fields can simply be informal discussion platforms shared by local and US-based Egyptian academics and professionals. Others have upheld a more structured policy reform agenda since the early 2000s.

One example of such epistemic initiatives is the March 9 Movement. Set up by a group of Egyptian academics in Egypt in 2004, the movement has sought to denounce the politicization of university affairs and to emancipate academic life in Egypt from security and patronage networks. The movement has decried since its inception the banning of certain books, non-transparent academic appointments, governmental interference in academic freedom of speech, and the control of student movements on campus. Going

transnational in the early 2000s, the grouping has since tapped into networks of graduate students, experts, and academics based in the US and other countries such as Canada.[75] By drawing on academics abroad for their positions as 'credible interlocutors', it has sought to form a broader support network for its appeals. For Egyptian academics in Egypt proper, the benefits of belonging to March 9 included receiving specialized input from academics residing abroad, collecting more signatures to propose reforms in Egypt, and spreading the word about their particular situation beyond national borders. For their part, US-based Egyptian academics reported that involvement gave them a say in various local governance issues and in matters such as the right of assembly and student activism in Egypt. The movement has grown in the aftermath of the uprising into an academic platform revolving around the broader politics of democratization. Specifically, in the immediate context of the Egyptian revolution, transnational exchanges through Skype, Facebook, and e-mail listservs centered on ways to support the protesters and on debating core issues at the heart of the post-2011 transition, such as the content of the constitution and whether it should be revamped or replaced. Academic freedom remained a major area of emphasis. Protecting academic freedom from polarization between Islamists and the army's supporters arose as a primary concern in 2012 and 2013.[76]

In addition to the March 9 Movement, a plurality of loose academic initiatives has flourished in the direct aftermath of the 2011 uprising. Some epistemic networks were embedded within transnational academic partnerships deliberating on developments in Egypt. Others capitalized on existing online platforms such as the US-based *Jadaliyya.* While transnational academic networks discussing 'the political' antedate the 2011 episode of contention, some of my respondents argued that US-based Egyptian academics felt more ownership over local politics in the direct aftermath of the 2011 uprising. One of my respondents, an activist and professional based at the time in the San Francisco Bay area, argued that the conflation between politics and territoriality loosened after Mubarak's overthrow, and it was at that moment that the networks became credible avenues for deliberating on the political: "Previously, academics based abroad perceived political issues to be local. They contented themselves with sending signatures. Now they see such projects as a venue for change."[77] While US-based epistemic initiatives—including those of the March 9 Movement—have had no policy purchase, they are credited, according to my interviewees, with openly

debating contentious issues in the transnational public sphere. Such issues revolved around the polarization of university life, government intervention in academia, and the impact of state repression on civil freedoms.

TRANSNATIONAL   SOCIAL   FIELDS: BETWEEN   ACTION, OPPORTUNITIES, AND LIMITATIONS

So far, I have demonstrated that a significant transnational field revolving around political action linked US-based Egyptian activists with their home country during the uprising and its direct aftermath. I have delineated this political transnationalism within digital, epistemic and civic domains of encounter. I have further highlighted key empirical instances to demonstrate how transnational social fields take shape, and the functions these fields have played within the US-Egyptian transnational space.

However, our analysis remains incomplete if we do not embed these fields of action within a broader interactional context.[78] The aim is to develop a more nuanced understanding of how activists drew on the uprising to create opportunities for mobilization, and how the homeland's political context has at the same time shaped their strategies. According to many of my interviewees, the 2011 uprising represented an opportune moment to negotiate extraterritorial and cross-participatory forms of political engagement. By contesting the conflation of politics with the Egyptian nation-state, activists have contributed to what Patricia Landolt frames as the 'transformation in the spatiality of political practice.'[79] Some of my respondents argued that the importance of the external voting campaign, despite its disputed political impact, lies in the transnational solidarity it has spurred. Moreover, activists' participation in horizontal cross-border initiatives, according to my informants, contributed to an understanding of the political that incorporates extra-institutional and discursive activity, broadening hence the conception of politics beyond the apparatus of governmental institutions. Given the relative lack of institutionalized citizen participation frameworks in Egypt, certain respondents underscored the importance of informal transnational platforms as conduits for political engagement, and emphasized an understanding of participative politics not confined to 'government' and 'policymaking'.

Table 1. Transnational Social Fields and Their Functions.

TYPES	KEY FUNCTIONS
DIGITAL	- Information dissemination and access to broader audiences 'Externalizing' the politics of contention - Mobilizing for reform in Egypt (e.g. OCV rights) - Addressing an 'Egyptian community' stretching across borders
CIVIC & ASSOCIATIONAL	- Organizing protests in the US and abroad - Sending suggestions for political reforms to Egypt - Political advocacy and lobbying in the US - Establishing development and educational partnerships between the US and Egypt
EPISTEMIC	- Discussing means for political participation beyond territoriality - Monitoring the state's repressive strategies and interference in academic affairs in Egypt - Publishing statements and collecting signatures

Further, some of my respondents claimed that due to the difficulty of altering policy structures in Egypt, investing in such ostensibly 'non-political' initiatives as education and development represented avenues for grassroots change.[80]

Cross-border interactions have also contributed to expanding Egypt's sites of contestation beyond territorial borders. Here, Sidney Tarrow's conceptual framework of 'externalization'[81] helps to identify why locals become collaborators in the politics of contention: locals identify allies in expatriate communities to disseminate information about their strategy and denounce the abuses of the authoritarian regime in external spheres, thereby capitalizing on communities abroad as an avenue to subvert the local repressive apparatus. By facilitating the exportation of collective action outside Egypt's borders and appealing to broader audiences, US-based activists shifted the scale of contention beyond Egypt's territory, becoming key actors in what Tarrow calls the 'coordination of contention.'[82] The analysis presented here widens, moreover, our understanding of Egypt's

political transition. Gauging US-based Egyptians' perceptions of the 2011 constitutional drafting process and sending them back home, drafting parallel visions of Egypt's constitution, and monitoring human rights abuses and reporting them abroad are examples of what Bohman describes as 'democratization through transnational publics.'[83] When evaluating the output of such initiatives on local governance, we still need to devise methodologies to gauge how and to what extent exchanges between locals and communities living abroad have shaped civic engagement and whether they may have increased support for democratic principles in Egypt at the time.[84] Against this backdrop, many of my respondents claimed that it is possible to track their engagement through the projects and flows of information that circulated between the US and Egypt at the time.[85] These were conveyed and sustained either through episodic visits or in the 'deterritorialized' politics of space through cyberrelationships and media flows. Cross-border flows, furthermore, resulted in conferences, workshops on civic engagement, publications or in webpages 'curated' in the diasporic space.[86]

While it is tempting to glorify the implications of cross-spatial networks for the diffusion of new political narratives, almost all concurred that the policy consequences of their initiatives within Egypt's political context remained elusive. One of my key respondents, a professor and consultant based at the time in Chicago, emphasized:

> Many Egyptian-Americans are in frequent contact with Egypt, yet it remains difficult to assess the impact of their involvement. I speak to Cairo twice a day. I am in contact with several institutions in Egypt. I am solicited to provide legal advice to the government. Do they read what I write? What influence do I have? My views are maybe taken into account, but I am not sure how.[87]

It emerges further from my field research that it is not possible to trace direct links between transnational mobilization and post-2011 homeland policy developments. The campaign for OCV rights serves here as a revelatory case.[88] Though the campaign inspired high levels of mobilization among Egyptians in the US, most of my respondents were skeptical as to whether the extension of OCV rights gave them more political leverage in Egypt,

especially in the light of Egypt's derailed transition.[89] My respondents were specifically unable to locate the concrete ways in which their transnational activism had direct impact on the Egyptian government's decision to extend this right. Some attributed the success of the campaign to shifting configurations of power, such as the broader convergence of interests between Egyptians abroad and the quick ascent of the Muslim Brotherhood after Mubarak's overthrow. Crucially, the Muslim Brotherhood—which quickly mobilized to win the national elections—enjoys support among a critical mass of Egyptians in the Gulf.

Beyond the difficulties associated with assessing the consequences of transnational engagement, all of my interviewees argued that activism from abroad has significantly declined in the context of Egypt's volatile political transition, specifically in the second half of 2013. In 2011, the opportune moment presented by the uprising made cross-spatial activism seem meaningful.[90] At the time, the broader wave of contention in the Arab world and large-scale protests in Egypt suggested that diaspora activists could score gains from political engagement. However, throughout the complex episodes of Egypt's post-Mubarak transition, all of my respondents agreed that the subsequent consolidation of the 'deep state' under Sisi's rule discouraged transnational dissent. Repressive strategies such as the banning of protests and state surveillance in Egypt have been pivotal, according to my key respondents with whom I held interviews in fall 2013, summer 2015, and 2016, in curbing transnational activism. In light of the politics of repression in Egypt which have led to jailing key figures of the 2011 uprising, the methods of activists in the US, namely street politics, have lost their appeal, and online involvement has hardly translated into engagement in US-based protests about Egyptian politics since.[91] As grassroots coalitions such as Kefaya and the April 6 Movement lost impetus in Egypt, their cross-border extensions lost their significance as well. As one of my key respondents, an Egyptian professor in the San Francisco Bay area, argues: "social activism in both the USA and Egypt has become discredited."[92] Furthermore, some of my interviewees referred to the dangers of transnational engagement and the consequences that this spells for them if they were to visit Egypt. Indeed, most of the websites of the diaspora organizations that activists shared with me in summer 2013 are no longer functional. In addition, some of key respondents stressed that non-migrant actors in Egypt have since 2013 entertained an uneasy relationship with activism from abroad.[93] Most

diaspora figures who returned in 2010/2011 to participate in Egypt's transition, most famously el-Baradei, have now left. Non-migrants referred in this context to a perceived sense of insularity between them and the diaspora.[94] Within this climate, the constituencies of some of the transnational coalitions that mobilized around key diasporic figures have shrunk and splintered. By 2015, it had become almost impossible to disaggregate their online constituencies from involvement on the ground.[95] A case in point is the Egyptian Association for Change, which lost its initial mobilization frame once el-Baradei retreated from Egyptian politics. One of my key respondents, a professional and activist based in the San Francisco area, relates:

> Social movements, those that have a transnational character as well, were eclipsed by the events. Despite momentary waves of activism, many splintered and lost significance. For instance, the National Association for Change, what does it stand for now? Its supporters first rallied around the demise of Hosni Mubarak and collected signatures to support Mohamad el-Baradei's campaign. Now their *raison d'être* is no longer there.[96]

Although unfavorable political changes in the homeland help explain the decline in transnational contention, it is equally important to factor in how US-based activists have reacted to Egypt's political conditions after the short-lived 2011 episode of contention. One of the key reasons why transnational mobilization has subsided is the political factionalization of US-based Egyptian activists. My interviewees pointed specifically to the various "fractures" that Egyptian transnational initiatives began displaying in the context of Egypt's post-2011 trajectory.[97] Beyond shows of solidarity throughout the eighteen-day uprising and its direct aftermath, US activists failed to agree on Egypt's post-2011 transition, especially how to deal with the political rift between Islamists and Sisi supporters. Associational initiatives began to espouse conflicting statebuilding visions, which intensified in the wake of the military crackdown against supporters of ousted president Mohamed Morsi on 30 June 2013. One of my interviewees, a writer and activist based in the San Francisco area, reported that while US-based activist movements were predominantly anti-Mubarak in 2011 and 2012, many supporters of these coalitions developed clashing loyalties throughout Egypt's

complex political transition. This led to the splintering of the various groups.[98] Other respondents associated the weak strategizing potential of US-based Egyptian initiatives as a core reason for their inability to achieve policy consequences. The fact that most of these associations were centered on cultural projects—as Egyptian's authoritarian regime has long decried diasporic contention—meant that by the time of Mubarak's overthrow almost none had established programmatic structures to evolve into political organizations.[99] Additionally, US-based Egyptians disagreed over the forms and methods of mobilization after Mubarak's ouster. A key polarizing debate revolved around whether institutionalized diaspora organizations or horizontal movements (such as the April 6 Movement) would better affect local governance. Detractors of loose transnational networks alluded to their weak ability in influencing policymaking in both the US and in Egypt. They furthermore pointed to their fluid constituencies in which it was not possible to disaggregate online from offline involvement.[100] Commenting on activists' divided strategies in the US at the time, one of my respondents, an Egyptian student and activist at Harvard, remarked:

> After Baradei had retreated from politics, a rift emerged: to institutionalize or safeguard the 2011 'revolutionary model' that was based on horizontal movements? Some perceived institutionalization as 'tainted.' It implied having a policy dialogue with incumbents at home [….]. Rifts slowly emerged within US-based groups. There were clashing visions over what to prioritize: building organizations with sustainable structures or focusing on pressing issues such as elections and constitutions in the homeland? [….] work on grassroots community building, create think tanks for the longer-term perspective, or concentrate on lobbying? [101]

Notwithstanding the waning of transnational contention by 2013, some of my key respondents argued that US-based activists still looked for viable means of mobilization. An Egyptian student based at the time in Boston argued: "We tried to establish a political movement in Boston. Things did not work out. We felt we would not have much impact in Egypt. We lost trust in politics. Still we sought alternative ways. We shifted our attention to development work, fundraising and social innovation." [102] Similarly, one of

my key respondents, a key representative of the April 6 Movement, remarked that though "the politics of fear" had dealt a blow to transnational mobilization by 2013, activists still sought to report 'human rights violations', convene with decision makers in the US, publish online, use twitter hashtags that could resonate with broader audiences. [103]

CONCLUSION

What forms does transnational immigrant activism take and how do activists interact with contextual opportunities and constraints? This article sought to shine some light on these questions. Looking at Egyptian transnational activism from the US, it has drawn on the research strategy of the 'transnational social field' to illuminate our understanding of some of the forms and levels that transnational engagement has taken in the context of the 2011 uprising and its direct aftermath. It has explored how these fields of action are embedded within broader interactional processes that necessitate accounting not only for shifting political opportunities but also for activists' projects and their 'sense making' of opportunities and constraints. US-based Egyptian activists have drawn on the 2011 uprising to renegotiate 'the spatiality of political practice.' At the same time, contextual forces have shaped the forms and levels of their engagement. While we are tempted to perceive US-Egyptian activists' inability to affect homeland politics as evidence of their limited agency in a constraining political environment, their 'waxing and waning' activism gives insight into the 'timing' of contention and the context-specific opportunities for mobilization that populations abroad embark on.

Though this article focused on the Egyptian case, future research may explore the various transnational social fields that Arab populations abroad have crafted, and how these fields build on complex relationships between activist strategies and configurations of power. Further research could develop cross-comparative and longitudinal methodologies to address variation and disparities in Arab immigrant engagement across policy contexts. The aim is to develop a dynamic understanding of how emigration has influenced the Arab state[104] while accounting for the ways structures of power within the Arab state have molded the flows, timing and outcomes of emigrant engagement. The potential of transnational social fields in explaining the interrelationships between emigration and political dynamics within the Arab state is thus yet to be determined.

NOTES

1 See, for instance, Luis Eduardo Guarnizo, Alejandro Portes, and William Haller, "Assimilation and Transnationalism: Determinants of Transnational Political Action among Contemporary Migrants," *The American Journal of Sociology* 108, no.6 (May 2003): 1211–1248; Jose Carlos Dore Cabral Itzigsohn, Esther Hernandez Medina and Obed Vazquez, "Mapping Dominican Transnationalism: Narrow and Broad Transnational Practices," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22, no. 2 (1999): 316–339.

2 Melissa Finn and Bessma Momani, "Established and Emergent Political Subjectivities in Circular Human Geographies: Transnational Arab Activists," *Citizenship Studies* 21, no.1 (2017): 22–43; Dana M. Moss, "Transnational Repression, Diaspora Mobilization, and the Case of the Arab Spring," *Social Problems* 63 no. 4 (2016): 480–98; Lea Müller-Funk, "Diaspora Mobilizations in the Egyptian (Post)Revolutionary Process: Comparing Transnational Political Participation in Paris and Vienna," *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 14 (2016): 353–70.

3 Louise Cainkar, "Global Arab World Migrations and Diasporas," *Arab Studies Journal* 21, no.1 (2013): 122–61.

4 Fiona B. Adamson, "The Growing Importance of Diaspora Politics," *Current History* 115 no. 784 (2016): 291–7; Teresa Graziano, "The Tunisian Diaspora: Between 'Digital Riots' and Web Activism," *Social Science Information* 51 (2012): 534–50.

5 See, for instance, Maha Abdelrahman, "The Transnational and the Local: Egyptian Activists and Transnational Protest Networks," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 38, no. 3 (2011): 407–24.

6 Sarah Kerton, "Tahrir, Here? The Influence of the Arab Uprisings on the Emergence of Occupy," *Social Movement Studies* 11, no. 3–4 (2012): 302–8; David Patel and Valerie J. Bunce, "Turning Points and the Cross-National Diffusion of Popular Protest" APSA *Comparative Democratization* 10, no. 1 (2012): 10–13.

7 Anna Di Bartolomeo, Delphine Perrin and Tamirace Fakhoury, *Egypt. CARIM – Migration Profile* (European University Institute, Florence: Consortium for Applied

Research on International Migration, 2010), accessed 10 May 2016, http://carim-south.eu/carim/public/migrationprofiles/MP_Egypt_EN.pdf.

[8] Migration Policy Institute, *The Egyptian Diaspora in the United States* (Washington D.C.: Migration Policy Institute, May 2015 revised, accessed 17 August 2015, http://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/RAD-EgyptII.pdf.

[9] Some of my respondents insisted that Egyptian immigrant communities exceed the number stated by the United States census.

[10] Migration Policy Institute, *The Egyptian Diaspora*.

[11] Professor, telephone interview with the author, Chicago, 21 August 2013.

[12] Kevin Dunn, "Guest Editorial Embodied Transnationalism: Bodies in Transnational Spaces," *Population, Space and Place* 16, no.1 (2010): 1–9.

[13] Migration Policy Institute, *The Egyptian Diaspora*.

[14] For an account of Egypt's political backlash after 2011, see Gilbert Achkar, *Morbid Symptoms, Relapse in the Arab Spring* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016).

[15] Moss, "Transnational Repression."

[16] Thomas Faist, "Migrants as Transnational Development Agents: An Inquiry into the Newest Round of the Migration-Development Nexus," *Population, Space and Place* 14, no. 1 (2008): 26–27; Patricia Landolt and Luin Goldring, "Political Cultures, Activist Dialogues and the Constitution of Transnational Social Fields: Chilean, Colombian and Canadian and activists in Toronto," *Global Networks* 10, no. 4 (2010): 443–466; Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller, "Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society," *International Migration Review* 38, no. 135 (2004): 595–629.

[17] David S. Meyer and Debra C. Minkioff, "Conceptualizing Political Opportunity," *Social Forces* 82 no. 4 (2004): 1457–92, 1457.

[18] Landolt and Goldring, "Political Cultures," 444.

[19] Hanspeter Kriesi, "Political Context and Opportunity," in David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule, Hanspeter Kriesi, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements* (New Jersey: Blackwell publishing, 2004), 67–90.

[20] Landolt and Goldring, "Political Cultures."

[21] Landolt and Goldring, "Political Cultures"; Guarnizo et al., "Assimilation and Transnationalism"; Itzigsohn et al., "Mapping Dominican Transnationalism."

[22] Luin Goldring, "The Power of Status in Transnational Social Fields," *Transnationalism from Below* 6 (1998): 165–95.

[23] Faist, "Migrants as Transnational Development Agents," 37.

[24] The available quantitative data on geographical patterns of Arab migration flows, stocks, and categories remains insufficient. See Cainkar, "Global Arab World Migrations"; Philippe Fargues, "International Migration and the Nation State in Arab Countries," *Middle East Law and Governance* 5 (2013): 5–35.

[25] Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Szanton Blanc, "From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration," *Anthropological Quarterly* 68, no. 1 (1995): 48–63.

[26] Debates are inconclusive as to which migrant categories can be classified as part of a diaspora. While some scholars such as Yossi Shain and Aharon Barth use a broad definition, others such as William Safran prefer a more restrictive definition. See Shain and Barth, "Diasporas and International Relations Theory," *International Organization* 57, no. 3 (2003): 449–79 and Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," *Diaspora* 1 (1991): 83–99.

[27] Finn and Momani, "Established and Emergent Political Subjectivities."

[28] Katharyne Mitchell, "Different Diasporas and the Hype of Hybridity," *Environment and Planning: Society and Space* 15, no. 5 (1997): 533–53.

[29] For an account of how activist strategies and political contexts interact, see Kriesi, "Political context" and Meyer and Minkoff, "Conceptualizing Political Opportunity."

[30] Patel and Bunce, "Turning Points."

[31] Abdelrahman, "The Transnational and the Local"; Nahed Eltantawy and Julie B. Wiest, "Social Media in the Egyptian Revolution: Reconsidering Resource Mobilization Theory," *International Journal of Communication* 5 (2011): 1207–24; Elizabeth Iskander, "Connecting the National and the Virtual: Can Facebook Activism Remain Relevant after Egypt's January 25 Uprising?" *International Journal of Communication* 5 (2011): 1225–37.

[32] David Faris, *Dissent and Revolution in a Digital Age: Social Media, Blogging and Activism in Egypt* (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013).

[33] Eltantawy and Wiest, "Social Media"; Iskander, "Connecting the National"; Melissa Lerner, "Connecting the Actual with the Virtual: The Internet and Social Movement Theory in the Muslim World: The Cases of Iran and Egypt," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 30, no. 4 (2010): 555–74; Merlyna Lim, "Clicks, Cabs, and Coffee Houses: Social Media and Oppositional Movements in Egypt, 2004–2011," *Journal of Communication* 62, no. 2 (2012): 231–48.

[34] Student, interview with the author, Harvard, 30 June 2013; Professor, interview with the author, Berkeley, 21 August 2013.

[35] Student, interview with the author, Berkeley, 28 April 2011; student, interview with the author, Berkeley 18 July 2012; scholar, interview with the author, Berkeley, 24 August 2013.

[36] Joel Beinin, "Exile and Political Activism: The Egyptian-Jewish Communists in Paris, 1950–59," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 2 no. 1 (1992): 73–94; Gerasimos Tsourapas, "The Politics of "Exit": Emigration & Subject-Making Processes in Modern Egypt," *Mashriq & Mahjar* 4, no. 1 (2017): 29–49.

[37] Jennifer Brinkerhoff, "Digital Diasporas and Governance in Semi-Authoritarian States: The Case of the Egyptian Copts," *Public Administration and Development* 25 (2005): 193–204; Michael Wahid Hanna, "With Friends Like These: Coptic Activism in the Diaspora," *Middle East Report* 267 (2013): 28–31.

[38] See for instance Eli Clifton, "Politics-US: US NGOs Call Mubarak to Account for Abuses," *Inter Press Service News Agency*, 17 August 2009, accessed 20 August 2013, http://www.ipsnews.net/2009/08/politics-us-ngos-call-mubarak-to-account-for-abuses/.

[39] Scholar, phone interview with the author, Florida, 23 August 2013.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Işık Kuşçu "The Egyptian American Diaspora During and in the Aftermath of the Egyptian Revolution of 2011," *Ortadoğu Etütleri* 4, no. 1 (2012): 121–142.

[42] Eltantawy and Wiest, "Social Media."

[43] Dunn, "Guest Editorial."

[44] Marta Severo and Eleonora Zuolo, "Egyptian E-Diaspora: Migrant Websites without a Network?" *Social Science Information* 51 (2012): 52; Ayman Zohry and Priyanka Debnath, *A Study on the Dynamics of the Egyptian Diaspora: Strengthening Development Linkages* (Cairo: International Organization for Migration, July 2010), accessed 16 November 2017, http://www.eip.gov.eg/Upload/Publications/study.pdf.

[45] See Laurie Brand, "Arab Uprisings and the Changing Frontiers of Transnational Citizenship: Voting from Abroad in Political Transitions," *Political Geography* 41 (2014): 54–63; Brinkerhoff, "Digital Diasporas and Governance"; Müller-Funk, "Diaspora Mobilizations."

[46] For an account of the political framing of emigration in Egypt, see Tsourapas, "The Politics of 'Exit.'"

[47] Dunn, "Guest Editorial."

[48] James Bohman, "Democratization through Transnational Publics: Deliberative Inclusion Across Borders," in R. Geenens and R. Tinnevelt eds., *Does Truth Matter? Democracy and Public Space* (Secaucus, NJ: Springer, 2009), 149–165.

[49] El Tantawy and Wiest 2011, "Social Media."

[50] Lerner, "Connecting the Actual"; Lim, "Clicks, Cabs, and Coffee Houses."

[51] Professional, interview with the author, Berkeley, 24 August 2013.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Activist, phone interview with the author, Dallas, 2 September 2013.

[54] Iskander, "Connecting the National," 1229. Pages such as El Baradei for Presidency provided platforms for dialogue.

[55] Activist, phone interview with the author, Dallas, 2 September 2013.

[56] Scholar, phone interview with the author, Florida, 23 August 2013.

[57] Severo and Zuolo, "Egyptian E-Diaspora."

[58] Professional, interview with author, Berkeley, 24 August 2013.

[59] Sidney Tarrow, *The New Transnational Activism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[60] Scholar, interview with the author, Berkeley, 6 August 2013.

[61] Halim Rane and Sumra Salem, "Social Media, Social Movements and the Diffusion of Ideas in the Arab Uprisings," *Journal of International Communication* 18, no. 1 (2012): 97–111, 104.

[62] Scholar, interview with the author, Berkeley, 6 August 2013.

[63] Activist, phone interview with the author, Dallas, 14 August 2015.

[64] Severo and Zuolo, "Egyptian E-Diaspora."

[65] See their official facebook website: https://www.facebook.com/eacusa.

[66] The link to the parallel constitution draft for Egypt that the Egyptian Association for Change posted is no longer functional.

[67] Activist, phone interview with the author, Dallas, 2 September 2013.

[68] See, for instance, the statement of the Egyptian-American Society at Houston, "Proposed Expanding of EAS," 1 March 2011, accessed 20 August 2013 http://easathouston.blogspot.com/2011/03/proposed-expanding-of-eas.html.

[69] The online statements that activists shared with me in 2013 are no longer available.

[70] See American-Egyptian Strategic Alliance, "American Egyptian Strategic Alliance to Help U.S. Policymakers Develop New Engagement Model with Post-Mubarak Egypt," *PRNewswire*, 11 February 2012, accessed 15 August 2013, https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/american-egyptian-strategic-alliance-to-help-us-policymakers-develop-new-engagement-model-with-post-mubarak-egypt-139148759.html. The website of the Alliance is no longer functional.

[71] AESA member, phone interview with the author, Washington, 9 September 2013.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Scholar, interview with the author, Berkeley, 25 July 2013.

[74] Faist, "Migrants as Transnational Development Agents."

[75] In 2013, my respondents estimated that approximately fifteen academics in Canada and the US were regularly participating in the 9 March online exchanges.

[76] Scholar, interview with the author, Berkeley, 6 August 2013.

[77] Professional, interview with the author, Berkeley, 24 August 2013.

[78] On the importance of relating activist strategies to their political environment, see Kriesi, "Political Context."

[79] Patricia Landolt, "The Transnational Geographies of Immigrant Politics: Insights from a Comparative Study of Migrant Grassroots Organizing," *The Sociological Quarterly* 49, no. 1 (2008): 53–77, 53.

[80] Student, interview with the author, Berkeley, 26 July 2012; student, interview with the author, Harvard, 14 November 2013; student, interview with the author, Boston, 15 November 2013.

[81] Tarrow, *The New Transnational Activism*.

[82] Ibid., 122.

[83] Bohman, "Democratization through Transnational Publics."

[84] For an account of these debates see Jonathan W. Moses, "Emigration and Political Development: Exploring the National and International Nexus," *Migration and Development* 1, no. 1 (2012): 123–137.

[85] Scholar, interview with the author, Berkeley, 25 July 2013; scholar, interview with the author, Berkeley, 6 August 2013; scholar, interview with the author, Berkeley, 24 August 2013.

[86] Scholar, interview with the author, Berkeley, 25 July 2013.

[87] Professor, telephone interview with the author, Chicago, 21 August 2013.

[88] On Egyptians' expatriate voting campaign see Brand, "Arab uprisings and the Changing Frontiers."

[89] Scholar, interview with the author, Berkeley, 25 July 2013; writer, telephone interview with the author, San Francisco, 31 August 2013; professor, interview with the author, Berkeley, 13 September 2013.

[90] Scholar, interview with the author, Berkeley, 25 July 2013

[91] Activist, telephone interview with the author, Dallas, 14 August 2015.

[92] Professor, interview with the author, San Francisco, 15 August 2015.

[93] Student, interview with the author, Harvard, 14 November 2013.

[94] Informal conversations between Egyptians and the author from 2013 until 2016.

[95] Activist, telephone interview with the author, Dallas, 14 August 2015.

[96] Professional, interview with the author, Berkeley, 24 August 2013.

[97] Professor, interview with the author, Berkeley, 21 August 2013; student, interview with the author, Harvard, 13 November 2013.

[98] Writer, telephone interview, San Francisco, 31 August 2013.

[99] Professor, interview with the author, Berkeley, 21 August 2013; professor, telephone interview with the author, Chicago, 21 August 2013.

[100] Activist and writer, telephone interview with the author, San Francisco, 31 August 2013.

[101] Student, interview with the author, Harvard, 14 November 2013.

[102] Student, interview with the author, Boston, 15 November 2013.

[103] Activist, telephone interview with the author, Dallas, 14 August 2015.

[104] See Tsouparas, "The Politics of 'Exit,'" 29.