City Space Architecture

Film Intervention in Public Space.
A Phylogenetic Spatial Change

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Abstract
Cinema has taken up the role of a social agent that introduced a variety of images and events to the public during critical times. This paper proposes the idea of using films as a tool to reclaim public space where a sense of belonging and dialogue restore to a meaningful place. During the January 2011 protests in Egypt, Tahrir Cinema, an independent revolutionary project composed of filmmakers and other artists, offered a space in Downtown Cairo and screened archival footage of the ongoing events to the protestors igniting civic debate and discussions. The traditional public space has undergone what Karl Kropf refers to as the phylogenetic change, i.e. form and function that is agreed upon by society and represents a common conception of certain spatial elements. Hence, the framework that this research will follow is a two-layer discourse, the existence of cinema in public spaces, and the existence of public spaces in cinema. Eventually, the paper seeks to enhance the social relationship between society, spaces, and cinematic narration – a vital tool to raise awareness about the right to the city.

Keywords: public space, outdoor screening, phylogenesis, revolution, cinema

Introduction: January 2011 was the Starting Point

The global debate on public space has occupied a different angle of perception since the Arab Spring[1] in 2011. The protests that took place across several regions in the Middle East defined an advanced level of understanding of mass usage of public space which, according to Mitchell (2012), represents anonymity and emphasizes micro-resilience over individualistic charisma. Referring to it as 'the rhetoric of space' (Abaza, 2014, p. 164), Tahrir square became the phenomenon of negative occupation, a space of fullness and abundance, typically characterized by the refusal of describing the world it wishes to create, rather it foregrounds its socio-political and intellectual presence. While the square has successfully become the most recognizable spatial icon associated with the Egyptian revolution, it has certainly put forward conceptions of "decentering of knowledge and power" (Abaza, 2014, p. 167). The visibility patterns that conquered the square introduced novel urban attempts of mass resistance and highly artistic public expressions. These have included musical performances, street graffiti, monumental caricatured sculptures, and street films.

In this sense, political space and public art became the dominant spatial lexicon for Tahrir square. Political space is highlighted through Hayward's interpretation of power and freedom (Hayward, 2000). Power is the notion of creating boundaries around a specific urban setting, deciding what kinds of actions that take place within, who is allowed access, and which interests are accepted. Freedom is the citizens' ability to effectively participate in shaping social limits and directing the conditions of their collective existence. On the other end, public art has become associated with civic participation, coming hand-in-hand with contemporary artists, perfecting itself as a raw material for addressing socio-economic issues to the general masses. Hence, public art, being more than just mere gazed objects, has come to fully identify itself as giving access to local communities who transform landscapes and question traditional assumptions. Tahrir Square was a landscape of artistic movement, among which was cinematic intervention in its urban spaces. The intertwined relationship between the socio-political framework of the square and the clashes taking place between protestors and security forces were captured by independent filmmakers, who later previewed the raw collected footage to the public. During the summer of Tahrir square sit-ins, these filmmakers created the Tahrir Cinema Project, a revolutionary media project that documented and exhibited the events of the January uprising to the public. For 3 weeks, till it was forcefully dispersed by the Egyptian military police on August 1st, the project laid the foundation of Mosireen (English: We are Determined), the world's largest video archive of the Egyptian revolution. The project has redefined mass intervention within public space encompassing a major impact in its physical transformation via the exchange of value and ideas. However, Tahrir Square was not the first case study. The literature review in this paper reveals historical examples from the early 1920s in New York till present-day public screenings in Germany, all of which redefine public spaces produced through collective actions and performances. These practices are considered novel ways to imagine and practice democracy associated with public visibility and imagery. Most importantly, these practices reveal different perspectives of spatial change. Urban theorist Karl Kropf, around which this research work revolves, puts

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[1] The Arab Spring was a series of anti-government protests that spread across much of the Arab world in the early 2010s, including: Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Syria.

forward the notion of evolutionary conception of change of the built environment. He describes the movement from one morphological period to the next causing long-term transformation of features defining a culture as periodic change (Kropf, 2001). In other words, the revolution spotlighted a new theory of urban form inviting a different perspective of social and cultural organization.

The main core of this paper is a thorough analytical outlook on such transformation revealing the potential role of cinema as a revolutionary catalyst in reclaiming public space. The paper sheds light on Karl Kropf's conception of the phylogenesis of urban space which is then mapped on the phenomenon of public gatherings during the screening events. The proposal in this paper is not intended for a national-scale perception, but rather a more effective small-scale application that may lead to similar ideas in other areas.

The Intervention of Films in the Social Framework

The Egyptian film industry has been critically involved in contemporary politics, offering foreign viewers dynamic character, form, and structure of Egypt's identity. The Nasserist regime[2], however, was perceived as the beginning of disassociating cinema from society, shifting towards "the most blatant plot lines, and a surrender to smugness, [which] marked them along with cou-cou songs, delirious oratory full of unnecessary gesticulation, false smiles and flashing glances, floods of tears, greasy multi-colored artificial make-up, all of which combined to create an image of complete mindlessness" (Sheria 1970, cited in Baker, 1974, p. 400). With a few exceptions of filmmakers who made individual films of social and political importance, the film industry in Egypt witnessed a sheer decline in quality and civic awareness. Furthermore, being enclosed within dark rooms as a capitalist's commodity, it has replaced and diminished the role of public spaces in expressing local voices. With the Sadat and Mubarak regimes[3], the films produced during this span were given limited access to political and historical criticism avoiding the negative image of the superior bureaucrats.

The metropolitan city, being accumulated with inequality and uneven access to services, successfully showcased the effective role of public spaces. Tahrir Square became the central subject of the 'who-owns-the-city' debate. Not only the square became synonymous with socio-political events, but also witnessed the artistic intervention of a variety of artists transforming it into a cultural environment. Extending its intellect from the physical street level to the virtual world, Tahrir Square became a spatial metonym of modern society seeking interactions between humans and the surrounding environment in an era of commodity and globalization – a semi-protagonist semi-antagonist phenomenon that blurs the line between publicness and privatization. It was this vagueness that mobilized artistic civic initiatives to revitalize the "terrains vagues"

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[2] Nasserism is a socialist nationalist political ideology, which began in the mid-1950s, based on the thinking of Former President Gamal Abdel-Nasser, combining elements of Arab socialism, republicanism, nationalism, and anti-imperialism.

[3] Former President Anwar El-Sadat defined a new economic shift in the nation – 'De-socialization' – that emphasized liberalization and foreign investment during late 1970s. Following his assassination in 1981, Former President Hosni Mubarak continued the policies, and had altered the Egyptian political structure. His regime was highly criticized for political censorship, restrictions of free speech and arbitrary detention.

(Morales 2003, cited in Binder-Reisinger et al, 2011, p. 89), i.e. the empty spaces between buildings representing spatial forms of transition. The decision to make use of such spaces poses novel questions about the current time and culture reflected in the setting of the space itself.

Aligning with this reading, past scholars have identified the outcome as the creation of the spectator's engagement with the physical space coinciding with the notion of the spectacle. The spectator's spectacle in space via existential intervention, then, becomes the main core of spatial analysis, translating Paul Klee's quotation, "now the objects perceive me"[4] into a dominant spatial tool. Here, Klee's interpretation of the visual entity is embodied as an intellectual machine that is capable of recognizing shapes and analyzing complex environments. On the other end of the spectrum, Guy Debord overviews a more advanced stage of the spectacle, i.e. social relations mediated by images (Debord, 1967). He defines the spectacle as the means for societal unification, a vital part of our modern social fabric. The visual landscape in Egyptian cinema can be described as being observer-oriented, i.e. representation is more subjective, which coincides with the enclosed, womb-like physical space of Cairo (Khatib, 2006). The Egyptian filmic landscape is a site of contradictions and conflicting spatial practices, presenting a unified image of the notion that is plagued by socio-political and economic differences. Egypt's cinematic representation of informal settlements is a vivid example that draws on this scale of the spectacle, highlighting micro-resistance of informality through the domination of physical space starting from the 1990s till the 2010s. Contrasting to the theory of phylogenesis, the spectacle here defines itself as the objective reality materialized by globalization and modern consumption. With the embeddedness of the observer, urban space becomes more than just a visual creation. Cinematic intervention within civic movement is usually addressed as a bottom-up 'guerilla act'. Binder-Reisinger et al (2011) highlight the spatial interactivity between the film screen and the site of the film projection. On one hand, the film influences the site, and on the other, the site influences the film. Hence, the site of projection is the point of departure for the urban analysis of socio-spatial relationships. Furthermore, the article highlights two German initiatives, *A Wall is A Screen* and *Hit & Run*[5] in Hamburg and Berlin respectively, where public screens ignited mini-tours for the public through hidden spaces of the city (Figure 1). The analytical discourse associated with these public screenings reinforces the notion of film's contribution to the re-appropriation of space by the normal pedestrian. The active viewing transforms the audience from mere spectators to participants highly aware of their rights to the city (Binder-Reisinger et al, 2011). On a parallel analytical note, Dell'Aria (2016) proposes that public screenings can allow us both to understand how artists generate meaningful economic spatial exchanges in public spaces and redefine our perception of mass spectacle in general. Additionally, scholars have further explored and developed the term 'public art'. Stephens (2006) claims that public art is a successful participatory model that encourages informal community-based learning. Furthermore, she states that the core of participatory public art is the integration of visual arts into the daily lives of the society acting as a catalyst that addresses socio-political, cultural and, economic issues.

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[4] See Chapter 5 in Paul Virilio's *The Vision Machine*, p. 59.
[5] The *Hit & Run* cinema in Berlin is no longer operating. According to one of the frequent audiences, viewers had to be sneaky about reaching to the 'secret locations' where the films were shown. Finding Berlin, September 7th, 2010.

The theoretical discourse of public screenings acting as public art is illuminated within a metaphorical setting by Casetti (2013). He outlines three aspects in this case: the monitor, referring to the screens' attempt to closely surveil and analyze movement in urban space – mainly to keep it under control; the bulletin board or blackboard, where the physical texture of the world, e.g. signposts, determine certain behavior in space; and the mailbox or scrapbook, which is an alternative platform for the audience to construct a story reflective of their characters rather than second-hand associating themselves with a fictional timeline. In a nutshell, Casetti (2013) brings together the detailed components of the operative behavior of screens in public space. Articulating the connection between cinema and movement in public space, Bruno (2002) explores the phenomenological experience of the body's relationship to the public screen, transforming the mere spectator to a liberated active participant.

Figure 1. Locals gather at a movie screening initiated by A Wall is A Screen in Hamburg.
Source: A Wall is A Screen

While scholars have explored the spatial behavioural context of public screenings, this paper aims to explore the spatial product resulting from a two-level analysis: moving images within public spaces and public spaces within moving images.

The Social Role of Public Screenings & Revolutionary Filmmaking: A Brief Historical Outlook

In June 2017, the small town of Schoharie, New York, was celebrating the 100th anniversary of the first commercial outdoor movie preview (Fox, 2017). Schoharie residents would watch movies projected on a sheet stretched across lampposts in front of a courthouse. The first film, *'The Awakening of Helena Richie'*[6], was shown at the height of World War I to boost the soldiers' wartime morale. According to Carl Kopecky, the Old Stone Fort Museum's director which showed archived pictures of outdoor truck screens, the residents came for the social aspect, as seasonal attendance reached 100,000 by the end of the 1920s.

Initially, the Board of Trade had to pool in an amount of $600 for a projector that stayed open until midnight to stimulate sales (Fox, 2017). Eventually, the social dimension of the outdoor screening was the main engine for the cultural imagery of Schoharie. What was intellectually captivating about this case is the idea of shifting from the general abstract model of spatial change, i.e. the induction of mobile cine-vans into space, but the meaning and socio-cultural value of change that occurred. In his revised manuscript, Kropf (2001) reveals the literature gap concerned with addressing the process of change. The tendency to adopt theories of biological evolution was Kropf's main aim in his research work, adding to the philosophical perspective of architectural theory of seeing cities as living organisms embedded with long-term activities that, as a result of historical collectivism, become labeled as culture.

On a similar cultural frequency, in the small district of Bermondsey in South East London, the local municipality used cinemotor vans to screen films to the working class as part of a health campaign entitled *'Education of the Public Hygiene'* (Lebas, 1995) (Figure 2). By the mid-1930s, the local council had produced more than 30 films that have successfully improved the working-class conditions. To promote the significance of the campaign, the films previewed to the local community avoided the use of cinematic luxurious imagery and tended to appear as raw as possible, mixing documentary with newsreel footage. Space was not just a mere subject of civic speculation, as in the cases of the Lumiere Brothers' silent cinema, but rather a "quotidian landscape of life… [being] a representation of the fantasy energy by which the collective perceives the social order"[7]. Space has become induced with meaningful existence fostered by the fusion of human and the natural order, a significant catalyst to our immediate experience of the world.

A similar manner operates within revolutionary filmmaking. In May 1968, protests in Paris sparked French filmmaker Philippe Garrel's most radical period of political actions in association with students. Alongside several other filmmakers[8], Garrel took to the streets documenting a collection of spaces in the city that became embroiled with strikes. His efforts, in addition to others as well, resulted in a short real-time document

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[6] Originally based on a 1906 novel and a 1909 Broadway play, The 1916 picture still survives incomplete in the Library of Congress.

[7] See Chapter 4 in Brian Larkin's *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure and Urban Culture in Nigeria*, p.126. During the 1930s in Nigeria, cinema vans – called *Majigi* – drove across different regions where several national developmental projects were taking place to be shown to the audiences.

[8] The 1968 protests in May received significant attention from prominent filmmakers of the French New Wave movement, including Jean-Luc Godard, Francois Truffaut, Eric Rohmer, Jacques Rivette, Claude Chabrol, and Philippe Garrel

of the upheaval known as *Actua One* – characterized by the layering of political speeches over raw footage of the revolution (Brody, 2008). Through the collaboration between Garrel's 35mm and film students' 16mm, *Actua One* was an early testimony to the poetic revolutionary voice of the French cinema at the time, and was interpreted, in Godard's words, as *"Une camera à la place du Coeur"* (English: A Camera instead of the Heart) (Le Cinema Club, 2018). The film ignited a change of perception on the city of Paris as a transformational zone from the Bourgeoisie to the Left, as well as experimentation. On the other end of the spectrum, the third cinema movement[9] that started in the 1960s in Latin America emphasized the importance of militant cinema in making an intervention that implies a social response, hence the political participation of the viewer (Chanan, 1997). One of the most prominent films of the era was the 1968 picture *La hora de Los Hornos* (English: The Hour of the Furnaces) – an experimental film that was shot semi-clandestinely in conjunction with members of organized resistance (Chanan, 1997). The film prompts intertitles posing questions that allow for discussion and debate – in other words, designed to disrupt the normal passive relationship between the viewer and the screen.

Kropf highlights the concept of spatial phylogenesis as the collective expenditure of societal physical and mental energy capable of changing and redefining the built environment. His Lefebvre-ian[10] analytical outlook conveys a three-way interaction between humans, ideas, and the environment, the ideas are fundamentally social that emerge through the continuous communication of shared cultural habits. In the case of Bermondsey, urban space was the main core of political and civic engagement empowering informal autonomous technicalities away from the mainstream conservative medical profession. The significance of the interaction between the community and the mobile screens further empowered their sense of right not just to public health and suitable living conditions, but also to their access to use the space for debate and social exchange of ideas and thoughts. Similarly, the intertitles used in the case of Latin American third cinema, which opposed the Hollywood model of cinema as mere entertainment of making money, emphasized the power of micro-resistance when facing social constraints, expending physical and mental energy in changing the surrounding environment. In other words, phylogenesis occurs within the spatial hierarchy of power shifting towards a more democratic setting. At the same time, the display of raw footage on the moving screens made it intellectually accessible to the wider audience, where the cinematic imagery of space was reinterpreted and redefined to provide physical space a social collective embodiment of culture and history.

What Happened in Tahrir Square?
What happened in Tahrir Square was the emergence of an autonomous city within the greater city of Cairo (Figure 3). It encompassed the basic features of any living environment: informal gates that allowed the entry of citizens only when showing their

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[9] The term 'Third Cinema' was put forward in filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino's manifesto which is meant to be non-commercialized, challenging Hollywood's model
[10] French Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre's *Production of Space* points out the embodiment of the mental and material constructs in the social emergence of space. Within the concept of everyday life, Lefebvre coins the expression *Urban Environment* as the space generated by society rather than the technological physicality of the city.

ID cards, a cluster of housing tents fixed within the central space, scattered mobile street vendors selling food and drinks, health care units for the wounded protestors, a few outdoor barbershops, spontaneous scattering of ambulant clothing salesmen, and, most importantly, the stage. In terms of geographical representation, the stage is divided into two regions: the virtual region that allowed access to hundreds and thousands of inspiring and creative artworks, short films, songs, and comedy circulating a wide range of active spectators, and the canvas region which showcased on-the-spot visualization of the events and the action that occurred during the 18-day sit-in. The canvas region was a direct portrayal of the power of public spaces that exerted civic force on authoritarian parties. It did so through the implementation of a unique visual culture that attracted the urge to document, film, and archive the revolution (Abaza, 2013).
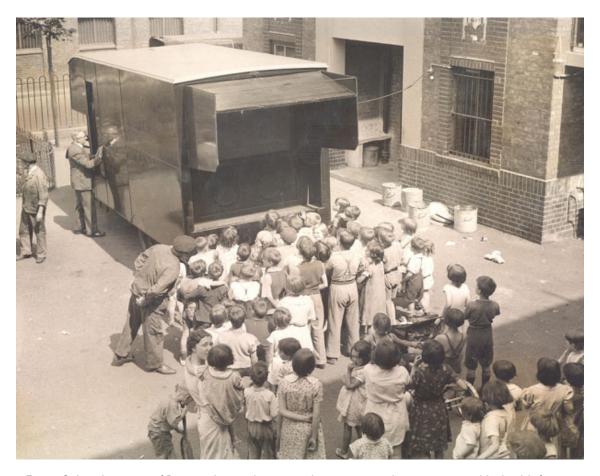

Figure 2. Local citizens of Bermondsey gather around a cinemotor that screens a public health footage.
Source: Southwark Heritage Blog

Within the boundaries of such novelty, there existed an informal intellectual hub of collectiveness changing the socio-political dimensions of Tahrir Square, what I refer to as the hidden sages. This was the first time that Egyptian history witnessed a mass mobile resistance at a larger-than-conscious scale, which led several scholars to trace the significant symbolic position of public spaces in general, for example, Taksim Square

during the Gezi Park movement[11] and Zuccotti Park during the Occupy Wall Street movement. It was a historical and intellectual milestone that put forward the idea that space is the foreground political player rather than having a main public leader. Hence, it was not similar to the French Revolution or the Bolshevik revolution that encompassed direct political and economic reasons, but rather it was a pure architectural urban uprising which, directly and indirectly, triggered the issues of society's daily living settings (Shinjo, 2013).

For a better comprehension of the iconic spatial position of Tahrir Square, it is better to provide a brief background of the historical collectiveness of the space, and how it comes to provide a meaningful and vernacular context for mass movements. Said (2015) provides an insightful article on how Tahrir Square came to be a prominent image of resistance in Egypt. He outlines three forms of the historical significance of the square associated with the 2011 uprising. The first is 'known target', which depicts the historical popularity of Tahrir Square as a site of resistance, the earliest known event being in 1919 against the British Barracks[12]; the second is 'source of strategies', that is considered the main reference of the 2011 protestors on how to stage an occupation, referring to previous sit-in occurrences[13] that were quite rare for the area; and the third is 'site of meaning' providing spatial symbolic inspiration for the 2011 revolution. Hence, it is not surprising that Tahrir Square in 2011 was the core of mass resistance imagery in Egypt. Being a central visible gathering point, the historical timeline of Egyptian politics proved that whatever happens in Tahrir Square immediately becomes a national concern (Farag, 1999). Factor into the whole process the advanced speed of digital communication, be it Facebook or Twitter, the square's vital role has become a global inspiration. It was a defining moment for all sectors of society, including artists, public performers, filmmakers, and musicians, to out-loudly express and reflect on the sense of place and solidarity. Towards the end of the Mubarak regime, artists and filmmakers were breaking boundaries of space and censorship. They moved away from the enclosed traditional form of the exhibitive space into a public space accessible to a wide range of civic members.

The artistic intervention in Tahrir Square revealed it as the metaphorical representation of the decomposition of neoliberal policies and the decrease of privatization of collective consumption and urban spaces. For the 2011-2013 period, the square maintained itself as the autonomous, city-within-city establishment and space of opposition against both the Mubarak and the Muslim Brotherhood regimes. The square became *de facto* the space for contestation, triggering a new visual culture via being a spot to film and be filmed, to see and be seen (Abaza, 2014). Creativity flourished

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[11] The Gezi Park movement was a wave of demonstrations in Istanbul to contest the urban development plan for the city's Taksim Gezi Park. Very similar to Tahrir Square's context, there was no centralized leadership and social media played a vital role in the mass organization of the protestors. For 3 months, more than 3 million citizens took part in 5,000 demonstrations across Turkey.

[12] In 1919, Egyptian mass protests rose against the British occupation. At the time, the square was named Ismailyya Square – having named after Khedive Ismail in 1865 – while the name Tahrir Square (Liberation Square in English) was used informally. The name 'Tahrir' was officially used after Egypt became a republican nation during Nasser's era.

[13] Prior to the 2011 revolution, Tahrir Square witnessed mass sit-ins three times: January 1972 against lack of an equitable social justice system under Sadat; March 2003 against the Anglo-American war on Iraq; and March 2006 against the persecution of judges under Mubarak. Each one spanned for roughly one day.

through the enhancement of visual language, on one hand, via graffiti and filmic spaces, and textual languages, on the other, through the public display of jokes. Such sense has generated a space of effervescent carnival attracting a variety of socio-political backgrounds, as well as citizens of the informal economy, i.e. street vendors. The different elements of innovation transformed a traditional vehicle-oriented roundabout into a contested symbolic space of ongoing battles with the ruling forces. Referring back to Kropf (2001), he highlights the nature of human senses in spatial phylogenesis as being capable of analyzing and responding to differences – differences of status, image, and association. The space within which society was gathered was the main reservoir for the different points of view exchanged across the fourth space[14], as mass protestors became empowered by the urban space itself. The existence of public screens "address[ed] the public's right to reclaim the streets…to strengthen the community by bringing them together" (Abdel-Ghani, 2017, p. 404) (Figure 4). While spaces are represented on screens, stories are generated and realities are unfolded.

Figure 3. Tahrir Square was considered a city within a city, with all the basic features of a sustainable living environment. Source: Drawing Parallels

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[14] In Urban Sociology, fourth space is an analysis of place as a vital actor in bringing up people's lives in certain ways and allowing us to understand hidden aspects.

Filming Space

The urge to document the events in Tahrir Square made 2011 a heyday for all forms of artistic intervention in the social realm. Such an unprecedented phenomenon emphasized the importance of archiving the expressive artworks as a catalyst for media revolution (Baladi, 2016). Egyptian-Lebanese artist Lara Baladi initiated 'Vox Populi', an archival project consisting of data related to events taking place around the world since January 2011. It is also comprised of a series of artistic projects that include installations, sculptures, and filmmaking. The first project that merged from Vox Populi was Tahrir Cinema. According to Baladi (2016), the impulse behind Tahrir Cinema was the essence of sound more than images – for Egyptians prefer loud and anxious noises. The sound of the street was angry and people gathered yelling out their political opinions in microphones. Activists and journalists screened their share of personal experiences of the revolution, especially the *'No To Military Trials'* campaign members who, at the time of the Tahrir Cinema project's initiation, were the first to showcase tons of documented testimonies of the army's violence on civilians[15].

Figure 4. A raw film footage taken during the events of 2011 is screened in front of a crowd of protestors in Tahrir Square. Source: Egyptian Streets

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[15] Egypt's Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) took power following Mubarak's resignation on February 11th, 2011 till June 30th, 2012, when Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohamed Morsi took over.

The Tahrir Cinema project foregrounded collective cultural memory. It triggered yet another online project 'Filming Revolution', founded by documentary filmmaker Alisa Lebow who interviewed more than thirty filmmakers, artists, activists, and archivists about filming during the time of the revolution. The thematic topics included using film as a weapon, the power of film images to write history, and revolutionary cinematic language (Lebow, 2018). Having a tool documenting the violent acts of authoritarianism remains a powerful physical medium for resistance. Palestinian filmmaker Samaher Al-Qadi recalls her experience with sexual harassment in Downtown Cairo when she decided to film the harassers, and so they got repelled and left her in peace. Actor and video activist Khaled Abdallah questions the nature of the weapon used to participate in the battle against the regime. Is it documentary films? Is it documenting footage from Tahrir Square? Is it production companies? Is it creating a certain space for other works to be showcased? Part of the answer can be found in the interview with feminist filmmaker Aida El-Kashef who recounts the battle of the camel[16] and how her camera became an important asset to record the events of that day. To El-Kashef, this was the epicenter of the revolution, and bringing film images to the streets tears the system down gradually. Film images have the power to bring both romanticized and realistic change to the community. Yet, this process of rewriting history has its limitations. Artist and filmmaker Jasmina Metwaly points out that the direction towards which the camera is pointing may give the audience a certain truth, while the real story might be happening right behind the lens. And this moves us to the notion of how authentic cinema language can be when documenting the revolution. 2011 was indeed the heyday for documentary films about the Egyptian revolution, ones that included *Tahrir 2011: The Good, The Bad, and the Politician*, *In Tahrir Square: 18 Days of Egypt's Unfinished Revolution*, and *Reporting…a Revolution*. Yet, there is always this concern of producing more documentary films, one after another, to the point of creating clichés and, in most cases, false images. Filmmaker Nadine Khan claims that production films did more harm to the revolution than good, as they degraded the powerful language of documentation of immediate series of events. This issue is concluded through the words of young filmmaker and curator Alia Ayman that revolutionary films do not necessarily have to encompass the revolution as a topic. The footage taken during the 18 days was not trying to be truthful or establish an ideology, rather they were sending impulses about resisting the status quo (Figure 5).

Other examples of public screening initiatives included *Kazeboon* (English: Liars), one of the most popular campaigns that posed a counter-narrative position to Egypt's Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) exposing the violence of the army's torturing and killing (Abaza, 2013). *Kazeboon* was carried out either with people's equipment or equipment borrowed from other members of the campaign. The screenings were shown on the walls of the presidential palace and the state TV building as well as residential buildings (Mollerup & Gaber, 2015). Unlike the raw footage produced by *Tahrir Cinema*, *Kazeboon* adopted editing techniques that were learned by different organizations in different ways. Their videos gained so much popularity from YouTube and circulated the whole nation. *Aqwa Aflam El-Mawsim* (English: The Most Powerful

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[16] On February 2nd, 2011, a number of Pro-Mubarak thugs riding camels and horses raided through protestors killing 11 and wounding 600.

Films of the Season), initiated by YouTube video maker Monatov, where she exposes the hypocrisy and lies of the media's coverage of the uprising. These initiatives complemented the philosophy of phylogenetic change through the repetition of visual forms as part of a newly-born cultural habit. Novel ideas dominated the centrality of urban space during the revolution which followed a circular life-cycle rather than the well-known linear one (Kropf, 2001). In other words, Tahrir Square was a direct transformation from individualism to collectivism, later to be referred to as collective memory.

What is captivating about these campaigns is how they created space that was not just a container of activism but a constitutive of it (Said, 2015). Space was foregrounded as an active participant against the regime using film images as a weapon to rewrite and redefine its socio-political role to emphasize the citizens' rights to freely access and use public space. Bayat (2010) tackles the complexity of street politics in the Arab World, claiming that the Arab Street is an expression of the 'Political Street'; where modes of articulation have undergone notable changes. Just as the time when Jean-Paul Sartre delivered a speech to French workers striking at the Renault factory in Boulogne-Billancourt 40 years ago, Tahrir Square extended what Bayat refers to as the 'spatiality of discontents'; "how particular spatial forms shape, galvanize, and accommodate insurgent sentiments and solidarity" (Bayat, 2010, p. 162).

Figure 5. A street graffiti illustrating the power of the camera as a weapon against the regime.
Source: IBRAAZ

Conclusion

The events' have established a point of no return within the psychological mindset of Egyptians. The cultural sphere of Tahrir Square has opened new visionary paths that will be quite difficult to suppress. The main idea in this paper was clarifying the nature of cinematic intervention in public space, i.e. public screenings. Historical timelines have proved the significance of public screenings in igniting a sense of belonging and attachment within the socio-political realm. Today, Tahrir Square stands as one of the most documented public spaces in the digital era. This paper set out to explore Tahrir Square as a visual cultural hub that enabled access to filmic images as a catalyst for mass informal expressiveness. By adapting the theoretical work of Kropf, the spatial phylogenetic change of space, the reader can comprehend the formation and transformation of Tahrir Square during the public screenings of archived footage of the events taking place. Bringing together the different sectors of society, who have shared cultural habits and economic goals, has redefined traditional forms and usage of public space, which was in turn reinforced through installing moving screens in the square. Eventually, the paper gives space for further studies about reinterpreting the right to the city, or the right to access to public space, by taking a closer look at the intersection between real film images and semi-documented semi-produced images. Similar to the activists' urge to document the square, the intellectuals' contribution is vitally needed.

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