



# **The Young Sing Back: On Protest Songs and the Rise of an Alternative National-Popular Consciousness in the Arab World**

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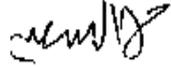
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## **Abstract**

The present study examines the dynamics of youth *artivism* -artistic activism- in selected countries of the Arab World as manifested in protest songs, produced by young singers and bands during the popular uprisings between 2010 and 2013. The study analyzes the stylistic, linguistic, and aesthetic features of protest songs, and their function as instruments employed to articulate collective defiance, grievances, and aspirations. The study, also, investigates the political engagement of young Arab protest singers in the homeland and diaspora, by analyzing their role as activist-artists in generating songs that represent an alternative national consciousness reflective of the popular masses. This national-popular consciousness is represented and documented in the protest songs accompanying the eruption of popular political contention. Central to this research is the assertion that the cultural phenomenon of Arab artivism is best understood within its social, political, and historical contexts. Presenting a critical discussion of neo-Marxist and post-Marxist approaches, the study is informed by Antonio Gramsci's concepts of 'hegemony' and 'national-popular' in an attempt to highlight the cultural paradigm of subversive artistic activism.

*Keywords:* protest songs, artivism, artistic activism, Arab youth, national-popular, national consciousness, Arab uprisings, political contention, movement culture, hegemony, nationalist ideology, collective action frames

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## Introduction

Why did the people in the Arab World wait for a street vendor to set himself on fire to start a revolution? Living in any country around the Arab World, we all know worse has happened. Yet, with all the horrors this question entails; is this all it really takes to end decades of autocracy in the region? Edward Walsh refers to such incidents as the suddenly imposed, and suddenly realized grievances (Walsh 1981, 2). They are the unexpected events that cause abrupt collective resentment, or reveal the serious weight of long-standing injustices. Such unexpected realizations or imposed injustices emphasize the significance of shared discontent in generating defiance. Hence, they stimulate social action, and precipitate civil disobedience. Along with rising poverty and unemployment rates, and the constant disregard for human rights and basic human dignity, police brutality and state corruption have been long-standing grievances in the Arab World. However, they were suddenly and undeniably manifested with the murder of Khalid Saeed, and the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi. In June 2010, the Egyptian police brutalized Khalid Saeed. The young Egyptian man was stopped on the street, to be beaten to death in his hometown, in Alexandria (Sika 2017, 41). In December 2010, Mohamed Bouazizi refused to pay the daily bribe to the police inspector, which often robbed him of his earnings for the day (Wright 2012, 15). The young Tunisian fruit peddler was beaten by the police, and his cart was confiscated. The next day, he stood on the street, poured gasoline on his body, and set himself on fire.

These incidents mark the “local tipping points,” piloting the explosion of protest and popular contention across the Arab region against economic deprivation, contempt of human dignity, and state corruption (Beinin and Vairel 2013, 22). Such violent incidents trigger a sudden realization of the weight of tolerated injustices, transforming the frustrating individual experiences into shared resentment. In turn, they trigger collective dissent against the repressive police and the autocratic regimes. The insight of tipping points triggering a volcano of existing grievances is more reflective of the Arab popular uprisings than Tilly and Tarrow’s view of these uprisings as a form of “radicalization” (Tilly and Tarrow 2015, 139). For Tilly and Tarrow, the starting point was “a low-level conflict between corrupt police and a street vendor” that radically escalated to reach national and transnational scales (Tilly and Tarrow 2015, 139). However, this view overlooks the impact of decades of police violence, repression, and corruption in various

Arab countries. So does the phrase “Arab Spring” appearing in 2005 to describe the rise of democratic calls for reform in Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, and Palestine, which resurfaced in 2011 to describe the Arab popular uprisings in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and Morocco, “as though these [Arab] societies were frozen in a long winter or slumber” (Beinin and Vairel 2013, 8). The strength and impact of the Arab popular uprisings have been surprisingly successful in toppling authoritarian regimes, and attaining democratic reforms. Nevertheless, the eruption of masses of demonstrators calling for civil rights did not come as a surprise, in light of the long-standing grievances against the regime’s security apparatuses and state corruption across the region.

It is important to note that the reason why Bouazizi set himself on fire was not entirely because he was harassed by the local police for the daily bribe, which he was used to paying. Bouazizi reached out to appeal his injustice at the local town hall, after the police inspector had attacked him and confiscated his produce. He, then, appealed to the governor’s office, and to the state officials, all while pushing his empty cart (Wright 2012, 16). It was after his official complaints had been rebuffed over and over again by the official authorities that he let the flames feed on his body. His vehement attempts to stay in course within formal *normal* politics failed. This includes resorting to the official authorities to implement the laws, and demanding constitutional rights via formal channels. The failure of normal politics is when certain groups in society are denied adequate representations, or even excluded from normal politics, and when the dominant group fails to maintain the established social and political order (Flacks 1997, 47).

Such failure has always been recognized by the ordinary Arab citizens, in their respective countries. Yet, when it is coupled with the humiliation, they become painfully overt. The awakening reality that nobody is safe from the arbitrary violence of the repressive security apparatuses was met with another awakening reality, which was the failure of these apparatuses to actually keep the country safe. Few months after Khalid Saeed’s murder by the Egyptian police in Alexandria, the same city witnessed the bombing of El-Qedeseen Church during the Christmas celebrations. This tragic incident rendered the failure of the security apparatus undeniably clear. What ignited the Arab popular protests in the late 2010 was not merely the self-immolation of a street vendor, or the young man being beaten to death by the police- despite how agonizing this may sound. What actually stimulated the preexisting volcano of collective resentment was the growing awareness of the constant degradation of human dignity by autocratic regimes, along with the growing awareness of their failure to improve the people’s living conditions.

The uprisings were not triggered by a ‘radically escalated’ low-level encounter between an ordinary citizen and the police, because such encounter has been on repeat for decades in their local contexts. Bouazizi’s self-sacrifice was not itself the trigger for the uprisings. It is the “emotional and moral identification” with such calamity that sparked uprisings in Tunisia, and the rest of the Arab world (Monshipouri 2016, 95). On the human level, it is the sudden realization that even an ordinary man trying to make a simple living, enduring his humiliation and poverty is not going to survive. On the moral level, it is the sudden awareness that every individual is a potential victim, hence is responsible to end the oppression. These incidents causing the suddenly realized and imposed grievances mobilize the deprived as well as the non-deprived groups in society (Walsh 1981, 2). They do not mobilize only the economically underprivileged or politically marginalized members of society. Rather, they disrupt the apathy of the non-deprived groups who may, otherwise, remain unengaged with the economic and political struggles of the ordinary masses.

It is, also, worth mentioning that Bouazizi’s self-immolation was not the first of its kind in Tunisia; it was the third public suicide to take place within just few weeks (LeVine and Reynolds 2016, 59). However, it was the first to be broadcasted when a photograph was captured by an anonymous witness showing Bouazizi standing as his body was caught in flames. When the unexpected incidents are “dramatic and highly publicized,” they become impossible to overlook (McAdam 2000, 257). With the social media channels in effect, there was no other place to look but at the video footage of Bouazizi’s mother demonstrating against the corruption that led her son to end up with third-degree burns covering ninety percent of his body. There was no other place to look but at the photo - postmortem- of Khalid Saeed’s mutilated face, left unrecognizable even to his close friends and family. The dramatic and highly publicized incidents politicize personal grievances, and generate popular mobilization against what was once tolerated and endured.

The grievances, the growing resentment, and the rejection of the oppressive conditions were channeled through popular uprisings and acts of protest sweeping over the Arab world, towards a popular movement that successfully crossed borders. When normal politics fail, ordinary citizens resort to forms of *popular* contentious politics. This involves citizen interaction with governments and official authorities, through public performances and coordinated collective action that claim shared interests and demands against those of the power holders (Tilly and Tarrow 2015, 7). Popular contention becomes political when governments and regimes are the target, “either dealing with them directly or engaging in

activities bearing on governmental rights, regulations, and interests” (Tilly and Tarrow 2015, 8). Through public expressions of defiance and civil disobedience, ordinary citizens challenge the regime’s interests in public space, mobilizing protest and building movements, as forms of popular politics. They engage in a continuous and sustained challenge against powerholders, by means of repeated public displays of “worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment,” which are the foundations of popular social movements (Tilly 1999, 257). The repeated public expressions of dissidence are manifested in the engagement with authorities, and occupation of public spaces through sit-ins, demonstrations, as well as adopting slogans, and articulations of support for shared demands (Tilly 1999, 260).

The suddenly imposed and realized grievances, and their publicization, along with the preexisting presence of national anti-state standings crystalized discontent, and launched a ripple of protest movements that spread around the Arab world. The collective grievances and resentment at the repressive police and the corrupt regimes were translated into public protests and demonstrations in major cities of the Arab world against the failure of the established political system. Ordinary citizens of the Arab world occupied public spaces in their respective countries, and expressed shared demands for human dignity and freedom. They were unified under one slogan that crossed borders, “The People Want the Downfall of the Regime!”

Moreover, while Bouazizi’s self-sacrifice stimulated grievances and frustrations leading to collective dissent, the collapse of Ben Ali’s regime gave this collective dissent an actual window of opportunity for political change. The video footage of the Tunisian protestor walking the streets at dawn, crying “*Ben Ali Harab!*” (Ben Ali Escaped!) signaled an unforeseeable political opportunity for transformation in the repressive context of the Middle East. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of January 2011, ten days after Bouazizi passed away in his hospital bed, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali fled Tunisia. On the same day, the first call for protest in Egypt was announced through *Kullena Khalid Saeed*- the Facebook page launched the year before to commemorate the brutal murder of Khalid Saeed by the local police. As Egyptians marched the streets on January 25<sup>th</sup> to protest against police brutality, and to demand social justice and human dignity, a movement started to mature in Sudan, erupting in universities on January 30<sup>th</sup> demanding regime changes. As Hosni Mubarak stepped down on February 11<sup>th</sup>, the Libyan people prepared to march against Muammar Gaddafi’s regime on February 15<sup>th</sup>. Meanwhile, the Moroccan youth mobilized for the February 20 Movement calling for democratic changes to the established monarchy. Whereas

Bouazizi's death triggered preexisting resentment, Ben Ali's escape presented an unexpected political stimulus for waves of contention in the rest of the Arab world. Ben Ali's flight highlighted the vulnerability of the Arab autocratic regimes and the failure of their established system.

The decision of the people to step outside conventional political activities towards popular politics is in itself a subversive form of politics. Popular protest activities, such as street marches, demonstrations, sit-ins, and other manifestations of popular collective dissidence, pose a "symbolic challenge" to the dominant order since they exist outside normal politics, hence highlighting their failure (Reed 2005, 307). However, the dominant groups may choose to ignore the symbolic challenge, "pretend that they did not hear it or see it" (Scott 1990, 205). Portraying the activists as "deranged" and morally unstable undermines the significance of the symbolic challenges to the political power (205). This was manifested during the Arab popular uprisings when the autocratic regimes portrayed activists and demonstrators as anti-nationalists, traitors, and terrorists, as Ben Ali stated in his speech, December 2010 (Wright 2015, 18). Their symbolic challenges were depicted as child-play, which was the case in Egypt December 2010. During the opening session of the Egyptian parliament dominated by the ruling party, Hosni Mubarak stated, "let them have fun," upon being asked about the opposition's effort to rally for a 'parallel' parliament (Abdel Hafiz 2015). The same disregard for the significance of popular political activity was seen during Omar al Bashir's address to the Sudanese armed forces in February 2011, when he responded to the opposition's demand for a democratic government and peaceful transition of power, stating "if they have people, let them bring down whatever they want" (Bashir 2011).

In addition to belittling the effort of the people in the movement, the response of the authoritarian Arab regimes included extreme violence and brutality against activists and protestors. During the first wave of the Egyptian uprising in January 2011, the police security forces attacked and killed hundreds of protestors in four days, before they abandoned the streets for the army to take over (Burns 2018, 115). The Sudanese uprising witnessed a series of arbitrary arrests, and violent assaults, as peaceful protestors were beaten by the police forces in the streets and in university campuses (Branch and Mampilly 2015, 409-410). The eruption of the Libyan uprising in February 2011 was met with -not just the violence of the police forces- but also the snipers and heavy fires of the military commandoes (Burns 2018, 173). The violence was accompanied by official media discourses and statements legitimizing the use of force against the protestors in order to

assert the national legitimacy of the regime in power, hinder the development of the uprisings, and dissolve opposition (Sika 2017, 11).

To express grievances, offer overt criticism, and make direct demands against the dominant ‘normal’ order is to engage in protest activities, even when no political goals are attained. Popular protest activities form and erupt outside the official political institutions. They take place in the street, where “previously inarticulate actors find voice and public visibility,” by alternative means of expressions (Flacks 1994, 339). Therefore, the expression of grievances outside conventional politics does not only contest and question the legitimacy of the power bloc and its ‘normal’ politics; but also allow the possibility to review the wider culture in society (Reed 2005, 296). The result of sustained confrontations with authorities, the continuous questioning of state’s national discourse, and the construction of alternative ideas and meanings during protest activities evolve as the *movement culture*; a culture with its own distinct ideas and forms, as well as artistic and cultural elements (Reed 2005, 297).

The movement culture accompanies protest and political contention in order to develop new meanings, representations, identities, and national consciousness, which are constructed and articulated by activists during popular political contention. Whereas grievances preexist the movement, the movement culture is actively generated, and constantly updated to mobilize, organize, and sustain collective action. The movement culture- the cultural practices and productions accompanying the movement- reshapes the broader cultural context, and restructures the society’s normal politics. It is as Doug McAdam argues,

Not only will the movement bear the imprint of the broader cultural context(s) in which it is embedded but insurgents are also likely to develop a distinctive movement culture capable of reshaping the broader cultural contours of mainstream society (McAdam 2000, 260).

In other words, the cultural impact of popular political contention is seen in the diffusion of the movement culture and its elements into the society’s mainstream culture, whether during the development of the movement, or after protest activities subside.

This in turn reforms and/or transforms the wider culture. ‘Reform’ takes place when the emerging movement is reformative of existing social order, while ‘transformation’ happens when the emerging movement is a revolutionary movement that topples the existing system and constructs an alternative. Thus, the aftermath of the revolutionary

movement and its protest activity will be a new ‘normalcy,’ a culture that allows activists and participants to enjoy “the freer space that their protest have helped open” (Flacks 1997, 51). The outcome is a new ‘normal’ that is inclusive and representative of previously marginalized identities and consciousness. Even when popular uprisings seemingly fail to provide substantial influence on policies and state decisions, they irrevocably influence the representation and consciousness of the marginalized groups, as well as the entirety of society through the diffusion of movement culture into mainstream culture.

Although protest activities as part of the collective political contention emerge to achieve political or economic outcomes, the most significant impact of political contention is usually “more cultural than narrowly political or economic” (McAdam 2000, 263). This can be due to the vehemently strong opposition in the political and economic arenas, but also because of the irrevocable ideological and cultural liberation attained through the diffusion of the movement culture. This irrevocable liberation is key to the present research. This research will not study everyday forms of resistance, rather focuses on forms of protest at a given instance of collective political dissidence. Despite being crucial to the advancement of political contention and the rise of popular movements, politically and socially disguised forms of resistance are not central to this present research<sup>1</sup>. Rather, this research focuses on the acts leading to irrevocable liberation;

An insult spoken behind the scenes or, for that matter, an insult that is thinly disguised is not irrevocable. But a direct, blatant insult delivered before an audience is, in effect, a dare. If it is not beaten back, it will fundamentally alter those relations [of subordination]. Even if it is beaten back and driven underground, something irrevocable has nonetheless occurred...In a curious way something that everyone knows at some level has only a shadowy existence until that moment when it steps boldly onto the stage.  
(Scott 1990, 215)

The present research argues that these blatant insults during moments of bold confrontations with authorities are articulated through movement culture. The movement culture poses an ideological challenge to the established order since it protests and contests the dominant meanings, representations, and consciousness, while offering alternatives that represent the people in the movement, and reflect their national consciousness. This is the

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<sup>1</sup> Examples include James Scott’s ‘weapons of the weak’ (1985), and his view of infrapolitics (1990), and Asef Bayat’s (2013) conception of the quiet encroachment of ordinary people.

point from which this research embarks. The research explores the emergence of *artivism* -artistic activism- and the creative intervention of young Arabs in the production and popularization of the movement culture, during the Arab uprising.

*Artivism*<sup>2</sup> marks the interaction between artistic productions and political and social activism. Artivism is the “hybrid neologism” that demonstrates the artists’ realization and utilization of the “organic relationship between art and activism” (Sandoval and Latorre 2008, 82). Artivism demonstrates the attempts of the artists to act as “synthesizers as well as catalysts,” hence becoming creators of authentic art and enticers of collective social action (Lippard 1984, 342). It is important to note that artivism is not a genre or a form, but “an engagement in social issues and social change” by utilizing different art forms, through various mediums (Sheikh 2009). Artivism is not limited to a particular style, nor to traditional media of expression (Lippard 1984, 342). It incorporates various styles, aesthetics, and media, in addition to generating new platforms of expression. Artivism is channeled through alternative platforms, “outside the museums and art academies, moving towards urban and social spaces” (Aladro-Vico et. al 2018, 9). The public space is where artivism is launched and performed by professional artists or otherwise (Korpe 2013, 20). Producing and engaging with activist art is, therefore, not exclusive to professional artists. Therefore, *artivists*<sup>3</sup> are the activist-artists driven by the obligation to “challenge, confront, and resist” injustices in their artistic expressions, by any medium necessary (Asante 2008, 206).

Youth artivism leading to and/or accompanying the eruption of mass protests, during the Arab popular uprisings resisted barricading the voice of the ordinary masses, and their severe marginalization by autocratic regimes. Arab youth artivism introduced subversive forms and media through which the deinstitutionalized people gain agency and visibility against the authorities’ confiscation of public spheres, restriction of political expression, and monopoly of political discourse formation and dissemination. With the culmination of defiance leading to the eruption of the Arab uprisings, popular forms of artistic activism rapidly flourished. These forms of artistic expression encompassed the collective voices of the majority of marginalized Arabs, especially young people, and proved to be one of the most intrusive and resilient forms of protest.

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<sup>2</sup> In the course of this research, ‘*artivism*’ and ‘artistic activism’ are used interchangeably.

<sup>3</sup> In the course of this research, ‘*artist*’ and ‘activist-artist’ are used interchangeably.

Movement culture is expressed, documented, and diffused into the wider culture through cultural texts and “aesthetic-cultural artifacts” deployed during the movement (Reed 2005, 296). This includes songs, poems, graffiti, murals, and other forms of artistic expressions. However, this research focuses only on songs as an example of the “aesthetic-cultural artifact” deployed during popular uprisings in the Arab world. These songs, produced and disseminated in specific socio-historical moments of political contention, contest the regimes’ cultural and ideological hegemony, and articulate popular dissent and collective grievances. In his investigation of the use of music in social movements, T. V. Reed writes:

Music becomes more deeply ingrained in memory than mere talk, and this quality made it a powerful organizing tool. It is one thing to hear a political speech and remember an idea or two. It is quite another to sing a song and have its politically charged verses become emblazoned on your memory (Reed 2005, 28).

Reed, thus, asserts the power of the song in the mobilization for political transformation. The same argument is echoed by Anastasia Valassopoulos and Dalia S. Mostafa who assert, “music is a continuously evolving space where singers and poets articulate, critique, and voice their perceptions, artistically and creatively, of the changes taking place in a transforming society” (Valassopoulos and Mostafa 2014, 639). During the Arab popular uprisings, the choice to employ songs to communicate dissent, grievances and national consciousness reveal that the protest movement is neither violent, nor destructive. Instead, the contestation of hegemony became a singing movement, and a stage for popular protest songs.

The research tackles protest songs, as a form of activism and an element of movement culture, in order to show how they have gone through a strong resurgence in the Arab world with the powerful eruption of youth artistic activism. A huge corpus of politically charged protest songs was produced, consumed and propagated through social media, live shows, and independent low-scale productions. The use of protest songs as means of artistic activism is not particular to the recent waves of protest in the Arab world. The protest songs investigated in this research are shown as a continuation of a legacy of protest songs accompanying popular movements, whether in the Arab world or in Western countries. The popular national songs produced by Sayyed Darwish and Badie’ Khairy under the British Occupation in Egypt, and Rai songs produced accompanying uprisings

against the Algerian regime in the 1970s are both examples of Arab activism. Similarly, the use of rock songs in the USA to express and diffuse anti-war ideologies, and a national consciousness opposing the military intervention in Vietnam are another example.

## **Research Questions**

The overarching question tackled in this thesis is how young Arab protest singers voice the people's grievances, defiance and political demands, while laying the foundation for counterhegemonic national consciousness that is representative of the dissenting masses. To address this question, the following series of questions are considered:

- I. What is the political context of cultural hegemony in which Arab youth activism emerges?
- II. How do independent protest singers interact with society as 'popular intellectuals'? What are the platforms they made available?
- III. In what way does 'the national' of the people collide with the 'national' of the regime? How does the regime respond to the rising counter national discourse?
- IV. How do young protest singers negotiate the 'national' and the 'popular' in their artistic activism?
- V. What can be the possible defining features of this 'national-popular' consciousness?

Through the analysis of Arab youth activism, as manifested in protest songs, the study argues that young protest singers are active social agents capable of constructing and voicing a rising consciousness that is both national and popular. Through subversive forms of artistic activism, the young activist-artists employ their protest songs to communicate the rising movement culture, through which they articulate and document the grievances and national demands of the ordinary people.

## **Limitations of the Study**

The present study traces the young Arab voices of protest and defiance during the waves of popular contention in the period between 2010 and 2013, in selected countries of the Arab world. While some waves of popular contention continued and/or erupted after 2013, the research is only limited to the period with heightened contention and heavy

production of activism, between 2010 and 2013. Although multiple Arab countries witnessed mass protests and popular uprisings during the selected time period, the research focuses on protest songs accompanying popular uprisings in Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, Egypt, and Sudan, while activism in countries such as Bahrain, Yemen, Syria, Palestine, and Saudi Arabia are not studied in this research.

Moreover, the corpus of songs produced by Arab youth in the selected time frame is huge. Therefore, the present research focuses on songs that articulate direct demands, and/or overt criticism, investigating the role of activist-artists who contribute in the political rapport of activism. The selected activist-artists elaborate in their songs a response to regimes' discourses during key political events in their respective countries. Although the songs studied vary in their genre and stylistic features, they share certain thematic content, which will serve to highlight the various modes and features of activism and the movement culture. In addition, the selected artists have been resiliently active, as manifested in their artistic intervention and their social and political presence. Therefore, the choice of bands and singers is guided by their direct involvement in the cultural phenomenon of activism and its political dynamics.

It is important to note that the selected protest songs discussed in this study were retrieved from online social media platforms, such as YouTube and Facebook. As for the songs performed on the public street, video footages of the street performances were filmed during protests, and published on social media channels by anonymous users, or by the artists themselves. Most of the protest songs selected for this study are originally composed and performed in variations of the Arabic language, in local vernacular dialects, or in standardized Arabic. They are translated into English by the author, unless otherwise indicated.

## **Tentative Chapterization**

In this thesis, chapter one discusses artistic activism as a defiant gesture against hegemony, examining the distinctive features of *activism*, in order to distinguish between activist art and political art. In addition, this chapter offers a theoretical framework that investigates Antonio Gramsci's notion of hegemony, the ideological state apparatuses, and national-popular consciousness. The first chapter reviews the location of culture under hegemony, with observations on cultural practices that challenge constituted political

power. Finally, the chapter studies the relationship between activism and the dislocation of hegemony.

Chapter two focuses the discussion on the activist-artists, *artivists*, their contribution in political contestation of power, and their social and artistic responsibilities. This chapter reviews concepts of the ‘organic intellectual’, the ‘traditional intellectual’, and the ‘popular intellectual’, in order to examine the tripartite relationship between the artist, the people, and the power holders. In addition, this chapter investigates the aforementioned concepts in light of the Arab reality, and the contribution of activist-artists under hostile conditions. This chapter sheds light on the experiences of Arab *artivists* in the homeland and diaspora, while presenting a critical discussion of the role of social media platforms in youth political mobilization and artistic activism.

Chapter three studies the features of the movement culture accompanying the waves of contention in the Arab world, as presented in the protest songs. This chapter studies how protest singers participate in micro-mobilization for protest activities, in light of the seminal works of David Snow and Robert Benford on framing processes, employed by activists during popular movements. Through studying the use of collective action frames in the context of the Arab uprisings, the research explores the subversive function of protest songs and the role of the *artivists* in contesting power by subverting the regime’s discourse and representations. This chapter reviews the repertoire of forms and genres, as well as themes loaded in the protest songs. In addition, this chapter studies how protest singers articulate the rising counter national consciousness, in their respective countries, and how the features of the movement culture manifested in the protest songs reflect the defining features of the national-popular consciousness. Finally, this chapter analyzes protest songs as creative documentation of the national demands and interests of the people.

# Chapter One

## The National-Popular, and the Location of Power: Theoretical Framework

Creative forms of protest present a synergy between art and activism. The result is *artivism*, which is the “activist-artistic interventions” that reveal the collaboration of artistic creativity with activist engagement (Milohnić 2015, 35). Artivism is “a form of social choreography in public space,” through which artistic expressions are launched during “temporary or permanent unions” to agitate the public, and produce dissonance (Korpe 2013, 20). Artivism is the cooperation between art and activism to generate “socially cognizant art” that raises awareness, exposes injustices, and contributes to transforming realities (Asante 2008, 207). This research defines ‘artivism’ as the generation of artistic productions for the purpose of articulating dissent, voicing protest, and mobilizing collective action towards social and political transformation. Artivism is, also, defined in this study as the conscious creation and dissemination of activist art that functions as platform for social and political engagement. Artivism, hence, is the artistic performance of activism, and the creative expression of political protest. Therefore, during popular uprisings and political contention, artivism is both an act and tool of defiance against power holders and oppressors. In itself, the decision of the marginalized to resort to artistic activism against oppression is a statement of defiance against cultural and political authorities. When loaded with political demands and criticism to accompany waves of popular political contention, artistic activism is, also, a subversive tool against hegemony. In order to interpret artivism and the production of activist art as anti-hegemonic cultural practices, *hegemony* as a concept has to be defined in respect to cultural power.

### I. Hegemony and *Spontaneous Consent*

In his *Prison Notebooks*, Antonio Gramsci argues that the authority of one group in society is exercised through two modes. The first is domination using coercive power to legally enforce discipline and “liquidate or subjugate antagonistic groups” (Gramsci 1992, 57). The second is hegemony which is manifested when the supremacy of one group in society is achieved through “intellectual and moral leadership” (57). Hegemony is presented in society through the effort of the power bloc to direct the masses and shape their ideologies for the purpose of social control. Hence, the hegemonic system extends its

control to reach “the spheres where the meanings and motives of behavior are constituted” (Melucci 2003, 92). In other words, hegemony does not explicitly curb dissenting collective action; rather, inhibits the development of ideas and collective consciousness leading to collective action. Instead of restraining protest activities, hegemony restrains the legitimacy of the motives that may potentially entice protest. This is achieved by normalizing the hegemonic ideologies and viewpoints, and their perpetual dissemination in society “with a stamp of legitimacy” (Hall 2001, 516). In turn, these hegemonic viewpoints are rendered “natural, inevitable, taken for granted” (516). This normalization is the basis of the hegemonic ‘intellectual’ leadership, by which ideologies, worldviews, and interests of the power bloc are legitimate, universal, and unsusceptible to opposition. Instead of coercion, a regime maintains itself “through its ability to shape our worldview,” and through its effort to dominate the cultural side of political consciousness as represented in ideologies and discourses disseminated in society (Gamson 1997, 496).

It is important to note that Gramsci’s ideological and cultural hegemony is established on basis of the masses’ *spontaneous* consensus, rather than their coercion or violent oppression. In that sense, spontaneous denotes being *unchallenged*. Gramsci defines hegemony as “the spontaneous consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group” (Gramsci 1992, 12). Therefore, hegemony is maintained when the custody of the dominant group- over political consciousness, national interests, and worldview- is accepted, as a result of being undisputed. When the disadvantaged group fails to contest the dominant ideologies, or challenge the ruling ideas and interests, they become ‘common sense’ ideas and practices; hence, hegemony is constructed and maintained. When dominant ideologies and discourses are undisputed, the political consciousness of disadvantaged groups becomes neutralized, leading to quiescence, portrayed as consensus.

Hegemony is exercised, established, and maintained by cultural and social institutions that “shape, directly or indirectly, the cognitive and affective structures whereby the people perceive and evaluate problematic social reality” (Femia 1981, 24). The result is social control, not through dominance and coercion, but through sustained ideological leadership. Through this ideological predominance, personal motives, cognitive structures, and convictions are organized and guided to correspond with the hegemonic definitions and interpretations (24). Therefore, hegemony is channeled into society through cultural practices and artistic productions that voice and disseminate the set of ruling ideologies and discourses in society. In other words, hegemonic power holders manipulate

their ideologies into “aesthetic systems, multimedia artistic environments,” through which their political content establish loyalties or conflict, and entice the people to act or to remain quiescent (Sartwell 2010, 1-2).

Thus, a dominant group assumes its dominance in society by exercising its intellectual leadership, and in turn, launching cultural and artistic productions that voice and propagate its ideologies and discourses, as well as its interpretations of social conditions and political interests. Accordingly, subordination becomes the result of failing to exercise the intellectual leadership and moral direction required to create cultural productions that voice counter discourses and challenge the hegemony. The total integration of these general interests and ideologies is, hence, achieved when the hegemonic system imposes cultural exclusion and ideological marginalization on the subordinate groups, in order to prevent them from affecting any power dynamic. As a result, the potential of subordinate groups to construct self-serving ideologies and self-reflective discourses, and hence voice their interests and demands is disrupted. This has been the quintessential argument made by Marx and Engels, stating that the groups lacking the means for intellectual and mental productions are subject to the intellectual forces producing the ruling ideas, expressing the interests of the dominant group, and sustaining its dominance (Marx and Engles 1998, 67).

That does not entail that the marginalized groups seize to become aware of their disenfranchisement. The marginalized masses recognize, in the larger term, the power of cultural domination in reshaping, reconstructing and re-presenting their realities, while acknowledging that a certain worldview is imposed on them through repetition and selection (Hall 2005, 67). However, the ordinary masses fail to end their suffering even when they recognize it, for lacking the means and methods needed to dispute and contest the hegemonic ideologies. They even sometimes lack the perception that any transformation is possible, which is the point Dominic Strinati highlights,

Consent to a prevailing social order does not necessarily arise because people are indoctrinated or forced to acquiesce, nor because they spontaneously consent to, or believe in, a dominant ideology. People can accept the prevailing order because they are necessarily compelled to do so by the need to make a living; or because they cannot conceive of another way of organizing society and fatalistically accept things as they are. (Strinati 2005, 161)

That is why hegemony is not maintained by the complete elimination of opposition, but rather by incorporating and dissolving oppositional ideologies and discourses “into the political affiliations of the hegemonic group” (Turner 2005, 178). When hegemony is disputed, the hegemonic power bloc utilizes its cultural and artistic apparatuses responsible for restructuring the ruling ideology and discourse, in order to sustain hegemonic control.

## **II. Hegemony and the Ideological State Apparatuses**

Whereas domination is the direct command exercised by the coercive power of the repressive apparatuses, including the army, the police, and security forces, hegemony is exercised at the hand of cultural and social institutions, and their members, as “deputies” of the dominant power bloc (Gramsci 1992, 12). In his discussion of the apparatuses exercising hegemony, Louis Althusser categorizes religious, educational, communication, and cultural institutions as *ideological state apparatuses* (Althusser 2012, 110-111). Of direct relevance to this study are the communication and cultural state apparatuses, which include the press, radio, television, literature, and various art forms such as cinema, songs, and performative art.

It is noteworthy to add that media, cultural, and artistic apparatuses are not always hijacked by the ruling factions, “or simply taken over by them” (Poulantzas 2008, 14). The members of the media and cultural state apparatuses align their political directives with that of the hegemonic state. Both independent and official cultural institutions and their members may or may not be ideological state apparatuses. Independent writers, TV and Radio personalities, journalists, or artists may associate themselves ideologically with the interests of the hegemonic regime. They may produce cultural and artistic productions that voice and popularize the ideologies and discourses of the power bloc, in order to sustain it against popular contention. Whether they are legally ‘independent’ or legally associated with official cultural and media institutions, their ideological association with the hegemonic power bloc- at a specific moment in history- aligns them with the ideological state apparatuses. At the same time, official public newspapers and cultural institutions are not *de facto* ideological state apparatuses, just for being owned and regulated by the government, or controlled by power blocs of different agendas- capitalist, religious, military, or others. They become part of the ideological state apparatuses, first, when they actively assume the social and political position of being *deputies* of the dominant power bloc; second, when their significance in society becomes to serve and protect the interests

of that power bloc against rising popular demands; and third, when they actively engage socially and politically to reproduce submission, and exclusion of the people's interests during times of popular contention.

The determining factor is not their legal association, rather their ideological association and social significance during moments of popular contentions. This point highlights the essentiality of sociohistorical context. It is when the people struggle to overthrow their injustices, demanding political and social transformation, that the position and significance of the cultural and intellectual institutions reach a crossroad. It is because these institutions along with the state are the primary mechanism developed to be "perceived as an embodiment of public will" (Emadi 2001, 3). They either embody the will of the people, thus initiating "dual power" by voicing the interest of the disadvantaged masses, to actively engage in affecting a shift in power dynamics (Glick *Encyclopedia*). Otherwise, they choose to impose the ideologies and interests of the hegemonic power bloc on the disenfranchised members of society.

The ideological state apparatuses reproduce the conditions of submission to the dominant ideology, through manipulating and reformulating the ruling ideology (Althusser 2012, 104). This is done by formulating and reformulating the "particular interests" of the hegemonic group as the "general interests" of society, hence rendering the hegemonic ideology unsusceptible to dispute (Scott 1985, 337). In other words, ideological hegemony is sustained through the "systematic...engineering of mass consent to the established order" (Gitlin 1980, 253). The hegemonic group, therefore, maintains its cultural leadership by engaging in "negotiations with the opposing groups, classes, and values" (Turner 2005, 178). This constant state of negotiation and restructuring sustains hegemony, while actively dissolving opposition. Such incorporation and dissolution address Gramsci's question to why resistance fails to achieve transformation in social and political conditions, and assert that hegemony is adaptable and withstanding against resistance. This becomes critical when the ruling ideology being negotiated and incorporated pertains to the national consciousnesses of the people, directed to sustain a façade of social and political stability under autocratic regimes.

### **III. From the State-National to the National-Popular**

The ideology of nationalism is the most capable ideology to express a narrative that reconciles politics and culture, under the "democratic expression - 'we the nation'"

(Malešević 2006, 309). Since the sovereignty of the nation is derived from that of the people, the 'nation' and the 'people' are supposed to be linguistically *and* ideologically "synonymous or nearly so" (Gramsci 2012, 208). However, when the cultural and artistic productions representing the nation "[do] not in any case coincide with 'popular'," the meaning of the term 'national' becomes ideologically restricted (208). As a result, the ideology of nationalism aligns with the interests, worldviews, and representations of the state, the ruling elites, and the ideological state apparatuses. This is particularly true in the absence of overt political challenge, when nationalism as an ideology is "banal, routine, almost invisible" (Billig 1995, 15). By being banal, the ideology of nationalism is undisputed and uncontested. These interrelated meanings of the 'nation' as the state, and the 'nation' as the 'people' living in the state "reflects the general ideology of nationalism" (24). When the ideology of nationalism is reflective of the state-national, while excluding the national consciousness, representations, and interests of the people, it becomes a hegemonic tool that should be disputed politically and culturally.

Nationalism is among the dominant ideologies that the ideological state apparatuses advertise and safeguard in order to sustain hegemony. It is manipulated and reformulated in order to propagate the particular national interests of the state, as the general interests of the masses, "by which a part claims to speak for the whole nation and to represent the national essence" (Billig 1995, 27). When the ideological state apparatuses manipulate and popularize national consciousness and interests as defined by the authoritarian regime, the artistic and cultural productions act as nationalist/fascist propaganda machines. They serve the legitimacy and resilience of the hegemonic state, since the essential source of state legitimacy is the national ideology (Malešević 2006, 307). Media, cultural, and artistic state apparatuses manipulate the national ideology, in order to maintain the existing dominance/submission dialectics, under the pretense of "providing national cohesion" (Glick *Encyclopedia*).

During contestation of hegemony, a political challenge is presented to the existing ideology of nationalism. The passive consensus to the hegemonic truths pertaining to nationalist loyalties and attachments is deconstructed, as alternative 'truths' become actively constructed. In the meanwhile, the cultural and intellectual state apparatuses offer compromises to pacify the rising contention, and absorb dissent, without threatening the legitimacy of the regime or compromising its interests. Even when they include "genuine accommodation," these compromises and negotiations are not intended to be part of any transformation or reformation processes (Turner 2005, 178). Instead, they are rather part of

an adaptation process “to avoid more radical changes in the future,” and to sustain authoritative power (Stacher 2012, 21). As a result, the banal nationalism stands in contrast with the “fiercely expressed nationalism” by the active agents struggling to form a new ‘nation’ (Billig 1995, 16). When the hegemony of the state is contested during social movements and popular political contention, “the triumph of a particular nationalism is seldom achieved without the defeat of alternative nationalisms” (28). This was witnessed during waves of political contention accompanying the Arab uprisings in the turn of 2010, with “the evaporation of *haibat al-dawla* (awe of the state)” and the generation of “*haibat al-sha’b* (awe of the people)” (Tripp 2014, 136).

According to Gramsci, in order to achieve the revolutionary transformation in society, the marginalized masses must engage in a cultural battle, to dismantle hegemony, and to elaborate a ‘national-popular collective will’ (Coutinho 2012, 72). Like ‘hegemony,’ Gramsci’s concept of the ‘national-popular’ has cultural and political dimensions. In the cultural field, the concept of the national-popular describes the representation of the people, their worldview, interests, and demands within the artistic and cultural representations of the nation. The national-popular consciousness can only be constructed when intellectuals and artists represent the people, not just the state and the ruling elite (Gramsci 2012, 198). The political implementation of the national-popular is realized in the exercise of collective will, by establishing *active* consent among the masses, as opposed to the passive consent securing the hegemonic power bloc (Gramsci 2012, 196). The political implications of the national-popular collective will is manifested in the people’s movements and collective action towards demanding and attaining their interests and goals. The formation of a “national-popular collective will” is impossible unless the marginalized masses recognize their collective struggles, align their interests, then “burst *simultaneously* into political life” (Gramsci 1992, 132). Therefore, the political participation in collective action is preceded by the united inclusion in the cultural battle for a national-popular consciousness, manifested in the shared demands and interests, and the recognition of the collective struggle.

Gramsci’s concept of the national-popular does not designate cultural content, or specify the features of a national-popular culture, rather explains the “the social preconditions of its formation” (Forgacs 2001, 217). The formation of the national-popular consciousness reveals the “emancipation of the masses from the trappings of common sense by making them the real actors of history” (Gupta 1988, 1621). The state-national representations of nationalism and the national consciousness are deconstructed, when the

disenfranchised masses engage in collective dissent, and collective construction of their authentic national consciousness. The national-popular is the construction and collective identification with a unified narrative that includes in its representation the conditions of the marginalized and the ordinary people (Holub 2005, 67). The cultural and political facets of the national-popular describe “an alliance of interests and feelings” of the different social and political forces in the nation, with strong organic links to the popular masses (Forgacs 2001, 217).

The alliance of the diverse political forces among the masses is manifested in popular political contention and collective actions, marking the collective outburst of the disenfranchised masses into the popular politics. Social movements are the extraordinary moments that bring forward outbursts of nationalist passion, and support the rise of alternative national identity and national consciousness (Billig 1995, 44). The rise of political contention and the emergence of social movements account for “a transformation of consciousness within a significant segment of the aggrieved population” (McAdam 1997, 184). Hence, a national-popular consciousness is represented, articulated, and documented in the cultural and artistic productions that accompany the eruption of popular movements and collective action. In that sense, the national-popular consciousness becomes counter-hegemonic against the state-national consciousness. In addition, the artistic and cultural productions accompanying the eruption of people’s collective action are intrusive and subversive of the state-national metanarrative. They construct the alternative narrative in which the people’s national discontents, grievances, and demands are articulated and documented.

#### **IV. The (Dis)Location of Power**

Any attempt to deconstruct hegemony “presupposes the formation of a new set of standards, a new psychology, new ways of feeling, thinking and living” directly relevant to the social actors, producing them. This is what Gramsci defines as “total revolution” (Gramsci 2012, 41). Thus, deconstructing hegemony is not the mere overthrow of the resilient hegemonic power bloc, and its adaptable ideological apparatuses. It is rather the process of dislocating cultural power. Acts of resistance against hegemony start with “winning intellectual power” in order to establish authentic cultural productions, specific to the people’s living conditions, and reflective of “their own conception of the world” (Gramsci 2012, 41). This echoes John Storey’s definitions of popular culture. He explains

that popular culture can be viewed as culture that originates from and for the people, and as the interactive terrain that hosts the struggle between the efforts of the disadvantaged people to resist hegemony, and the dissolution of this resistance to sustain the interests of the hegemonic power bloc (Storey 2009, 9-10). Therefore, in order to move towards a total revolution, first, the power bloc's hegemony should be contested through an alternative culture that is relevant to the people, through which the disadvantaged groups in society can represent and organize themselves. When the people engage in political contention to end their oppression under hegemony, and during their direct interaction with power holders, such authentic cultural and artistic productions articulate the people's political demands and interests, and mobilize the collective action of the disadvantaged groups in society. The popular forms of artistic and cultural expressions perform an activist function, by disputing the hegemonic representations in the dominant culture, "which serves very few of us while affecting all of us" (Lippard 1986, 342).

The location of power, hence, lies within the guarded borders of the cultural center, where ideologies and discourses are produced and propagated through intellectual and cultural practices. The cultural center here is best described in relevance to the dual tradition of culture informed by Ann Swidler and her view of culture as a form of power. It is the assembly of the Weberian culture as "ideas developed and promoted by self-interested actors" seeking to legitimize demands, and to shape and influence collective social action (Swidler 2004, 25); with Durkheim's culture as "collective representations" that concretize collective consciousness through its shared public displays (26). In other words, the cultural center is where actors promote ideas and worldviews that shape, legitimize, and mobilize collective action to attain interests. In addition, it is where collective representations are generated through public performance of collective consciousness. The collective consciousness is shaped by the rapport between what individuals understand and believe, and what the dominant cultural system and ideologies represent (Gamson 1997, 495). Hence, the people's collective national consciousness is constructed when the hegemonic state-national interests and discourses are contested, as the popular-national consciousness voices the national discourse, demands, and interests of the people. The collective consciousness is concretized in collective representations, and public displays of ideologies and discourses within the overall cultural system. Popular collective action, the occupation of public space, demonstrations, marches, and even the utilization of distinctive slogans are the repeated and shared public displays of alternative national consciousness, political values, and culture (Tilly 1999, 260).

When hegemonic power bloc controls the cultural center, culture- as *ideas*- is developed and promoted to legitimate the interests of the dominant group and justify its actions. Meanwhile, this hegemonic control over the cultural center constrain the marginalized groups' effort to promote their worldview, thus their ability to legitimate their interests, and to justify their collective action. Power holders dominate "ways of making the world meaningful" and hence articulate and circulate their ideas and meanings as "hegemonic truths" that assume authority over the "the ways in which we see, think, communicate and act in the world" (Storey 2009, 87). During contestation of hegemony, the cultural center becomes the terrain for contesting such hegemonic truths, meanings, and ideas. The cultural center is where the marginalized groups are able to generate and disseminate dissident ideas that legitimate their interests and mobilize for action. The cultural center becomes the arena where official institutions are bypassed, dominant ideas are disputed, and their legitimacy is questioned. Often times, when hegemony is contested, dominant ideas will be subverted to prepare for the rise of people's ideas as manifested in popular forms of culture.

In addition, the cultural center under the control of hegemonic power bloc generates culture, in the form of collective *representations*, that display false consciousness that does not represent the marginalized groups, on which it is imposed. Meanwhile, the marginalized groups are denied the means to constitute collective self-representations, and to publicly display authentic collective consciousness. However, during moments when hegemony is contested, the cultural center is used by the masses to produce and sustain self-defining representations that reflect self-serving collective consciousness. The cultural center, then, marks the public performance of consciousness, and the translation of shared ideologies and discourses into collective action. Hence, culture is "a form of power", and cultural practices are the "enactments of power" (Swidler 2004, 30). The cultural center becomes the arena where hegemony is disputed and power is contested/asserted. The struggle over power, hence, becomes a struggle over culture and the production of its enactments; i.e. literature, film, music, and various expressive and instrumental artistic productions that define self-serving ideas, promote interests, mobilize social action, reflect authentic representations, and display collective consciousness.

## V. *Artivism: Art as a Defiant Gesture*

The location of power within the cultural centers, and its practices as enactments of power are essentially critical during the moments of political contention, when hegemony is disputed, preparing for political transformation. These moments define the position and significance of the cultural institutions helping or hindering the resilience of the hegemonic power holders. In addition, these moments of political contention provide the sociopolitical context for artistic activism directed against ending the oppression and conditions for disenfranchisement. During the eruption of political contention, a symbolic struggle arises as the dominant ideologies and discourses, representative of the imposed political consciousness are contested (Gamson 1997, 497). As the excluded and marginalized social factions realize their oppression under the authoritarian power bloc, they adopt alternative forms of contentious politics, to make up for their exclusion from normal politics, and the feebleness of the established political organizations. Contentious politics are the subversive and alternative forms of politics adopted by ordinary people, and signaled by the failure of politics-as-usual mechanisms. This occurs when ordinary people form alliances, confront authorities, and sustain their challenge against the power bloc mounting into social movements (Tarrow 1998, 2). The context of contentious politics is the context of artistic activism accompanying both the political and cultural confrontations with authorities. Popular political contention, collective action, and the anti-institutional creative dissidence are not just instrumental in attaining political and social goals. They are political and cultural goals in themselves, because their presence challenges the dominant power bloc, its politics, and culture; hence “a different way of naming the world suddenly reverses the dominant codes” (Melucci 1985, 801). This is the sphere where hegemony is disputed, when the barricades surrounding the cultural center are threatened, and when the cultural power is dislocated by ordinary people, creating popular movement culture while performing their popular contentious politics. Within the national context of the movement, the collective activities of the movements are “consumers and producers” of popular culture and its forms (Eyerman and Jamison 1995, 457). Contentious politics mark the rise of subversive forms of popular politics that protest the failure of normal politics. Similarly, movement culture and its aesthetic artifacts deployed during such political contention are subversive forms of artistic activism that protest and dispute cultural hegemony.

The rise of artivism is recognized as a “movement of cultural democracy” that encourages artists to express themselves and represent their communities, while criticizing

the homogeneity of the dominant culture (Lippard 1986, 342). Engaging in activism disputes the power bloc's hegemonic ideology and the ruling ideas, by contesting definitions of national consciousness, and representation of national interests. Therefore, activism signifies and represents the process that Doug McAdam describes as 'cognitive liberation.' Cognitive liberation is achieved prior to engaging in collective protest, when the aggrieved people "collectively define their situations as unjust and subject to change through group action" (McAdam 1997, 184). Unless the people "recognize their subordination as oppression," the need for revolutionary transformation may not arise (Storey 2009, 84). Therefore, cognitive liberation precedes political protest, which echoes Gramsci's viewpoint that a cultural revolution precedes political transformation. Cognitive liberation replaces passive consensus, through the display and articulation of the transformation of consciousness, in order to prepare for organized collective protest. Activist art and its producers aim to "get under the cosmeticized skin of representation" in the mass media and the dominant culture (Lippard 1999, 56). The function of artistic activism extends beyond stimulating widespread dissent. Activist-artistic productions are those that "make visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate" (Mouffe 2007, 4). Hence, the intrinsic function of activist art is to combat the ideological state apparatuses. Whereas the latter are committed to popularizing the ruling ideas and sustaining oppression, activist art is committed to the articulation and documentation of the people's grievances and demands, liberating the people's consciousness from the hegemonic passive consensus.

In addition, activism deconstructs the power bloc's monopoly over the means of cultural production by facilitating the dissemination of subversive cultural productions through alternative platforms. The communication of political ideologies and national consciousness "is not limited to pamphleteering or speechmaking" as art, literature, and music are equally, if not more, effective (Denisoff and Peterson 1972, 107). The oral nature of songs and drama performances, as well as the visual nature of cartoons, posters- and in modern times, graffiti- overcome the need for official cultural institutions, and the need for a literate, culturally sophisticated audience. As a result, activist art gives "voice to all those who are silenced within the framework of the existing hegemony" (Mouffe 2007, 4). Activist art subverts the dominance of a non-representative culture, and empowers self-representation. Instead of being merely oppositional, activist art is critical and subversive of the dominant culture. The subversive presence of activist art is manifested in the generation of "alternative images, metaphors, and information formed with humor, irony,

outrage, and compassion, in order to make heard and seen those voices and faces hitherto invisible and powerless” (Lippard 1986, 342). Therefore, winning intellectual power is supported by intellectuals and artists committed to the people’s national struggles and to voicing their national consciousness. Hence, activist art and its producers must fight cooptation and neutralization into the dominant culture (Lippard 1986, 345). *Artivists*, or activist-artists, create alternative media and platforms for the dissemination of the people’s cultural production that maneuver attempts of dissolution and cooptation. Artivism is, thus, a hybrid that marks the collision of the artist’s creativity with moments of contention, when artistic productions become intrusive and subversive of the sociopolitical reality, and of the official dominant culture.

## **VI. Popular, Folk, and Protest: Songs in Movements**

Among the activist art forms employed as defiant gestures against oppression are songs. When activist-artists turn their music stage to a platform that disputes the hegemonic truths, and criticizes the authority of the state-national consciousness, the songs become mobilizing tools that “spread counter-hegemonic discourses and ideas about rights and freedoms” (Côté 2011, 736). These songs are creative statements of protest, and articulation of the people’s shared dissent. Gramsci asserts the songs that represent how the people think and feel are *popular* songs (Gramsci 2012, 195). While Storey explains that culture originating from and for the people are popular culture, Gramsci contends that songs produced by and/or for the people are not necessarily popular, unless they represent the people. Therefore, the distinguishing factor of ‘popular’ song is not the music genre or artistic aspect, but the way by which the song “conceives the world and life, in contrast with official society” (Gramsci 2012, 195). Hence, during moments of popular political contention, these popular songs represent the political demands of the people in contrast with the interests of power holders. Gramsci’s definition of the popular song mirrors the description of *folk* songs communicating and representing the cultural depository of the inarticulate people, and the underprivileged community (Greenway 1953, 8).

However, when waves of popular contention against hegemonic powers manifest themselves in protest activities, songs that explicitly and intentionally communicate grievances, demands, and political dissent, while representing the reality of the disadvantaged members of society become needed. Whether the song voices the struggle of the people against independence from colonial powers, the people’s opposition to racial

segregation, or their collective call for democratic and peaceful transition of regime power, these songs that accompany popular activism, and articulate dissent during collective action are songs of protest. They are “the struggle songs of the people,” best described as,

... outbursts of bitterness, of hatred for the oppressor, of determination to endure hardships together and to fight for a better life. Whether they are ballads composed and sung by an individual, or rousing songs improvised on the picket line, they are imbued with the feeling of communality, or togetherness. They are songs of unity, and therefore most are songs of the union. To understand the area of protest out of which they grew, they should be read and sung with a history of organized labor open beside them (Greenway 1953, 10).

Protest songs are, thus, songs that accompany the people’s struggles, and emerge alongside popular movements, composed and performed during forms of civil dissent and political contention. These songs express the shared resentment and bitterness at the oppressive conditions, and the power blocs sustaining them. Protest songs voice the tenacity of the people to endure the hardships during the struggle, with determination and hope to end their suffering.

Songs, as other various forms of artistic and cultural expressions, highlight “group belonging and collectivity” in the expression of dissenting views, specifically during confrontations with repressive authorities (Eyerman 2002, 447). Therefore, protest songs are marked by their mobilizing function, and their capacity to empower participants to take a stand against injustices. Moreover, protest songs create a sense of solidarity within the movement, while expressing and reinforcing the movement’s values, demands, and goals (Denisoff 1983, 60). Protest songs articulate the people’s collective grievances, interests, demands, and aspirations, as well as direct criticism and blame towards the power holders. These songs mobilize active participation in collective action against the hegemonic state apparatuses sustaining the oppressive conditions. Above all, they are struggle songs, that features “the recurrent and clear statement of the political message” voiced during confrontations with the power bloc, for the purpose of finding remedy to existing social problems (Denisoff and Peterson 1972, 17). When employed during encounters with official authorities, protest songs empower and mobilize the masses as they “promote sentiments that diverge from dominant discourses, criticize the status quo, and encourage change” (Côté 2011, 741). The mobilizing function of protest songs is the reason why they are considered one of the significant forms of artistic activism. Other times, when the

protest song does not mobilize for collective action, and proposes no solutions, it still disrupts the complacency on which hegemony and oppressive authorities reside, because they are statements of protest that dispute the passive consensus, or in Denisoff's words they state "“I protest, I do not concur”, or just plain “damn you”" (Denisoff 1972,18).

## **VII. Protest Songs: Between Political Art and Activist Art**

Mobilization and empowerment during moments of political and social contentions are key features of activism, setting the distinction between 'political' art and 'activist' art. Both political and activist art forms share the function of engaging with social issues, and analyzing political content. Yet, while political art is a display of social issues, activist art is a protest against them. Anti-war artistic productions that reveal, for example, the horrible conditions of the war trenches, so the people become aware are different than artistic productions that protest such conditions to mobilize collective action to end the war. While political art is "socially *concerned*," activist art is "socially *involved*" (Lippard 1986, 349). Therefore, the first difference is that socially concerned political art raises awareness of certain sufferings in society, while socially involved activist art mobilizes collective action to end the suffering. What Roy Shuker coins as 'conscience rock' is a form of artistic activism that spread in the 1980s among rock singers and producers in the US and UK. The purpose of this activist phenomenon was launching songs and music events to raise donations for social causes, such as the mass famine in Africa, and the AIDS epidemic, in addition to protesting political issues such as the nuclear advancement made by the state (Shuker 2001, 236). Although the concerts and music records, such as the "Band Aid" and "We are the World," were performed by elite music celebrities, and supported by capitalist mega corporations, their contribution to the "fundraising operations" support vital social causes and change realities (Mathieu 2019, 364). This form of artistic activism is instrumental in raising the awareness of privileged communities, while being practical in transforming dire realities of underprivileged communities. The musical productions are launched for the purpose of effecting change, by mobilizing collective action, such as mass donations. Activist art is generated for the purpose of affecting transformation to the current conditions, with the intent to mobilize the people towards change. In the meanwhile, political art is not action-oriented, as it presents a critical commentary of the current injustices, with no mobilization towards change.

Hence, the mobilizing function of artistic activism renders it a powerful instrument when the people become aware of the injustices, and demand more than their knowledge of it; when they demand to end it. Forms of artistic activism, hence, must “fight and tussle, wrestle, grapple, and stand up against oppression” (Asante 2008, 208). This is particularly true for protest songs, which are in themselves, mobilizing tools during people’s movements, employed to serve the movement’s goals. While political songs reveal and present problematic realities, the activist function of protest songs is to situate these problematic realities as motives to trigger collective action. Protest songs ‘point to’ the problem, while proposing solutions and suggesting action, to end the suffering and reach an intended goal (Denisoff 1983, 60). In other words, they articulate discontents and grievances, as well as social ills and political issues, in order to mobilize individuals to end their suffering, or to call out officials to stop or start taking certain actions. Producing activist art is consciously engaging in creative articulations of the people’s demands and interests during contention, in order to provide visibility and representation.

Thus, activism battles omission and dissolution of the people’s struggle, as well as their demands, interests, and representations in the dominant discourse through creative articulations. The political feature of artistic activism stems from its capacity to occupy the public space as “counter-hegemonic interventions,” in order to disrupt the representations of the power bloc, hence, “bringing to the fore its repressive character” (Mouffe 2007, 5). Consequently, activism involves subversion, articulation, and framing processes, which highlight the popular indignation at injustices, and solidifies the active collective will of the people in the struggle. The subversive nature of activist art highlights its distinction from political art. This subversion can be framed as indignation, or even celebration. While political art celebrates achievements and progressive conditions to express optimism and offer praise, activist art celebrates identities, sentiments, and achievements as an instrument of protest against imposed shame, exclusion, or defeat. This point is illustrated in the cultural and artistic celebration of ‘blackness’ and ‘black is beautiful’ during the rise of the civil rights movement in the late 1950s and through the 1960s in the USA. This artistic celebration of blackness protested against the shame imposed by the white segregationists. Freedom songs that were produced and chanted during sit-ins and marches celebrated “positive sense of blackness” that assert pride in being black, against the “white-defined ‘Negroes’” (Reed 2005, 34). The celebration of blackness in freedom songs associated with the civil rights movement is an example of the

subversive nature of activist art that protests humiliation and segregation, by articulating pride and rightful equality.

Moreover, during and following the popular uprising in Egypt in 1919, singer and composer Sayyed Darwish, and poet Badie' Khayri produced songs celebrating the Egyptian military. These songs, through their celebration, protest against the British Occupation's assertion of military incompetence, hence, the Egyptians' inability to maintain self-rule. Khayri and Dawrsh's songs can be perceived as political songs, if viewed outside the political context of the British Colonization in Egypt. Yet, when placed in the context of their production and performance, under the humiliation and shame imposed by the British colonizer, these songs are protest songs. The government of the British Occupation had set certain requirements to ensure the conscription of the poor and uneducated in the Egyptian army, whereby the enrollment in the Egyptian military was accompanied with a sense of humiliation for being underprivileged (Fath-Allah et al. 2010, 29). As a result, among Egyptian citizens, the public image associated with the military service was that of disgrace and shame. This representation of military service as disgraceful served the interests of the hegemonic British colonizers, whose agenda was to assert Egypt's inability to self-rule, due to its weak army. The inability to self-govern allowed Britain to sustain its occupation, and assert its declaration of protection on Egypt since 1914. In protest, Darwish and Khayri launched musical productions that articulate pride, and celebrate the dignified honor in joining the Egyptian army. Among these songs is the famous dialogue "*ya ommy lih tebky 'alaya w ana misafer eljihadeya*" (1922), as a son asks his mother not to weep him as he leaves for the army. Since the British rule mandated a *badaleya*, or a 'ransom' to be paid to avoid enlisting, the son begs his mother not to sell her jewelry to "buy him," and to spare the son from the compulsory enlisting (Fath-Allah et al. 2010, 650-651). It was impossible for the poor masses to pay off their sons, because the *badaleya* was only afforded by the rich (Fath-Allah et al. 2010, 29). To subvert the shame associated with enrolling in the Egyptian army, the song voices the young soldier's honor and patriotism in fighting for his land, because for him and his comrades "the sound of artillery in the battlefield will be violins" as they sleep in their trenches for the glory of sacrificing their lives for their nation (Fath-Allah et al. 2010, 650-651).

The activist function of these songs stems from their subversive re-appropriation. Activist-artists adopt the "subversive re-appropriation method" in their activism to produce a "boomerang" effect, through which the "offensively constructed verbal or iconic

degradation” are subverted on two levels to create the boomerang (Milohnić 2015, 40). The first is through agency to voice an alternative discourse, and the second is through the celebration of self-reclaimed identity. The hostile images and defamatory expressions are adopted, re-appropriated, and reframed in artistic activism, to be recovered and recuperated by the victims as a celebration or as humor. The blackness in the United States during the civil rights movement, and the humiliation of enlisting in the Egyptian military during the British occupation are adopted and re-appropriated by activist-artists to subvert the shame into honor. What was considered reason for degradation is re-appropriated as source of pride. As a result, instead of becoming consumers of degradation, they become producers and disseminators of celebration. The subversive re-appropriation in these songs signifies more than just protest and activism against imposed representations by a hegemonic power bloc. The artistic performances of these subversive representations is an articulation of authentic self-defined identity. The imposed representations of shame facilitate the sustainability of hegemony and its oppression. The rise of self-defining representations subverts shame into pride, deconstruct the hegemony, exposes the repressive hegemonic representations, and contests the legitimacy of oppression. Ultimately, the subversive artistic representations are used as tools to voice alternative political ideologies that legitimize equality for African Americans, and self-rule for colonized Egyptians.

The artistic performance of self-defined identity is an activist tool in popular political contention, because it disputes the basis of hegemony, subverts its representations, and articulates alternative political ideologies. These protest songs counter the representations advertised by the hegemonic ideological apparatuses, by propagating alternative authentic representations. However, these songs are not merely propaganda for political ideology; they are tools for collective agitation against oppression, and towards social and political transformation. R. Serge Denisoff contends that indeed all songs, including patriotic anthems, religious hymns, and love songs can be considered as forms of propaganda, because they communicate an intellectual, ideological, or a sensual message (Denisoff 1983, viii). Protest songs, however, highlight the intellectual and ideological aspects instead of the sensual, in an attempt to “convince the listener that something is wrong and in need of alteration” (Denisoff 1983, viii). Protest songs are designed to “communicate social, political, economic, ideological concepts, or a total ideology,” in order to popularize an alternative ideology to that advertised by the dominant power bloc (Denisoff 1983, 2). As a result, the alternative ideologies articulated in the protest songs reinforce the demands and interests of the struggling masses. The freedom songs during the

civil rights movement, and Darwish and Khairy's songs under British Occupation are articulations of self-liberation and self-ownership. These are shared demands for African Americans after a long history of servitude, and for Egyptians under the strong grip of the colonial powers. The social actors under attack gain agency through their own engagement in voicing their self-reclaimed identity, which they use to mobilize towards attaining political and social rights in society. Therefore, generating activist art and composing protest songs are essentially producing subversive statements that agitate, mobilize, and empower towards change.

Moreover, activist art forms are not 'backdrops' to social and political transformation; rather, they are critical factors towards achieving such transformation. It is critical that protest songs, as activist art, are not perceived as mere 'soundtracks' of protest activity. Such perception views protest songs as "playlist on protesters' iPods while they battled security forces, or a live broadcast over a sound system behind the barricades" (Swedenburg 2012). While political songs may offer criticism and commentary, protest songs are an integral component in the development of popular movements, and instrument in voicing alternative political ideologies. Although the boundaries between the political and activist art forms blur since both can be critical of oppression, one can argue that political art is more expressive than instrumental, while activist art is more instrumental than expressive. For example, unlike patriotic songs and national anthems, protest songs are mostly generated without "careful artistry" (Greenway 1953, 3). This is attributed to the spontaneous production of activist art, due to its association with ongoing struggles on the ground. The direct involvement in struggle does not always allow a window for organized musical productions with sophisticated musical components. Moreover, the artistic skills of activism, and musical features of protest songs are sometimes intentionally minimized in order to ensure that the ideological message remains dominant (Denisoff 1983, 25). Protest singers, such as Pete Seeger, deliberately tuned down the music in their songs in order not to detract the lyrics (Rodnitzky 1976, 23). Protest songs can be unmusical, because they are more instrumental in mobilization and empowerment than expressive of sophisticated sentimental and musical values.

Nonetheless, it is significant to examine the argument proposing that "activist art is not instrumental in the violent overthrow of a regime," yet, "pragmatic" when the power of art is united with the power of the people during movement (Sheikh 2009). A regime does not collapse because a rapper drops a beat, or when a satiric cartoon of a corrupt tyrant goes viral. A regime collapses when a rapper drops a beat to articulate the demands of the

people during popular movements, at the same time as the satiric cartoon goes viral to mobilize dissent against the corrupt tyrant. Artivism is a useful tool in political activism because artists “have access to power through their framing and reframing of the visible and seemingly invisible, through subversion of, rather than subservience to, dominant discourses of visibility and representation” (Sheikh 2009). It is the active exercise of this power through social engagement and political organization that renders artivism a tool of political and social transformation. This brings the discussion towards the importance of the sociopolitical context.

The context of production and dissemination of artistic productions stresses the distinction between political art and activist art. While activist art engages with a certain context of the struggle, political art has no direct alliances with any struggle. Political art remains unassociated directly with particular events or movements (Lippard 1999, 49). Building on the previous example, political art will analyze the suffering of the war, even when the society, where the artistic productions are launched, is not involved in war, or affected by any armed conflict. On the other hand, activist art will protest the suffering of the war when its society is directly affected by its horrors, launching artistic productions that mobilize and empower this society’s anti-war or pro-war collective action. Activist art contributes “*within* its context, and *with* its audience” (Lippard 1986, 349). The immediate engagement with the context of activism and the activists involved in the struggle highlights the distinction and practicality of artivism when compared to political art. Activist art aims to stimulate active participation, during certain moments of social and political contention, in addition to being critical in its presentation of social and political issues. Artivism, hence, engages with immediacy in a specific context of social intervention, and with intent to bring about certain results.

This distinction, also, highlights a controversial feature of activist art; its temporality. Artivism is rooted in the temporal context in which it emerged, and cannot be divorced from it. It flourishes specifically under oppression when artists realize that resistance is the only choice to be made, and acknowledge that silence is the same as approval, and that neutrality in the face of critical issues aid the system of oppression (Asante 2008, 208). Therefore, artivism is especially marked by being “eminently ephemeral and practical in its permanent balance between visibility, durability, and risk” (Aladro-Vico et. al 2018, 9). Artivism is ephemeral, since it associates itself with a movement, or moments of contention with instantaneity. It is practical because of its instrumentality in articulating demands, and mobilizing for action. It is durable against

hardships facing the movement, battling cooptation and marginalization, in order for the struggle to sustain its confrontations with official authorities. Yet, the popular movements and its protest activities are bound to end, whether when the movement goals and demands are attained, or when the movement is repressed and/or neutralized. Movements are “transitory” (Eyerman and Jamison 1991, 3). Consequently, the artistic activism accompanying them are also ephemeral and temporary. Its mobilizing effect is immediate yet momentary, and its significance to enticing a response becomes transient. The immediate mobilizing but transient power of the artistic production will not last beyond the moments of contention. As John Greenway stresses, “songs of protest are by their very nature ephemeral; most are occasional songs that lose their meaning when the events for which they were composed are forgotten, or displaced by greater crises” (Greenway 1953, 6). The agitation and empowerment intended by artistic activism disappears as the collective action comes to an end. The activist power of the artistic content, images, or lyrics will become tamer and less confrontational. It can be regenerated during future movements to create a continuity with past struggles. The effects and meanings hence depend on “the specific utterance made on a certain occasion” (Sartwell 2010, 236). However, outside the political struggle, in absence of contention, when the national ideology returns back to being ‘banal,’ the mobilizing power of activist art will be lost, and these productions will act as a documentary archive of the struggle.

Consequently, activist art cannot be removed from the historical, social, and political context in which it emerges, because of the underlying dynamic interaction between the artistic productions and their sociopolitical contexts. To borrow Frederic Jameson’s opening statement to the preface of his book *The Political Unconscious*, “Always historicize!” Jameson refers to the imperative of placing the cultural text within its “historical moment” (Jameson 1982, 9). To interpret the significance of activist art, the artistic productions must be placed in the ‘historical moment’ of their production, dissemination, and consumption. While activist artistic productions are intrinsically tied to the sociohistorical contexts in which they emerge, political art is associated with the theme; the injustice or form of oppression criticized. Hence, political art can easily be regenerated and revived during different struggles, to encompass various causes, and can be borrowed by different movements to serve the function of critical commentary.

An example of this unremitting revival of political songs can be seen in the musical heritage of slave spirituals in the USA, such as “We Shall Overcome.” It was adopted from the gospel spirituals of the slaves “sorrow songs,” to be relayed as a political song during

the labor union struggles in post WWII, then as a freedom song in the civil rights movement in the 1960s, until it found its way to the Occupy Wall Street movement in 2011 (Eyerman 2002, 447-448). Similarly, the legacy of the duo Imam and Najm in Egypt has been carried from the political agitation during the 1960s, to the bread riots in 1970s, to late 1990s workers strikes, until the year 2011 during the popular uprising in Egypt. The significance of these political songs depend on the conditions of their revival, rather than the conditions of their composition. Although the revival may create a tradition of resistance, it runs the risk of potentially obliterating the original sociopolitical context, during which the artistic production had been created, to make room for the present. These examples of political songs depend on “the musical package,” which is the context of the song’s consumption, rather than its production (Denisoff and Peterson 1972, 7). Other times, artistic productions can be politicized when revived, although they had no political significance upon production, and while lacking direct political protest. This *politicization* of art takes place “when artwork that was not meant to be political by its creator is given new meaning by challengers” (Mathieu 2019, 360). Such politicization of art can turn a benign song into a powerful voice of protest. The politicization of a folk song such as “Ya Hadret el Omda” (Your Excellency the Mayor!) can turn the benign song with its humorous tone into a citizen’s cry for justice to the official head of the village, against the act of sexual harassment committed by his son. The female citizen addresses the mayor in a failed attempt to seek justice, repeating the question “do you think this is fair?” Yet, while the mayor- the political representative of the power bloc in the village- repeats his disapproval at his son’s misconduct, he offers the citizen no solution, and takes no action. The song offers no explicitly political statement, yet if politicized, it becomes a protest against power abuse and sexual harassment, despite its original context.

On the other hand, when activist art is revived, the social, political, and historical context of the struggle is revived alongside. Activist art is deliberately produced for the purpose of protest during the context of political contention. Its political significance is intrinsically embedded in its lyrical content, making it impossible to neutralize or depoliticize, in addition to being associated with the sociopolitical context of its production and release. The temporality and seeming transience of activist art reveal its capacity to act as documentation of collective struggles, against public amnesia. When resurrected after the sociopolitical context fades, activist art will always be accompanied with the memory of the struggle through which it contributed, adding the layer of continuity to the present struggle. Therefore, activism gives rise to artwork that empowers people to contribute to

the social and political transformation, with the promise that their effort will always be part of the collective memory, and will always be recalled as a point of departure and continuation in the future, whether during political agitation or stability.

## **Conclusion**

Artivism is the production and dissemination of activist art that articulate dissent and mobilize for collective action. It is the artistic performance of collective defiance, and the creative articulation of popular protest. Protest songs as a form of artivism engage in a dialogue, which is critical and subversive of the hegemonic power bloc, the dominant culture, and its ideologies. Simultaneously, protest songs empower and enable the rise of alternative voices of dissent, as well as subversive ideologies and forms of culture. Therefore, activist art in general, and protest songs in particular, operate among two layers of protest. The first is sociopolitical against injustices and oppression of the power holders. The second is cultural against the authority of the dominant culture, and its circumscription of authentic self-expressive artistic productions. The fact that activist artistic productions are present and visible is in itself resistive and subversive of the hegemony and cultural exclusion. In the meanwhile, the communicative political messages loaded in these productions protest social injustices and oppression. Therefore, when examining protest songs as forms of artivism, one speaks of songs that are instrumental in social mobilization and political empowerment, while also being expressive of oppressive social realities and political injustices. These songs have a functional role in the movement in which they emerge. The significance of these protest songs must be examined in light of their political and sociohistorical contexts. Protest songs are closely tied to the context of their production, dissemination, and consumption. Hence, as artifacts of artistic activism, protest songs are tools during specific moments of political contention. They contribute to the protest movements in which they emerge, and represent the popular consciousness of the people participating in these movements. In addition, these songs protest oppression and subvert exclusion through the representation and articulation of the marginalized, their interests and sentiments, hence resisting their omission from, or cooptation into the dominant culture. Therefore, the general features of protest songs as activist art include their instrumentality, temporality, and its subversive reframing potential.

## Chapter Two

### Arab Protest Singers as Movement Intellectuals under Repression

In order to harness and sustain what Antonio Gramsci refers to as “winning intellectual power,” any subaltern group striving for revolutionary political, economic, or social transformations needs to dismantle and overpower the ideological state apparatuses, while simultaneously developing within itself its own “organic intellectuals” (Gramsci 1992, 10). During moments of political contention, Gramsci’s organic intellectuals provide the group with “an awareness of its function, not only in the economic, but also in the social and political fields” (Gramsci 1992, 5). In other words, after deconstructing the hegemonic disenfranchisement, organic intellectuals become the social actors who raise the group’s awareness of their identity and function in the world. They allow disenfranchised people the chance, not just to recognize their suffering and injustices, but to engage in a battle for representation of collective demands and identities, in order to end this suffering. The function of the organic intellectuals is not just to “conquer” the ideological state apparatuses, but also to set the stage for alternative ideologies that voice the people’s interests (Gramsci 1992, 10). In this study of artistic activism, artists, singers, and songwriters, not party leaders, are themselves the activists and social actors who launch cultural and artistic productions that voice and propagate the ideologies and discourses of the people, during their struggle against power holders. They are responsible for interpreting unjust social conditions, and legitimizing the people’s political interests. They protest and subvert cultural exclusion and marginalization to disrupt hegemony, then create alternative space for the self-serving ideologies and self-reflective discourses. Through their artistic productions, activist-artists or *artivists* associate themselves with the struggle of the people, participate in the popular movement, and commit their art to the “the service of social transformation” (Dimeo 2016, 2).

#### I. The Intellectuals: The Traditional, the Organic, and the Popular

Two key features characterize the organic intellectual, which are reflected in the role of the activist and Arab protest singers. The first is the activists’ social significance and active participation in the resistance struggle by generating artistic practices reflective of the people and their interests, at times of social and political transformation. Organic intellectuals are active agents in expressing, to the “state organism,” the national

sentiments, interests, and desires of the people (Gramsci 1992, 5). The second is the political directive and leadership, exercised by activists during moments of contention through committing their productions to political mobilization. Gramsci contends that organic intellectuals are necessary “organizers of masses” able to mobilize the people, and raise awareness against hegemony. Activists are artists who merge their commitment to freedom with “the pen, the lens, the brush, the voice, the body, and the imagination” (Asante 2008, 206). As the organic intellectual, the activist does not depend on eloquence and artistry, but on creating artistic productions committed to the popular movement.

To explain the organic intellectuals’ commitment to the people’s struggle, Antonio Gramsci demonstrates the active exercise of their social significance and political directive in contrast with the intellectual acquiescence and autonomy practiced by ‘traditional intellectuals.’ Traditional intellectuals are the writers, artists, journalists, and any member of society with the specialized technical education and the professional position in society that enable them to influence public opinion (Gramsci 1992, 9). Despite having such social significance, traditional intellectuals resort to intellectual acquiescence for the purpose of protecting either their interests, or their intellectual independence, while the organic intellectual assumes the position of being a “constructor, organizer, permanent persuader and not just a simple orator” (Gramsci 1992, 10). During popular political contention, traditional intellectuals evade any confrontation with the power bloc, surrender their political directives, and remain divorced from the needs and demands of the people. Yet, they are equally divorced from the power bloc’s attempts to recruit them as part of the state’s ideological apparatuses. Therefore, in light of the tripartite liaison between the intellectual, the people, and the power bloc, traditional intellectuals assume a political and socially autonomous position, while the organic intellectual assumes a committed position to the people’s national struggles.

As a result, the system of social relations and conditions, in which traditional intellectuals carry out their activities and practices, places no influence on either their work or their ideologies (Gramsci 1992, 8). They perform their intellectual and artistic activities in a sociopolitical vacuum, in their “realm of disinterested objectivity” (Said 1996, 21). Their intellectual effort transcends the radical changes in the conditions of their communities, whether the changing demands of the public, or regime changes. This strand of acquiescent intellectuals is referred to, in the Arab region, with the pejorative title *elnokhba almothakafa*, the elite intelligentsia. Their detachment from the people’s struggles, yet uninterrupted monopoly over formation and direction of public opinion, can

best be described as Sartre's states, "they compensate for their lack of political or social power by taking themselves for an elite qualified to deliver judgment on everything - which they are not" (Sartre 2008, 229). Eventually, the intelligentsia mislead the people towards turning their back to their own national interests and struggles (229).

However, this acquiescent, yet null, position is the other side of the coin of the intellectual and artistic independence that Taha Hussein, and Loren Baritz defend. They support the independence and freedom of the intellectual from any social or political responsibilities. Aware of the dynamics of how the dominant political power bloc can never be "empowered or sustained without having advocates to support it, and to broadcast and popularize its ideologies among the people," Taha Hussein argues that the social and political engagement of the arts is "a political construct, manufactured by politicians" and not a cultural stance (Hussein 1955, 9). Therefore, Hussein demands total creative freedom of the arts on the basis of two moral grounds. The first is the rejection of imprisoning the creative and intellectual abilities within society's needs and expectations (Hussein 1955, 13). The second is the rejection of being exploited by politicians and their parties to produce propagandist artwork (Hussein 1955, 14). For Hussein, squandering intellectual independence in favor of committed literature limits the creative talent, and manipulates public opinion, which is the same argument expressed by American intellectuals of the 1950s. They were disturbed, not by the fear of being rejected or alienated, but by the fear of losing this alienation, and consequently being incorporated, which means "they will begin merely to conform, and will cease to be creative and critical and truly useful" (Hofstadter 1963, 680). To avoid being incorporated or "digested," Loren Baritz supports the estranged independence of the intellectuals, and their "principled withdrawal" from social responsibility (Hofstadter 1963, 688). Baritz echoes Hussein's argument, stating that to become socially responsible, the intellectuals lose their creative freedom that can only be maintained in isolation and alienation.

It is noteworthy to place the aforementioned arguments within their respective sociopolitical contexts. Taha Hussein's and Loren Baritz's arguments against the political involvement and social participation of the intellectual emerged following the 1952 military coup in Egypt, and following the anti-communist McCarthy era lasting through the 1950s in the USA, respectively. Both contexts are marked with the rise of a new state-sponsored wave of 'we-the nation'. Hence, the social significance and political directives of intellectuals may be described as "they are troubled when power disregards the counsels of intellect, but because they fear corruption they are even more troubled when power

comes to intellect for counsel” (Hofstadter 1963, 724). For some traditional intellectuals, the ivory tower is where they protect their position in society as intellectuals, and where the stigma of isolation is more bearable compared to that of either the confrontation or alignment with the state apparatuses.

However, when the people demand social and political transformations against the power bloc, the reverence of intellectual autonomy, and creative independence marks what Gramsci considers the failing of traditional intellectuals to engage with the national struggle. While the intellectual existence of this intelligentsia in society is seemingly ineffectual, their alienated existence becomes borderline dangerous during popular movements for change. The obsession with the creative autonomy of the “ingenious artist” creates “an ideological base for obscuring the historical circumstances,” and increases the irresolvable confusion regarding the significance of the artist in society (Milohnić 2015, 37). The withdrawal of artists and intellectuals from producing works of art that bear direct social or political implications reveals the artists’ total disregard for the socio-historical conditions of their respective societies. The excessive concern with their own “purity” can highlight the moral failure of traditional intellectuals, because purity can only be maintained when there are no responsibilities to be assumed (Hofstadter 1963, 746).

This moral failure is the same argument that intellectuals and artists such as Paul Wolfe employed to accuse Bob Dylan of selling out the left. Bob Dylan has been accused of self-absorbed purity, and abandonment of responsibility for producing introspective songs that are “inner-directed” when his politically-charged audience expected him to be more confrontational (Denisoff and Peterson 1972, 147). However, Dylan did not refuse the responsibility of producing committed activist art during a rising popular movement. Rather, he refused the role of the leader and the spokesman. Distancing himself from any *formal* association with political movements, Dylan has constantly rejected “the burden of responsibility for the lives of a generation that many seemed to want to place upon him” (Pratt 1990, 199). During the annual Newport Music Festival in 1964, Dylan performed “It ain’t me you’re looking for, babe.” It was perceived as Dylan asking his audience to find a leader in someone else, hence surrendering his political activism (Denisoff and Peterson 1972, 148). On the same stage, Phil Ochs addressed the government in his classical anti-war song, and voiced the people’s rejection to support the war, singing, “I must have killed a million men, and now they want me back again, but I ain't marchin' anymore.” It was not just the juxtaposition between the two songs that contributed to Dylan’s view as irrelevant, and his songs as a display of “self-conscious egotism,” to use Paul Wolfe’s words (148). It

was the sociohistorical context of the performance. Describing the “activist climate” of the 1960s in the United States,

The worst charge against an artist during the 1960s was that he copped out. Traditionally, one copped out by prostituting his art for fame or fortune. However, during the activist 1960s, copping out often became indistinguishable from simply sitting out. (Rodnitzky 1976, xix)

The sociohistorical context of the struggle obliged protest singers to exercise their social significance and political directives as cultural and political heroes. To ‘sit out’ and refuse formal association with the movement was the same as standing against the people. As M. K Asante puts it, “if we are oppressed and our art does not counter this oppression and challenge this oppression, then it is, by default, supporting the oppression” (Asante 2008, 209). That is why in the following year, the Festival audience booed Dylan off the stage (Eyerman and Jamison 1995, 460).

However, it can be overbearing and naïve to demand committed activist-artists to assume the role of movement leaders, when they are persecuted by the government. Bob Dylan has witnessed his predecessor Pete Seeger, a renowned protest singer, and vehement civil rights advocate, being blacklisted by the state, and his music banned from the radio. Seeger was prosecuted for his artistic activism in 1955, during the McCarthy Era, and was called to appear before the Committee on Un-American Activities, to be tried for his communist activities. The conflict between the state authorities and popular musicians such as Pete Seeger stemmed from the state’s traditional concern to protect ‘the nation’ against ‘foreign’ enemies (Côté 2011, 747). The singers and songwriters were considered as a threat to the state security, and enemies of the state, because of their opposition to the war, hence, to the ‘national’ interest of the state. It appeared that their musical contributions side with “the other camp” while “undermining the integrity and security of their own country” (Côté 2011, 747). As a result of the growing political and social tension at any call for peace and equality, protest singers had to perform the most cautious self-censorship when their songs are recorded, to avoid joining the state’s “damaging political blacklist of left-wing sympathizers” (Phull 2008, 24). The state censorship and persecution have deterred singers, as Bob Dylan, from publicly declaring their political association with the movements.

Dylan’s detachment from formal political institution, and his refusal to become a preacher should not overshadow his actual contribution to the movement through his artistic activism. Dylan was culturally and artistically committed to the political activism during the people’s struggle. He composed and performed songs that voiced the people’s

national consciousness and their anti-war and anti-segregationist ideologies during the movements of the 1960s. Although his songs address no party in particular, Dylan himself describes some of his songs, such as “Masters of War”, as “finger-pointing songs” (Eyerman and Jamison 1995, 461). They highlight injustices and point fingers at the culprits. “Masters of War” is a clear statement against those who “build the big guns,” the “death planes”, and “the bombs”, but hide behind their walls and their desks,

Then you sit back and watch  
When the death count gets higher  
You hide in your mansion  
While the young people's blood  
Flows out of their bodies  
And is buried in the mud

When performed outside the context of the popular struggle, this song is a political song concerned about sending young people to die, as the rich and the powerful are safe in their mansions. However, the song was composed and released in 1963, during the rising movement against the war, and the state’s military and nuclear advancements. This song is a protest song because, when the people voiced their discontent against the war, Dylan committed his songs to represent the popular rage against those who “fasten all the triggers for others to fire.” Dylan does not create his art in a self-absorbed vacuum, rather in association with the national consciousness of the people in the movement.

Moreover, Dylan’s song “The Times They Are a Changin’” is a clear direct invitation to all members of society to engage in the social and political transformation. Performed in 1964, Dylan invites writers and critics to keep their eyes open and their pen ready because “the chance won’t come again,” while asking mothers and fathers to find a new road because their “old road is aging”. He invites senates and congressmen to either lead the way, or to step aside, because,

There is a battle outside  
And it is ragin’  
It will soon shake your windows  
And rattle your walls  
For the times they are a-changin’.

Without being ideologically dogmatic, and without “presenting any specific political line or strategic action,” Dylan voices the consciousness of the struggling American youth, performing songs that deal with the “universal themes” of the era (Eyerman and Jamison 1995, 459). By stating that change is coming, Dylan voices the aspirations of the disenfranchised young people as they march and demonstrate against the established system. His songs are not political commentary. It is produced *during* the struggle, to voice the demands of the people *in* the movement.

Dylan’s songs can be perceived as inner-directed or introspective expressions because they represent his personal experience during that era (Pratt 1990, 200). However, Dylan’s personal experience was part of the collective experience of his generation during the social transformation of the 1960s in the USA. Dylan’s personal experience is not just authentic to the people’s national consciousness, but also reflective of the shared experience during the movement. Even his total disillusionment by the end of the 1960s was also reflective of the young people’s disenchantment and hopelessness in the post-Vietnam era. Dylan’s protest songs during the 1960s are intentionally committed, with no “ambiguity...neither in the lyrics nor in the performance” (Eyerman and Jamison 1998, 169). His political and cultural contributions may have been more effective, compared to leaders and vehement activists (Pratt 1990, 207). His rejection to be entitled the symbol of the generation is not at all a rejection to voice and express the grievances and aspirations of the people of this generation.

The experience of Moroccan band Nass el-Ghiwane also illustrates the decision of the activist-artist to side with the people, and to produce artistic activism that engages with political and social issues, while rejecting the imposed political leadership. While Dylan released his songs during the activist era of the 1960s in the USA, the time when Nass el-Ghiwane composed and released their songs was a time of heightened state violence and severe surveillance. It was the period of Moroccan history known as the Years of Lead, between the 1960s and the 1980s, which witnessed the strongest crackdown on Moroccan opposition. Thousands of protestors, including students and intellectuals, were subject to arbitrary imprisonment, forced disappearances, and assassinations (Muhanna 2012, 136). Coming to prominence in the early 1970s, members of Nass el-Ghiwane have constantly defended their music from political agendas, or association with any political party. Yet, they assert that their songs are “songs of protest” that voice the realities and hopes of “the man of the street” (Muhanna 2012, 145).

Committed to the reconstruction of a national identity in post-independence Morocco, while voicing the grievances of the people at the oppressive conditions in the decades following the independence, Nass el-Ghiwane identified with the ordinary people. They protested social inequality and state corruption from the perspective of the man of the street. This faithful association with the people's grievances and national demands was made clear when they released the song "Ma Hamouny" (I Cared Only),

I cared only about the men who are lost,  
I feared only for the children who went sick and hungry,  
I cared only about the trees that fell,  
The orchards that dried, and their peppermints blackened,<sup>4</sup>

This song, composed and sung in the Moroccan local dialect, was released during a time when forced disappearances and arbitrary imprisonments were a daily threat facing any ordinary citizen, and destroying families. Nass el-Ghiwane are concerned with those men who were lost, kidnapped, imprisoned or killed, and with their children who found nobody to feed them. The song is an expression of the intolerable pain felt after the death of those who were persecuted and treacherously killed by the regime's security apparatuses, during the Years of Lead.

Moreover, "Ma Hamouny" states no demands to authorities, nor does it mobilize the people to participate in collective civil disobedience of any sort. Despite the artists' refusal to be recognized as political leaders, the song articulates the people's communal anguish and resentment against the state repression and surveillance,

Whoever moves his eyes in his head is taken to the butcher  
then fast, his body is found departed.  
No word is above that of the big-boss!

The song highlights the arbitrariness of the state violence against ordinary citizens, who are punished for even the slightest movement, as to dare to look around and watch the horrors and the miserable conditions. The crackdown on opposition made freedom of expression impossible. Caring only about the people, Nass el-Ghiwane may have feared that singing a call-to-arms may lead to more departed bodies.

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<sup>4</sup> In the course of this research, the songs originally composed and performed in variations of the Arabic language, in local vernacular dialects, or in standardized Arabic are translated into English by the author, unless otherwise indicated.

Yet, Nass el-Ghiwane do not see their songs as an embellished criticism of authority, nor state anthems of nationhood. Rather, their songs were a display of the self-defined national sentiments of the people, and their suffering under oppression, state violence, and corruption. The release of Nass el-Ghiwane's earliest songs "Ghir Khodoni" (Take Me Only to God!) describes the suffering of the ordinary people during the fear and silence of the Years of Lead. The song itself protests the fear, and breaks the silence by raising the question,

Answer me, why am I the victim of silence?

Answer me, what happened to me?

These are my brothers and sisters and they are oppressed.

This is my portrait abandoned,

This is my tent demolished

But by God, my people,

This hardship will wear away, no doubt!

This is my country, my land,

You have no right to keep me away.

"Ghir Khodoni" protests the silence, asking, "why am I the victim of silence?" Sung as a wounded cry of pain, the song articulates the people's refusal to endure the silence, and to accept the suffering. Recognizing that this country is their land, the song expresses the people's demand to have their rights, and the hope that one day they will claim their land back.

The documentation of state crimes against ordinary citizens in the songs, along with the remembrance of the men and women who were killed, kidnapped, and lost were central in the artistic activism during the Years of Lead. By the 1990s and early 2000s, Moroccan activists mobilized numerous sit-ins in front of the secret jails and detention centers of the Years of Lead (Beinin and Vairel 2013, 37). Demanding truth and justice, activists, victims, and victims' children gathered, holding *portraits* of the missing people- victims of forced disappearances and unlawful imprisonment- and wearing these photos around their necks (Beinin and Vairel 2013, 44). In addition to protesting injustices and silence, and demanding truth and salvation, the artistic activism and the political civil opposition commemorated the missing victims, and "the men who were lost." Despite not being involved in on-the-ground confrontations with the authorities, Nass el-Ghiwane battled state violence, and injustices, addressing issues such as corruption, and abuse of power

(Simour 2016, 17). The protest songs of Nass el-Ghiwane articulate that the struggle for freedom, human decency, and better social conditions, at a time when fear and silence were overshadowing the lives of Moroccan people.

However, the Moroccan authorities allowed Nass el-Ghiwane a margin to produce their artistic activism, which was due to the fact that the post-independence government was minded with the national-building project, to which Nass el-Ghiwane contributed. Nass el-Ghiwane structured their songs with features of the precolonial Moroccan cultural heritage, which sanctioned them a certain level of tolerance from the regime. They depended on “poetic strategies,” such as folk idioms, and the *darija*- the vernacular Moroccan Arabic, packaged in Sufi music rhythms, in order to load their songs with political protest, and to “connect ideological versions of politics with the daily practices and customs” (Simour 2016, 19:26). In addition to the popular folk musical aesthetic in their protest songs, Nass el-Ghiwane obfuscated the political messages with religious Sufi prayers, to avoid the regime’s backlash (Salois 2013, 40). This is clearly demonstrated through the chanting style of *enshad* singing, and the insertion of prayers in the lyrical component of the songs. The musical performance of “Ghir Khodoni” is composed as a call to *Allah*, as the Sufi chanting voices the desperation, asking God why the people suffer in silence. Nass el-Ghiwane employed the musical and poetic aesthetics in order to ensure state tolerance during highly oppressive times in Moroccan history. Ultimately, the strategic employment of protest content within the existing heritage of music forms made the songs, and their political messages more accessible to the ordinary people.

Nass el-Ghiwane struck the equilibrium between reconstructing the national musical heritage, and articulating artistic activism. Both goals were essential in post-independence Morocco, since the independence highlighted the failure of intellectual and political elites to examine ideological and political issues pertaining to the nationalist project (Simour 2016, 18). Dominant authorities may tolerate musical performances, and different forms of popular culture emerging from below, “as effective safety valves,” through which accumulated anger and resentment are released (Pratt 1990, 12). As a result, Nass el-Ghiwane were invited by the state officials to perform at numerous occasions and state dinners, hosted by the very regime blamed in their songs (Schaefer 2012, 27). Realizing such leverage, this generation of Moroccan artists refused to compromise the musical components of their songs for the sake of social mobilization. The chance to sing their songs *at* the state, not just *about* it was made possible due to the strong national poetic component in their music. However, the poetic curtain, behind which the political protest

was hidden, was sometimes too slim to be missed by the state physically present in the live performance. Members of Nass el-Ghiwane had to spend “a brief jail sentence” after performing one of their protest songs to government officials “sitting in the front row” (Sabry 2010, 43). Yet, their songs and live performances were not banned from the official radio. They have successfully created for themselves a space “at the very perimeter of what the authorities are obliged to permit or unable to prevent” (Scott 1990, 138). This place would not have been sanctioned “unless fully orchestrated from above” (138).

Yet, as strongly as they refuse being coopted by oppositional political parties, Nass el-Ghiwane refuse to be labeled a traditional folk music band and ultimately be coopted by the post-independence regime. They assert that their songs are not a mere revival of folklore, but a revival of the national culture that reflects the independent identity of ordinary Moroccan citizens. As a result, their songs express “a self-consciously nationalist sound, new-fangled and old-fashioned at the same time” (Muhanna 2012, 135). The colonial experience affecting the Moroccan reality rendered post-independence activism both highly aesthetic as well as vehemently engaged, which is a unique exposition of political activism. Nass el-Ghiwane’s songs aim to reclaim representations of both the self and the communal identities that have been culturally and politically “tyrannized” during the colonial and postcolonial experiences (Simour 2016, 17). They utilized the precolonial national cultural and musical heritage in order to produce songs that protest against the repressive conditions during the Years of Lead, and voice the national consciousness of the people who lived in state-induced terror.

Just like Bob Dylan’s musical contributions to the 1960s popular movements in the USA, Nass el-Ghiwane’s artistic activism reflects their associations with the ordinary people, and their engagement in the people’s national struggles. Despite their absence from direct confrontations with authorities, and their rejection to formally associate with a political movement, Dylan and Nass el-Ghiwane cannot be viewed as traditional intellectuals who trade their social significance and political independence for autonomous artistic purity. Yet, despite their artistic commitment to the people’s struggles and national interests, they cannot also be recognized as organic intellectuals who assume the responsibility of being organizers and mobilizers of the masses against hegemony. Both Dylan and Nass el-Ghiwane are examples of what Michiel Baud and Rosanne Rutten define as ‘innovator’ popular intellectuals, who load their intellectual and cultural productions with ideas and political discourses that are essential to the emergence and development of the movement, while sustaining their autonomy from any political and social organizations

(Baud and Rutten 2004, 198). Although these intellectuals may not be closely connected to the movement, their cultural and artistic productions articulate the collective interests and demands of the popular masses, becoming useful as an activist tool during movements (198).

As innovator popular intellectuals, Dylan and Nass el-Ghiwane rejected any formal association with the opposition or the official regime, and denied any political agenda imposed on their artistic contributions. Yet, they produced artistic activism that committed to the people, and to their struggles. They were faithful to the ordinary citizens, aware of their moral and artistic responsibility to voice the grievances and demands of the people during troubled periods of history. Bob Dylan's songs became the "personal vocabularies of millions," imbedded in the perspective of young people struggling in an era of change (Pratt 1990, 207). While Gramsci's traditional intellectuals defend the disinterested objectivity of their cultural productions, Dylan and Nass el-Ghiwane articulate the people's national consciousness, interests, and grievances during the popular waves of contention, when the stakes are high, and when the regime's backlash is imminent. Dylan's songs accompany the emergence of the 1960s movement, and "embody in their lyrics and in the emotional force, with which they were performed, the values and virtues exemplified in the civil rights movements" (Eyerman and Jamison 1998, 169). Like Dylan, Nass el-Ghiwane's songs expressed and articulated the people's trauma at the brutal Years of Lead. As Ali Ashraf puts it, "what the people said in secret, Nass el-Ghiwane said out loud" (Ben-Hamou 2018). In turn, the people identify with protest singers and artists because, as Omar Sayyed—the founding member of Nass el-Ghiwane notes, the people recognize that protest singers and activist-artists do not get to enjoy social security nor freedom of expression under repressive conditions (Muhanna 2012, 147). As innovator popular intellectuals, their cultural involvement and artistic activism are authentic to the people, and essential to the emergence of popular movements against injustices and oppression. Although distanced from any official association with the movement, they remained committed to the people *in* the movement. They dedicated their protest songs and artistic activism to the service of its goals.

The experience of protest singers as Bob Dylan and Nass el-Ghiwane reveal a cultural commitment and artistic activism that Gramsci's model of the organic intellectual may obscure. They may have surrendered their social significance and political directives as ideological leaders, but not as producers of committed activist art that voice the ideologies of the people. The commitment of Dylan and Nass el-Ghiwane as protest singers

follow Edward Said's reflection of "the quite complicated mix between the private and the public worlds," the space in which the intellectuals articulate and represent what they essentially believe, while resisting attempts to be "co-opted by governments or corporations" (Said 1996, 11:12). Their rejection to be spokespersons of the movement does not limit their commitment to represent and articulate the movement demands and values. They are activists who pledge their creative talents to the people's struggle for social and political transformation, without acting as movement leaders. They are committed to producing "art for the people's sake" (Asante 2008, 209). The 'popular intellectual' described by Baud and Rutten offers a closer definition of the social significance and political directive of activist-artists, particularly protest singers committing their artistic activism against autocracy, oppression, and social injustices, during popular waves of contention erupting in the Arab world by the end of 2010.

Popular intellectuals share with the organic intellectuals the effort to dismantle hegemony by contesting the dominant ideology, then articulating alternative ideologies and definitions that are representative of the subaltern groups. Popular intellectuals are minded with the popular masses, articulate their grievances and "aim to understand society in order to change it" (Baud and Rutten 2004, 2). Therefore, popular intellectuals are marked by their engagement in 'framing' and reframing processes, which include producing political, intellectual, and cultural activities that explain and highlight certain social conditions as problematic, and in need of change. By interpreting suffering as unjust, popular intellectuals subvert the worldview imposed on the people by the power bloc. The reframing of injustice as intolerable instead of acceptable is, hence, subversive of the spontaneous consent, by which hegemony is sustained. As a result, popular intellectuals identify the people as victims of oppression, while pointing fingers at the "perpetrators" causing their suffering (Baud and Rutten 2004, 2).

Unlike organic intellectuals, popular intellectuals are not necessarily engaged as individuals in social organization and political mobilization. Their social and political significance, hence, depends on their effort to disseminate intellectual and cultural productions that 'frame' the people's suffering as unjust and oppressive. These productions, also, articulate the people's social and political demands as legitimate and rightful. Hence, the commitment of popular intellectuals and activist-artists is evident in their cultural and artistic productions, even when they maintain their distance from movement organization, as the innovator popular intellectual. Nevertheless, when the popular intellectual is closely associated with the movement, they actively engage in its

protest activities. These popular intellectuals are movement intellectuals, who are “directly rooted” in the movement, and emerge during its development, producing cultural and artistic activism that accompany the movement’s protest activities (Baud and Rutten 2004, 199). Their cultural and intellectual productions become tools in mobilizing citizen participation to end injustices. Activist art during popular movement is significant for movement mobilization, because it is essentially adversarial, subversive, and anti-hegemonic.

## **II. The Arab *Activist*: The Movement Intellectual**

Movement intellectuals are individuals who contribute, through their activism, to “the formation of the movement’s identity” (Eyerman and Jamison 1991, 94). Through their activism, movement intellectuals explain and legitimize collective actions to the movement supporters, and to the power bloc (Eyerman and Jamison 1991, 115). They are directly and explicitly responsible for promoting and developing ideas and discourses to serve the movement, defend the legitimacy of its demands, mobilize its participants, and represent its identity (Baud and Rutten 2004, 199). In the context of this present study, the concept of ‘movement intellectual’ offers a theoretical framework for the social significance and political directive of young Arab protest singers, during the popular uprisings in the Arab world. Movement intellectuals, employ their activism, “*within* a social movement,” in order to articulate the popular consciousness, as well as the interests of the social movement (Eyerman and Jamison 1995, 450). Similarly, the young protest singers emerged within the popular protest movements erupting in the Arab world in 2010, in order to articulate the demands and interests of the movement, and to interpret, explain, and legitimize the movement’s protest activities. Studying the contribution of musicians and singers in the political movements of the 1960s, Eyerman and Jamison stress that, although the identity of the movement is represented through political organizations and mass demonstrations, the most significant articulation of the movement identity, demands, and sentiments are “disseminated in and through” music productions (Eyerman and Jamison 1995, 452).

The activist-artists associated with Sudan’s *Girifna* Movement (We’re Fed Up) illustrate the political participation of movement intellectuals discussed by Eyerman and Jamison. *Girifna* is a youth-driven movement shaped in 2009, and represents the first visible form of popular political contention against the Sudanese Islamist military

autocracy in over 20 years. The unarmed grassroots movement was initially formed to expose the regime's human rights abuses, but developed into a dissident movement, as it mobilized for political reform through civil protests and cultural street activities (Kadoda and Hale 2015, 222). In 2010, prior to the then-impending presidential elections, *Girifna* activists mobilized for the civil participation in the democratic transition of power. They organized social and cultural activities to facilitate voter registration, and spread knowledge regarding the election process (Hamilton 2010). Sudanese activist-artists associated with *Girifna* movement in the homeland and in expatriation collaborated to produce artistic productions that articulate the need for civil participation in democratic elections.

Emerging within *Girifna* movement, Nas Jota, a Sudanese band and music production group, organized the release of the song "b-Sotak" (With Your Vote/Voice) in March 2010. The song featured a collaboration of artists, singers, and dancers in the homeland and diaspora, including the break dance group Someeta Crew, Algerian Rai singer Cheb YaCine, and American Trinidadian rapper Messiah Ramkissoon. "With Your Voice/Vote" mobilizes Sudanese citizens around the world to participate in the presidential elections that was to be held the following month,

Protect it with your vote,  
Our beloved country,  
Overcome your silence,  
Let it live!

The song is a call to Sudanese citizens to protect the freedom and the resources of Sudan by participating in the peaceful democratic transition of power, for which *Girifna* movement has mobilized. The song is a hopeful and optimistic invitation of the "invincible" people of Sudan to participate in determining the future of their homeland. As movement intellectuals, members of Nas Jota and the artists featured in the song do not only support and articulate the movement interests, but they also "articulate the collective identity of the movement" (Eyerman and Barretta 1996, 506). Young activists in the context of *Girifna* and similar youth-driven grassroots movements play a significant role as interpreters of the movement. By promoting electoral participation and mobilizing citizens to take part in the voting process, Nas Jota and its coalition of activists define and express the pro-democracy identity of the *Girifna* movement. It is important to note that *Girifna* activists and artists were targets of the regime's violent persecutions, and were forced out of the country, as the movement dissolved under regime repression (Kadoda and Hale 2015, 222). However,

despite the extensive persecution, imposed self-exile, and reduced physical presence in public space, the non-violent movement bred politically-conscious groups that remain active both in Sudan and in exile (Kadoda and Hale 2015, 223). In addition, the artists and singers associated with the music platform Nas Jota remained active through online productions, committed to artistic activism and active political participation. After the final wave of the Sudanese uprisings in 2019, and the ouster of el-Bashir, artists and singers associated with Nas Jota performed their first live concert in Khartoum.

### **III. The Arab Context: Protest Singers Under Repression**

The discussed theoretical models of the intellectual do not give enough credit to one key challenge central to the Arab reality- surviving state repression. Profound repression in the Arab political scenes raises the cost of political commitment and mobilization (Beinin and Vairel 2013, 39). In addition to using “intimidation, harassment and the threat of violence” as tools to deter protests, the state security and the repressive state apparatuses assess the range of political opposition, and decide “who is allowed to play the game and how” (Beinin and Vairel 2013, 40). If the rise of organic intellectuals is crucial for revolutionary transformation, the situation of Arab activists and intellectuals may explain why social and political transformations in the region were hindered. This requires an emphasis on the contextual hostility and repression constraining protest activities in general, whether through political or artistic activism. The waves of popular political contention erupted in the Arab region against “some of the most authoritarian regimes in the world in terms of repression and social control over the population,” whereas the masses of protestors and activists were supported by “weak civil societies,” lacking political organization under such repressive conditions (Dupont and Passy 2011, 447). The tripartite relationship of the activist, the people, and the hegemonic power bloc needs to be discussed in relevance to the context of repression, violence, and surveillance in the Arab region.

No statement more accurately describes the degenerative conditions of Arab artists and intellectuals more than Edward Said’s statement; “most of our best writers and intellectuals have either been co-opted or jailed into silence” (Said 1995, 230). According to the Gramscian perspective, the repressive state apparatuses are only resorted to against revolutionary activities in time of political contention, whereas in the Arab region’s political setting, “the security apparatuses are omnipresent” (Beinin and Vairel 2013, 25). In defense, the Arab intellectuals are overpowered by the constant constriction on active

social and political participation. As a result, committed Arab intellectuals and artists were left with one of two options. They may choose to strike the Faustian bargain and align their “ideological priorities” with the regime interests and agendas, and accept being swallowed into the ideological state apparatuses, by relinquishing their social significance and political directive (Kandil 2010, 86). On the other hand, they may resort to self-exile from any political engagement, specifically contestation of state power, while “reorientat[ing] their thought toward apolitical cultural themes” (86). Committed Arab intellectuals may resort to intellectual acquiescence, or to the cultural domains, as to be “less intransigent, less forward in their political demands, and less defiant toward political authority” (Kandil 2010, 87).

The detachment of Arab intellectuals is to a great extent attributed to the increasingly repressive political reality accompanying the region’s growing authoritarian regimes. The ivory tower, where Gramsci’s traditional elite intelligentsia passively resides autonomous from the people, is the Arab intellectuals’ prison cell, their refuge, or imposed self-exile. As a result of state repression, committed Arab intellectuals may share the political and social margin with the masses, while sharing the stigma of acquiescence with the elite intelligentsia. To demand Arab artists and intellectuals to step quixotically on the political stage is to invite them to suffer the wrath of the regimes. For argument’s sake, to be defeated and overpowered then consciously reroute to becoming less confrontational, Arab artists and intellectuals must, in the first place, be aware of their social significance. This includes artists whose work has not been sanctioned nor tolerated by authoritarian regimes, or those who are aware of the repressive regimes and their violent responses.

Such state repression and violent persecution have followed the career of most Rai singers and producers. Since its emergence as a popular music genre in Algeria, Rai music and its producers were constantly harassed by the opposition, the official regimes, and, before that, by the colonial rule. Arising in the political and cultural margins during the 1920s, Rai music is the creative expression of the daily concerns of ordinary people, and the musical articulation of the popular ‘opinion’ and ‘point of view’ of the disenchanting young generation (McMurray and Swedenburg 1991, 39). As the new popular genre garnered audience in major cities in Algeria, the police harassment against Rai singers began to take form. At times, the harassment was justified as an attack on Rai song’s treatment of love, sex, and alcohol, in line with the global hippie notion ‘make love not war.’ The growing voice of the young generation, expressing their frustrations at the poor living conditions, the unemployment, and their need to explore their sexual and cultural

freedoms was considered a disrespect to the conservative middle classes. However, police harassment intensified as Rai singers started to deal with social and political issues, especially with the rise of anti-colonial sentiments, and the national liberation struggle. Rai witnessed a transformation during the liberation and post-liberation movements in the 1950s and 1960s. The songs turned from the portrayal of sex and romance, into resisting the arbitrary arrests and imprisonment, the rising poverty rates, and the poor health conditions in Algeria (McMurray and Swedenburg 1991, 39). The end of the colonial regime was not the end of state violence and harassment against Rai singers.

The post-independence period in Algeria witnessed a rise in nationalist traditional culture. The socialist nationalist regime, then, in power, was hostile towards Rai, and its influence on the Algerian society, particularly the young people. The battle waged by the left-winged National Liberation Front against Rai was directed towards “eliminating the foreign ‘pollution’ of Algerian culture” and any traces of inauthentic artistic expressions, after years of French colonial rule (DeAngelis 2003, 281). Through the 1970s, Pop-Rai and its romantic, religious, and political themes swept across the country despite being denied access to official media and state radio. At one point, the state banned the import of blank cassettes, which Algerian young singers and music producers, such as Cheb Khalid, used in order to record and distribute their music (McMurray and Swedenburg 1991, 41). Rai music suffered censorship and exclusion in Algeria, until the regime realized that Rai music, as a youth driven phenomenon is “safer to appropriate than ignore” (DeAngelis 2003, 282). By mid 1980s, the socialist regime realized that pushing Rai music into the mainstream and coopting it as part of the dominant culture can be beneficial. By 1985, the state sponsored the launch of youth music festivals in major cities featuring Rai singers, and allowed Rai musicians exposure in radio and television, and even allowed them to travel abroad, which facilitated the propagation of Rai music to a wider international audience (McMurray and Swedenburg 1991, 41).

This brief sanctioning, between 1985 and 1988, also facilitated the subtle protest in the songs to seep into the disillusioned young Algerian generation, who by October 1988 erupted in mass riots against the socialist regime and its economic and political failures. Rai singers were held accountable for enticing civil discontent. Cheb Khalid’s song “el Harba Wain?” (Where to Flee?) was a protest against the poor living conditions caused by the failure of the regime to take proper economic measures. The song lyrics, translated by Joan Gross, David McMurray and Ted Swedenburg, express the disillusionment of young Algerians following the independence,

Where has youth gone?  
Where are the brave ones?  
The rich gorge themselves,  
The poor work themselves to death,  
....  
Gold has turned into worthless lead  
Whose cover stifles all understanding  
There's only flight...but where? (Gross et. al 1992, 16)

The song highlights the disenchantment of the Algerian youth, who realize that the only way to survive is to escape the failure of the socialist regime. The song “el Harba Wain?” voices the young people’s torment between their eagerness to revive the nation after decades of colonialism, and their need to escape the repressive reality in their home by seeking exile. This song among other Rai musical productions released and propagated by the Algerian youth was regarded as the spark initiating protest against the socialist regime. Moreover, the revolutionary young generation was referred to as the “Rai generation” (McMurray and Swedenburg 1991, 42).

The failure of the nationalist socialist left-wing politicians in Algeria paved the way for the fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front to take control. Among the first decisions made by the right-winged regime was to cancel the youth music festivals, and put Rai singers under cultural and political containment (McMurray and Swedenburg 1991, 42). The Islamist regime initiated a wave of violent persecution against Rai singers. For Islamists, the battle against Rai singers aimed at harnessing supporters, since “Rai offers an alternative to the same youth that are potential supporters of radical Islam” (DeAngelis 2003, 278). The destitute Algerian youth are the majority of Rai audience, as well as the target of Islamists, who “seek converts from among the disaffected underclass of the cities” (278). Therefore, the repression extended to more than just Rai music, and the songs’ lyrical content. Rai singers and producers were targeted by the regime. The death threats and violent persecution during the 1990s has sent the young community of Rai singers into self-imposed exile in France. The need to flee the country was intensified following the assassination of popular Rai singer Cheb Hasni, in 1994, followed by the assassination of Rai music producer Rashid Baba in 1995, by the Islamist Front (DeAngelis 2003, 278). During the same time, Rachid Taha and his fellow immigrant Rai singers in France were producing artistic productions that defend the rights of Arab immigrants, establishing a

strong cultural identity in Western exile, and articulating political opposition against the Islamist regime in their homeland (Swedenburg 2004, 182:184).

However, the 1990s concluded with the most renowned and heartwarming collaboration between the three committed Algerian Rai singers Rachid Taha, Cheb Khalid, and Faudel. Together, in Paris, they released a live concert, *1, 2, 3 Soleils*, in 1998, in order to celebrate the survival of Rai music and its voices. The three Algerian young singers in diaspora mixed their authentic Algerian Rai with Western rock music, in order to revive the struggle against the heavy “chains” of injustices, as the trio performed a rendition of “Yal Menfi” (Oh, the Exiled):

When they took me to court,  
There were a lot of officers, old and young,  
The chains weighed a ton,  
And they sentenced me to a year and a day.  
Tell my mother not to cry!  
God will not abandon her son.

“Yal Menfi” belongs to the oral music heritage of Algerian protest songs, performed during the anti-colonial liberation struggle. As the song recounts the suffering of political prisoners under colonial regimes, its modernized performance in Western exile brings forward the narrative of decades of resistance against unlawful imprisonment, state repression, and injustices. The young Rai singers voice the agony of young Algerians in exile, estranged from their families, yet courageously enduring their ill fate, knowing they are not abandoned. Despite the violent persecution, state containment, and the orchestrated cultural siege, Rai music received international and local recognition as the “official narrative of Algerian nationalism” (DeAngelis 2003, 281).

In their attempt to sustain their hegemony, and seize political and cultural control in Algeria, the French colonial regime, the authoritarian socialists, and the fundamental Islamists focused their oppression on Rai young artists. This was attributed to the social and political protest in the lyrical content of the songs, as well as the expression of national consciousness that “disrupts the hegemonic discourse of the nation and allows for another way of imagining society and identity” (DeAngelis 2003, 283). Despite their huge variation in ideology, all the hegemonic power blocs seizing control in Algeria equally agreed on one thing; Rai singers threaten to propose an alternative national consciousness than the one set by the regimes. As state authorities recognize the power of popular music forms to

express ideas, and to potentially threaten the state legitimacy, they impose restrictions on the lyrical content of the song, its performance, and dissemination (Côté 2011, 740). In addition, the artists producing these songs become considered a threat to national security, because they have the ability to communicate “views antagonistic to those of the state authorities” (Côté 2011, 747). Therefore, the censorship on freedom of artistic expression, the repression of cultural productions, and persecution of singers and music producers confirm the power of music in the struggle, and serve to testify to its political potential. This is the same argument made by the Moroccan rapper Mouad Belghouat, in his statement published 2014, when he asserted that the regime’s “intellectual and cultural prison” has made his music “more powerful” (el-Haqed 2014).

The experience of Belghouat, who goes by the nom de guerre el-Haqed (the Enraged) reveals the continuation of the repressive conditions under which Arab protest singers produce their artistic activism. The violent persecution of activists, especially protest singers and musicians, extended to the more recent waves of popular uprisings in the Arab world. Unlike his Moroccan predecessors, Nass el-Ghiwane, who had no political affiliations, and experienced no direct confrontations with authorities, el-Haqed associated himself with the people’s movement towards reform in 2011, resulting in his multiple arrests during and after the popular uprisings. As a movement intellectual, el-Haqed was the only Moroccan protest singer to publicly and officially declare his association with the February 20 reform movement, which was organized by the coalition of political opposition forces in Morocco (Salois 2013, 184).

The Feb 20 movement called for economic reformative measures, as well as constitutional amendments to limit the powers of the king and his state officials. El-Haqed dedicated his artistic activism, as well as his political engagement, to the service of the people, and the goals of their movement. In April 2011, he released his song “Baraka Men Skat” (No More Silence!), featuring Jihane, a young Moroccan female singer. The song echoes the verse recited by the Tunisian poet Abu al-Qasim al-Shabbi, “if, one day, the people, will to live” (al-Shabbi 1993). This verse became the slogan chanted by millions of protestors across the Arab world in their struggle for freedom, dignity, and social justice. In his song, el-Haqed calls the Moroccan people living in misery, and “those who refuse to be humiliated,” to realize the need to end the silence, and “to stand-up and defend their rights.” The song raises awareness of the “calculated political brainwashing” implemented by the regime and its media apparatuses to distract the people and sustain the injustices,

They have usurped our rights,  
Now, we have no choice but to fight!  
Silence won't work anymore.  
I am the child of the people, and I'm not scared!  
To those who suffered and are still silent,  
To those who still circle the streets,  
Aren't you fed up with what's happening?

el-Haqed takes on the social, political, and artistic responsibility of voicing the grievances of the people, and the demands of the movement, as he articulates the people's dissidence against the absolute power of the monarch, the corruption of state officials, the brutality of state police, and the deteriorating living conditions of the disenchanting masses. As a result, el-Haqed was persecuted by the Moroccan police, and got detained three times between 2011 and 2013, spending, in total, two years in prison.

El-Haqed's persecution by the Moroccan regime was a direct result of his artistic activism and political engagement with the Moroccan oppositional political forces calling for the Feb 20 movement. His protest songs fueled the mass protests in Morocco during February 2011. The Feb 20 movement reached some of its goals as the Moroccan constitution was reformed and voted upon, although these constitutional amendments did little to limit the power of the King still in power (Freeland 2018, 290). Yet, el-Haqed was still systematically persecuted by the Moroccan regime, and was denied the chance to perform in public. Ultimately, he resorted to imposed self-exile in Belgium, in fear of further persecution. El-Haqed recognizes that his path against the "the gatekeepers of power" ultimately led him to prison and self-exile (El-Haqed 2014). His commitment to the movement and the people supporting it is reflected in his protest songs and artistic activism, as well as his political association with the opposition, against all social and political taboos protected by the Moroccan regime. In 2015, el-Haqed was awarded the Index on Censorship Arts Award for his artistic activism towards freedom of expression and human rights, which allowed him the chance to perform in Europe and various other countries. However, the Moroccan police prevented el-Haqed from performing in Casablanca, blocked the streets leading to the venue, cancelled his first concert in his homeland, and arrested some of his fans (Shibata 2015).

#### **IV. The Arab Context: The Digital Stage**

Most of the Arab protest singers and activist-artists, like el-Haqed, may have never performed live on stage in their respective homelands. They resorted to the virtual public space, creating for themselves a digital stage, through which they launched and disseminated their artistic activism. In that sense, young artists discovered and generated “new spaces within which they can voice their dissent and assert their presence” (Bayat 2009, ix). The online platforms and social media channels were utilized during the Arab popular uprisings, at the turn of 2010, as alternative public space, allowing activists to articulate dissent while maneuvering state repression and violence. In addition, they were employed as tools for production and dissemination of political and artistic activism that mobilize collective action. As they promote access to information, and interactive participation in content production, the online social media, and the new digital technologies had a significant role in communication due to their immediacy, high connectivity, and wide outreach (Monshipouri 2017, 188). They enabled Arab youth to find alternative modes and patterns of “participation, civil involvement, and self-expression” which is necessary in shifting the public discourse towards issues of freedom and justice (188). Although the contribution of new digital technologies in political organization is undeniable, it is also overstated. This is particularly true with statements describing them as “the most effective tools of organizing and instigating the uprisings” (Monshipouri 2017, 187).

In regard to political organization in the ground, the role of online social media was limited during the Arab uprisings in 2011. Social media’s contribution to political organization was typically confined to the initial stages of protest, as in the case of the Egyptian uprising. The calls for protest in January 5<sup>th</sup> 2011 were communicated via a Facebook page, *Kullena Khalid Saeed*, through which the protests were “coordinated as an ‘event’ on Facebook, with a beginning and an end date” (Aboubakr 2013, 232). Yet, when the Egyptian authorities resorted to the communications shutdown, the circumscription of the social media channels “neither stopped the protests, nor prevented the protesters from communicating with the outside world” (Aouragh and Alexander 2011, 1344). While the online calls for protest were successful in reaching a level of political organization in Egypt, it was because of the readiness of the Egyptian masses to actually be present on the street, and articulate their national demands for freedom, bread, and social equality, specifically after the victory of their Tunisian counterparts. The social media channels were not a tool

that *instigated* these demands, but a tool that facilitated their exposure, across the entire country, with little-to-no financial cost. Yet, such advantages are still in-built features of all online channels and digital tools, with no specific regard to the content they communicate, or the ideologies imbedded in it. Online social media may offer advantages for activists, but the state and the counter-revolutionary forces have access to the same resources (Kadoda and Hale 2015, 229). This became evident in the infiltration of state-sponsored ‘cyber-Jihadist’ in Sudan, and ‘electronic committees’ in Egypt, which advertised the regime’s hegemonic discourses to the virtual public opinion for the purpose of deterring protest activities.

Moreover, in a country such as Sudan, where the development of social media is slight, and the Internet penetration is the lowest in the Arab region (Kadoda and Hale 2015, 223), political organization was not deterred, as mass protests erupted in January 2011, threatening the firmness of the Islamist military regime. In case of Tunisia’s popular uprisings, political organization preceded the online calls for protest. Only few hours after Bouazizi had set himself on fire, “hundreds of youth, sharing similar experiences of humiliation by the authorities, staged a protest in front of the same building” (Castells 2015, 22). Video footage of the protest was distributed via online platforms, which motivated masses of Tunisians to join the protests, which in few days turned into mass popular uprisings across the country (22). In that case, the on-the-ground protest activities themselves mobilized further political organization, while the role of the social media channels was merely communicative. The immediate communication and publicization of political events, such as the self-immolation of Bouazizi and the eruption of protest, have contributed in broadcasting incidents that were critical to popular mobilization of dissent.

However, the political organization of protest activities is attributed to the “political synchronization” as activists coordinate between online and offline protest activities (Alexander and Aouragh 2014, 893). This has been further highlighted in the Egyptian context in 2013, during the popular protests of June 30<sup>th</sup>, mobilized by Egyptian youth-driven movement *Tamarod* (Revolt) against the Islamist regime. In addition to launching online campaigns, the political organization of the *Tamarod* movement depended on collecting signed “paper petitions,” as activists reached out “to communities not serviced by social media” (Alexander and Aouragh 2014, 893). Moreover, activists organizing Sudan’s *Girifna* movement realized the limitations of online social media in political organization. As a result, they launched on-the ground political campaigns to “complement” their online presence (Kadoda and Hale 2015, 228). The on-the-ground

strategies allowed *Girifna* members to form coalitions with other groups, and to engage with communities, inaccessible through online media (228). This political synchronization between online and on-the-ground political organization paved the way for the formation of new political groups, and the eruption of Sudan's second wave of protest in 2013.

Online social media was a “useful tool” well-handled by political activists and organizers to accelerate the impact of certain protest activities, as well as “a vital platform” for the performance and dissemination of the movement demands, identity, images, and values (Lynch 2014, 97). However, these advantages do not render online social media channels as “the cause of any specific uprising,” nor do these advantages determine the outcome of the uprisings (97). The claim that the Internet and digital technologies have *caused* or *instigated* the Arab uprisings undermines the agency of the people, the weight of their suffering, as well as the long legacy of political, social, and artistic activism, in their respective countries. The repeated insertion of online social media channels and the Internet corporations such as Facebook and Twitter at the center of popular political mobilization “seemed as if particular Western characteristics were artificially being inserted into a genuine popular Arab revolution” (Aouragh and Alexander 2011, 1346). A brief look at decades of state corruption, police brutality, violent oppression of opposition, suppression of freedoms, miserable living conditions, and total disregard of the basic human rights of ordinary citizens will explain why masses of ordinary citizens, across the Arab world, were politically mobilized against adaptable authoritarian regimes in their respective countries.

The Internet, social media, and online platforms can, instead, be viewed as movement resources; spaces and tools utilized by activists and artists since they were available during the popular uprisings. Generally, the resources available during a movement organization can “affect and constrain the presentation of group identity, cultural enactments, recruitment of supporters, and definition of the situation” (Fine 2004, 132). When adopted by movement intellectuals, artists, and activists, these resources help construct “movement communities,” among which activists can communicate; “enable public performances” of the movement identity and goals; and “facilitate cultural expression” that mobilize collective action, articulate grievances, and legitimizing protest (132). Hence, the role of social media and digital technologies can be recognized in facilitating communication of the movement's activities, ideologies and goals to the world.

This can be seen in the interactive use of social media as site to consume, produce, and disseminate information, and immediate content among movement communities. This includes, for example, the propagation of video footage of street protests, and police

violence accompanied by calls to join the protests during the Tunisian uprising (Castells 2015, 23), as well the use of visual digital material, archived through online channels, during street performances and screenings to raise awareness and expose regime crimes after the Egyptian uprising (Aboubakr 2013, 243). This dynamic interaction and ‘political synchronization’ between digital and nondigital protest activities have been central in expanding movement communities during Arab uprisings, and in the public performance of the movement identity and ideologies.

For activists, in general, and protest singers, in particular, the Internet, the social media channels, and the digital technologies were both a tool for artistic productions, and a platform for cultural diffusion of movement culture. Protest singers and activists living under the cultural siege of the hegemonic autocracy had to create for themselves alternative spaces of expression and communication. The online platforms generated by activist-artists through digital tools and online channels allowed them to overcome their exclusion from official media, and the absence of free spaces for self-expression. As discussed in the previous chapter, the hegemonic power bloc controls the means of cultural production, as well as the channels of self-expression. By launching their artistic activism online, young protest singers living under the hegemonic grip subverted their exclusion and marginalization, and circumvented censorship. They utilized the alternative media platforms in order to exercise their active agency in the political struggle against autocracy, through self-expression of self-representative national grievances, interests, and demands. In addition, through their active utilization of online media, they deconstructed the monopoly of the regimes and their ideological apparatuses over formation of public opinion. Moreover, the virtual public space facilitated the attempts of activist-artists to battle the state circumscription of the physical public space, with limited confrontations with the official authorities. However, that does not entail that the social media channels were ready-made sites of protest and political participation. Arab activists carved out for themselves a site of protest within the existing online social media channels. If it were not for the activists’ *strategic* occupation and utilization of this virtual space, social media channels would not have played any role in the Arab uprisings, beyond their built-in function as sites for social networking and instant communication.

In addition to being an alternative space, the online platforms and the digital technologies were used by young protest singers as tools in creating their artistic activism. This is particularly significant for aspiring young artists who lack both funding and fame. Launching low-cost productions that have a high chance at visibility and exposure became

feasible through online tools. It was the “communicative autonomy” of the social media channels that allowed for the “viral diffusion of videos, messages and songs that incited rage and gave hope” (Castells 2015, 28). As a result, the technological advancement in communication, coupled with the emergence of a young tech-savvy generation provided the activist-artists with “some tactical advantages” in their sociopolitical struggle for civil rights and liberties, and their struggle against the cultural hegemony of the state, and its monopoly over means of cultural production (Reed 2005, 277). Once again, the tactical advantages offered by the digital technologies, however, would have very little weight on the creation and dissemination of artistic activism if they were not captured by politically-conscious artists and singers, who are committed to voicing the struggles of the people in their protest songs.

The committed protest singers were aware that the violent retaliations of the regime will reach them, even when directing their artistic activism online, away from the physical confrontations with the state security apparatuses. The Arab reality stands in contrast with the notion that the digital stage may provide a certain level of ‘safety’ for online activists, due to the choice of anonymity offered by the online social media channels. In Arab countries, the Internet exists under the authority of telecommunications state officials, which regulate access to online social media, making them subject to state surveillance, infiltration and suppression. This has been proven to be true during the course of the Arab uprisings, when the regime’s targeted protest singers, among various persecuted political activists, intellectuals, and bloggers, who directed their activism through online channels.

El-Haqed spent a one-year prison sentence, for slandering the monarchy and state symbols in his song, “Kilab al-Dawla” (Dogs of the State). This particular song directs its attack to police brutality and corruption in explicitly profane language, as el-Haqed lists the atrocities committed by the Moroccan regime’s security apparatuses. He describes the police as dogs following the orders of the king and his statemen to rob and assault the citizens,

You are paid to protect the citizens,  
Not to steal their money!  
Did your commander order you,  
To take money from the poor?

Despite its language, the song articulates the popular demand for decent human rights, in “a free Morocco.” El-Haqed was arrested and faced prison charges because of this song on basis of tarnishing the image of the police (Freeland 2018, 292). The song was released on

social media, along with a video footage featuring a collage of humiliating photos of King Mohamed VI, his statesmen, and the members of the Moroccan police forces (Boum 2016, 295-296). Although el-Haqed denied copyrights and creative ownership of the video content, the protest singer was convicted of contempt towards public servants, and sentenced to a year in prison (LeVine 2012).

Even for protest singers who tried to maintain their anonymity, and hide their identities behind aliases, while exclusively depending on online social media to launch their artistic activism, the long arm of the security apparatuses still managed to reach them. This was the case for Hamada Ben Amor, a young Tunisian rapper known with his nom de guerre 'El Général.' He released his protest songs on online social media channels, before and during the popular uprising in Tunisia. In November 2010, El Général recorded his rap song "Rayes Leblad" (President of the Country) in a small studio in Sfax, Tunisia, using his alias, and hiding his face with a baseball cap in the video. His song voices direct calls for protest, against the oppression of Ben Ali's regime,

I speak in the name of these people,  
Who have faced injustices,  
And were stepped on!

Following the widespread propagation of the song, and its reception by the outraged masses, the regime directed its surveillance towards revealing his identity. As a result, El Général was detained from his house by the local police. El Général recounts that during the three days of interrogations he was directly asked to stop singing about the president (Walt 2011).

The digital stage was not a 'safe' arena for regime opposition from within the Arab world. Arab activists producing their artistic activism from within the Arab region are aware that maneuvering state repression through online artistic activism is still dangerous. They utilized the online digital platforms in order to maneuver state circumscription of public space, while being aware that state surveillance has reached the virtual public space. Yet, activists recognized the political opportunities in making use of the high-speed visibility, exposure, and connectivity of the digital stage. They capitalized on the immediacy of dissemination of the online social media, through which their artistic activism will be seen, heard, shared, and regenerated, before the regime security apparatuses get a hold of them. Even if they fail to maneuver the state violent retaliation, their artistic articulation of popular dissent, and mobilization for collective action will surely maneuver severe censorship, and suppression of freedoms of expression. For activists living under the

cultural and political siege of the autocratic regimes, the one undisputable advantage of online social media is enabling young activists to ‘outrun’ the regime, yet with no guarantee of the outcome.

## **V. The Digital Stage: Bridging Diaspora**

Whereas activists in the homeland were subject to surveillance and persecution for their online engagement, the diasporic Arab youth enjoyed a freer voice away from the tight grip of the autocratic regimes in their respective homeland. The high-connectivity and wide outreach of the digital stage were of service to activists in diaspora. The virtual public space facilitates the engagement of diasporic artists in the popular contention erupting in the physical public space of their homelands. Launching their artistic activism online guarantees its dissemination across borders, as the online platforms facilitates the mobility of their protest songs. This is the case for various activists including the Chicago-based Libyan American rapper Khalid M.

As an activist, Khalid commits his art to the struggle of the people, as the demonstrations erupted in Libya in February 2011. In an interview with CNN Radio, Khalid affirms, “it was never my intention to be a political rapper, or write political songs... but I felt like I had to stand up with them, in the way I know how” (Sepulvado 2011). With the eruption of popular protests in Libya, Khalid released the song “Can’t Take Our Freedom” in March 2011, in collaboration with Lowkey, a British protest singer and rapper of Iraqi origins. Committing his artistic productions in diaspora to the people’s movement in the homeland, Khalid announces in his song that he speaks “on behalf of the kids in the street,”

Living on their own cause their papa's missing,  
Don't know if he's dead or he's locked in prison  
Disappeared! They considered him the opposition.

Aligning with the struggle of the Libyan people, Khalid highlights the crimes committed by the Libyan repressive state apparatuses against ordinary citizens. This includes unlawful detention, forced disappearances, and assassinations.

The Libyan regime’s response to political opposition has been characterized with violence and brutality. This has marked the personal and collective experiences of the traumatized Libyan people, both in the homeland and in diaspora. As the son of a political refugee, Khalid M. carries his father’s trauma, who had to escape Qaddafi’s political

prisons after being tortured for five years, and right before he was supposed to be executed. In an interview on ABC News, Khalid attributes his musical influence to his family's pain, and the scars on his late father's back (Katersky 2011). The personal suffering of his late father as a political activist resurfaces during the 2011 uprising, when unarmed protestors experienced the violent retaliation of Qaddafi's regime. The Libyan demonstrators were faced with strong military attack, as the state's security apparatuses launched devastating assaults on the center of the uprising in Benghazi (Fraihat 2016, 21-22). The military attack on protestors has followed Qaddafi's orders to "cleanse Libya, inch by inch, house by house," which he announced in his address to the people in February 2011 (Qaddafi 2011). The collective struggle against state violence in the recent popular contention is aligned with the personal trauma of the past in Khalid's song "Can't Take Our Freedom." In addition to committing his artistic activism in diaspora to the movement's political activism in the homeland, Khalid M. uses the family bond as reference to the shared trauma experienced by Libyan people under Qaddafi's regime:

Now I'm a grown man  
Ain't never seen my homeland  
Ain't been closer than a Magic Jack phone plan  
Dad escaped jail and he dedicated  
His life to the cause but he never made it  
This ain't about my father getting retribution  
Or my uncles getting tortured with electrocution  
Other uncles getting hung in public executions  
Just simply coming out with the best solution!

Composed and performed in English, the song is a ferocious articulation of the predicament of the Libyan people terrorized by the repressive regime and its brutality. Aligning the violence his 'father' and 'uncle' experienced in the past with the violence "other uncles" are currently experiencing, he presents a mix between the personal and the collective suffering. Recounting the past trauma in the song mobilizes and legitimizes the present protest against state crimes and the regime supporting it. Moreover, as the virtual dissemination of the song maneuvered the estrangement in diaspora, it reached the people in the homeland to evoke a sense of togetherness and camaraderie in the national struggle.

The collaboration between Khalid M. and Lowkey to produce and release this song highlights the strong identity ties and the shared political interests between Arab artists in

diaspora, and beyond the border of the homeland. Although none of the two rappers has ever seen his homeland, they align the political alienation imposed on them to the alienation experienced by the people back home, who are “disenchanted and dispossessed by the repressive regimes under which they lived” (Monshipouri 2017, 190). Similar to the collaboration between the earlier generation of Rai singers in Western exile, the collaboration between Khalid and Lowkey signifies the diasporic artists’ support to the oppressed masses in their homelands. It reveals how diasporic activists align their political interests and aspirations to their communities back home, utilizing social media as an alternative public space, which they can virtually share and occupy. As a result, the digital technologies facilitated the expansion of “a more unified Arab political space” (Lynch 2014, 100).

## **VI. Street Politics: Collective Struggle, Collective Singing**

In addition to taking over the virtual public space, Arab protest singers turned the physical public space into a defiant musical stage, instead of handing over the street to the oppressive regimes. Their refusal “to exit from the social political stage controlled by the authoritarian states” (Bayat 2009, ix), echoes a song that strikes a chord in the repertoire of Arab music activism; “the street, to whom? The street is ours.” Composed by committed Egyptian poet Salah Jaheen, and performed by the Lebanese singer Majida El Roumy in 1976, the song recounts the tension between a failing patriarchal authority and the defiant youth, in a society torn with despair at the revolutionary dream deferred, following the Arab defeat in 1967. Despite its unmistakable failure, the patriarchy of the failing regime remained relentlessly oppressive of the rising youth, and their hopes for a brighter future. Knowing that “the wide street opens its arms to me,” the young people reclaim their right to the street, as they claim back their future, and their freedom. The hopeful defiance of the song was revived in 2011, during the marches to Tahrir Square in Egypt, as the young people took to the streets to demand the end of Mubarak’s regime.

For the informal people who lack the structured power of disruption, the street is “the ultimate arena to communicate discontent” (Bayat 2013, 12). The street becomes a “political site” when it is actively used by social actors as “site of contestation” of the official authority (Bayat 2013, 52). One young protest singer found in the street the perfect stage for live performances as means of contesting state authority. During the Egyptian

uprising in January 2011, Egyptian singer Rami Essam actively occupied the physical public space to release his protest songs in direct contestation of state authority. Essam turned the street into a creative stage as he engaged the demonstrators in singalongs on Tahrir Square. The collective singing on the street ushers the contestation of authorities over public space. Essam, accompanied by masses of protestors, engage in street politics. The conflict between individuals and authorities is a result of “the active or participative” use of public space, in ways that defies and “infuriates” the state officials (Bayat 2013, 12). Turning the slogan “Erhal!” (Leave!) into a song, Essam and the protesting masses announce the artistic occupation of the public space,

All of us,  
We are one hand,  
We have one demand,  
Leave!

Moreover, performed collectively on the street with a single guitar, this song echoes a category of protest songs referred to as the ‘magnetic’ protest song, for which the primary goal is to harness support for the movement by attracting non-participants, and motivating adherents into joining the collective dissidence, as a solution to the cause of protest (Denisoff and Peterson 1972, 17). Its structure depends on a familiar tune, and simple repetitive lyrics, “which could be sung en masse either without instrumentation or with a simple piano and guitar accompaniment” (17). Essam’s “Erhal!” as a magnetic protest song is a simple four-line song that stresses solidarity and togetherness, by frequently repeating the pronoun “we.” The simple lyrical and musical components of the song facilitate its shared performance on the street. “Erhal!” is composed to be sung en masse during collective acts of civil dissent, such as demonstrations or sit-ins to promote solidarity within the movement, and highlight the agency of movement supporters. As Essam strummed his single guitar on the square, among masses of protestors, without orchestra or organized music production, the song had to be deliberately simple to perform. The “simplistic musical scale” of protest songs facilitate communication of ideas, and audience participation (Denisof 1983, 3). In the meanwhile, the repetition of the pronoun “we” emphasizes the collective engagement in the struggle (Denisof 1983, 25). The call-and-response style signify the collective articulation of shared demands, and reinforce the camaraderie and movement solidarity.

“Leave” was one of the central national demands included in the repertoire of protest chants during the Egyptian uprising. With his guitar and his physical presence on

the Square among the revolting masses, Essam was more of a conductor than a singer, as the orchestra of demonstrating protestors accompanied him in a street performance. As Essam calls out a verse of the song, the protestors join him in a synchronized response resembling a chorus. The call-and-response style of this song turns protestors into producers and performers of the song, not just its consumers. The songs composed as a call-and-response have the ability to “literally and symbolically transform the passive listener into an active participant” (Neuman 2008, 2). This active participation in the public performance of the song reveals collective engagement in the artistic articulation of shared demands and interests. Among the demands shared by the protestors during the Egyptian uprising was the end of Mubarak’s thirty-year rule.

The mobilizing effect of the call-and-response style of Essam’s song was intensified due to its public performance on the street previously confiscated by the local authorities. The street is as where the state authority is manifested and evidently present, since the street as public space is “the domain of state power” (Bayat 2013, 53). The mere fact that the street is actively turned into a musical stage, where ordinary citizens are invited to participate, is contestation of state power. The collective singing turns the street into a site of communication and active participation, subverting of the social isolation and exclusion, imposed by the state. The collective singing, creates “a community of space,” where participants engage simultaneously in synchronization of communicated experiences (Schutz 1976, 177). The impact of the ‘community of space’ created in Tahrir Square is multi-layered. As Rami Essam adopts the square as his stage to voice the movement demands, he, also, joins the demonstrating masses at the picket lines, as one of the protestors. Instead of simply *delivering* a musical performance, he orchestrates a live concert, during which the masses are invited to sing along, giving space in his musical rendition for their shared contribution. As a result, the artistic occupation of Tahrir Square became a political statement of agency, and popular sovereignty over the street. In addition, the street becomes a shared arena where strangers communicate and recognize their mutual interests. Hence, solidarities are enlarged, and collective actions occur (Bayat 2013, 13). The collective singing on the street becomes an expression of self-belonging and self-governance, which intensify the movement solidarity. As William G. Roy puts it, “for social movements, joining arms and singing creates more solidarity, more a sense of “We””(Roy 2010, 89).

Moreover, the live collective performances Rami Essam launched on the Square, during the days of the uprisings created a sense of “collective effervescence”, which is a

moment when a group of people collectively and communally communicate shared ideas, and create unified eruption of emotions. When the demonstrators voice their collective demand, they are empowered, and the influence of the demand is magnified by their collective voices, shared during their peaceful occupation of the public space. As a result, “the initial impulse is thereby amplified each time it is echoed, like an avalanche that grows as it goes along” (Durkheim in Olaveson 2001, 99). The spontaneous collective expressions are in themselves powerful triggers to the overflow of intense emotions, which in the case of the street performance of protest songs may vary from rage to hope. Through collective effervescence during movements, “individuals become less privatized in orientation and more focused upon collective activities, identities and goals” (Crossley 2002, 27). The lyrical content of the song, its call-and-response musical composition, and its performance during a street protest are factors that come together to emphasize the collective agency of the popular masses, and their shared demands. The creative moments are repeated, and the “symbols and narratives” created through collective participation are celebrated, regenerated, and intensified (Crossley 2002, 27). The collective effervescence in Tahrir Square is further intensified as Rami Essam turns the slogans chanted by protestors into songs.

The artistic occupation of public space is solidified as an act of popular political contention when the songs collectively disseminated articulate the movement’s shared demands. Essam voices the discourse of the street protestors, by adopting the “political slogans, popular idioms, and satirical comments” which were coined spontaneously during the protest activities on the ground (Valassopoulos and Mostafa 2014, 649). As the lyrical content of Essam’s political songs is consistent with the demonstrators’ demands, and as the community of space is simultaneously shared, the protest songs and the collective singing become more self-representative. Thus, the singalong style of the song has rendered its political statement more powerful; “this is why states have national anthems, religions have hymns, and social movements have protest songs” (Roy 2010, 90). Essam’s songs successfully voiced the demands of the people, and reinforced the solidarity and commitment of the movement participants.

In addition to challenging the state dominance in the street, and mobilizing solidarity with the protest movement, Rami Essam successfully contested the official media’s representation of youth collective action as civil disturbances. The singalongs, which he organized, dispute and subvert the hegemonic representation of Egyptian young people as vandals, through framing and introducing their collective dissent as acts of

collective creativity and expression of artistic resistance. As a result, the collective singing in Tahrir Square contributed in the protestors winning, “the battle for popular opinion, which no doubt played a major role in the victory for the Egyptian people” (Sanders and Visona 2012, 217). As video footage of the collective singing was propagated online, “the entire world could hear it and sing along” (217).

Whereas most protest singers accompanying the recent Arab uprisings resorted to the virtual public space and social media channels to avoid police violence and state repression, Rami Essam is among the very few Arab protest singers who produced and performed their songs on the street, experiencing firsthand the violent retaliation by the state’s repressive apparatuses. Essam took his songs to the street during collective dissent, and amidst the boiling rage of the regime. As a result, Essam was detained and beaten by the Egyptian security forces, in March 2011.

Upon his release, Rami Essam staged another street performance to condemn the Army officials, then in power. His fearless return to the Square was in itself an act of protest as defiant and resonant as his songs. Essam’s “Taty” (Lower Your Head) sarcastically asks the people to lower down their heads and remain silent to protect the so-called democracy,

When its protector  
Becomes its robber  
when he throws the country behind his back,  
and exploits it in every way possible,  
as the military uniform covers his back,  
Lower your head down  
Lower it down  
You are in a democratic country!

The bruises on Essam’s face intensified the satire in his song. The mockery in the lyric and bruises on his face were emitting joyless laughter among the protestors, who shared the disenchantment following the ouster of Mubarak. The song marks the anguish of the masses at the deferred dream of freedom and dignity in a democracy. Ultimately, Essam was forced to self-exile to Europe in 2014, after threats to his safety, and as pro-military demonstrations took over Tahrir Square (Le Vine and Reynolds 2016, 73).

## **Conclusion**

At the heart of revolutionary momentum, activists recognize and assume their committed obligation to exercising their social and political directives, as spokespeople of the masses against the hegemony of ideological state apparatuses, and the absence of elite intelligentsia. They engage in the production of activism that serves the national struggle for political and social transformation in their respective countries. As they disrupt the spontaneous consensus, on which hegemony is erected, they reveal, articulate, and contest social injustices. During social and political contentions, Arab activists commit their artistic productions to the people's national aspirations and interests. Therefore, they seek in their activism to document a national consciousness that is relevant to the people, in order to establish the new modes of thoughts and definitions required for a total revolution (Gramsci 1992, 9). As movement intellectuals, their artistic activism does not only document the national consciousness of the people, but also documents the movement culture of the struggle.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Protest Songs and the Movement Culture**

Gramsci's strategy for a total revolution does not stop at the deconstruction of cultural hegemony implemented by the power bloc and its ideological state apparatuses. A total revolution is achieved when the state's hegemonic ideologies and interests are disputed, delegitimized, and replaced by the national ideologies and interests of the disenfranchised people. The transformations in ideologies, representations, and consciousness leading to the total revolution represent the cultural turn of popular movements and political contention. The existing conditions and the "underlying values of society" are redefined during "the creative turmoil that is unleashed within social movements" (Eyerman and Jamison 1998, 6). Consequently, movements reconstitute culture and politics, particularly when cultural and artistic expressions are part of the political action repertoire (Eyerman and Jamison 1998, 7). That is when cultural and artistic expressions are used as mobilizing tools during the political struggle, and as cultural artifacts representing and documenting movement identity and goals.

In the context of this study, the creative turmoil is unleashed during the Arab uprisings erupting in the late 2010. Arab youth protest singers are the freedom-fighting guerrillas who composed, performed, and disseminated songs that rallied the national-popular collective will among the dissenting masses during the waves of popular contention in their respective countries. They are the movement activists and intellectuals who defined the movement identity and framed its grievances and demands. The mobilizing function of their protest songs is viewed through their framing activities, which produced 'collective action frames.' The identity, goals, and national consciousness of the movement are examined as features and themes of the movement culture. The protest songs, produced and performed by young Arab activists during the uprisings are the cultural artifacts that diffuse the mobilizing collective actions frames, and represent the movement culture into society, during the political struggle. Their songs highlight the grievances of the popular masses, legitimize their demands, mobilize for their protest activities, and contest the state hegemony.

#### **I. Protest Songs: Cultural Recoding**

Social movements are the site where meanings are *consciously* made and remade

(Eyerman and Jamison 1998, 170). In order to mobilize for collective action against the hegemonic authorities, activists must deconstruct the passive spontaneous consent to hegemonic truths, by engaging in meaning-making, which is “the collective contest over interpretation” (Charles Kurzman 2008, 6). It is the process when the ready-made established meanings and categories of understanding are deconstructed so the people can recognize their human suffering in a different light, and envision the possibility of a different world. Movement activists and intellectuals articulate subversive interpretations and meanings of existing situations and conditions. During movements, the purpose of these subversive interpretations is to dispute and contradict the interpretations imposed by the hegemonic power bloc, while generating alternatives relevant to the movement adherents. In addition, the contentious interpretations motivate collective engagement in corrective action to end oppression and transform society, while demobilizing the antagonistic forces hindering the movement development (Snow and Benford 1988, 199).

The ability of the people “to develop and maintain a set of beliefs and loyalties that contradict those of dominant groups” facilitate mobilization and drive protest (Taylor and Whittier 2004, 163). By deconstructing the interpretation of current conditions as tolerable, movement activists construct an alternative interpretation of these conditions as unjust, and in need of change. Moreover, activists deconstruct the hegemonic passive consensus that social and political transformation is unneeded and unattainable, by framing collective action as functional, and highlighting that change is possible. Thus, these framing activities become the site of the “symbolic contest over which meaning will prevail” (Gamson 1997, 497).

The processes of meaning-making, framing, reinterpreting, renaming, and redefining the existing conditions are forms of “cultural recoding,” which are the agendas of many social movements (Swidler 2004, 34). The Arab regimes and their cultural and ideological apparatuses have sustained and advertised a discourse that interprets and frames police violence as excusable and tolerable to maintain peace and order. With the murder of Khalid Saeed in Egypt, and self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in Tunisia as direct outcomes of police brutality, coupled with the failure of the regimes to maintain state security and citizen welfare, an alternative reinterpretation was due. What was interpreted by the hegemonic state apparatuses as excusable is reinterpreted by activists as unjust. In other words, activists highlight “differing experiences of the same data” (Gusfield 1994, 69). Police violence is recognized by both the regimes and the struggling masses. However, during political agitation, the imposed recognition and state advertisement of police

brutality as a necessity to maintain peace and order are disputed and subverted. Police brutality is reframed as a crime, and articulated as unjust form of state oppression that should be stopped.

As a result, both movement activists and the ruling authorities use “symbolic frames” to interpret “a common field from opposite poles” (Melucci 2003, 356). These symbolic frames may challenge the existing hegemony by rationalizing the mobilization of the movement, legitimizing its demands. On the other hand, the symbolic frames may reinforce hegemony by suppressing movement mobilization, undermining the legitimacy of its demands (356). The unjust conditions and the grievances themselves are the same, and recognized by the people. Yet, the symbolic frames highlight them as intolerable forms of state oppression, and sources of shared grievances. Activists frame injustice and suffering by redefining “as unjust and immoral what was previously seen as unfortunate but perhaps tolerable” (Snow and Benford 1992, 137). This is why the ideological state apparatuses will attempt to publicly destabilize the movement, by normalizing the existing conditions, suppressing oppositional discourses, and delegitimizing the movement demands (Swidler 2004, 34).

The contest over meanings and interpretations, and the cultural recoding do not necessarily mobilize protest activities. Meaning-making during movements can lead to mobilization for collective action to end the suffering, depending on the interpretations and meanings associated with the movement (Kurzman 2008, 6). The cultural recoding must be directed towards the generation of action-oriented frames that tackle and confront the authorities in the public discourse. During political agitation, “when the familiar is dying, but not yet dead,” the battle over frames, representations, and definitions broaden the “space within the universe of political discourse for naming new names” (Jenson 2004, 116). It is in this time of agitation, and in that broadened space in the public political discourse that activists transform the ‘symbolic’ frames into ‘collective action’ frames. This reflects what Stuart Hall considers as “the *work* required to enforce, win plausibility for, and command as legitimate a decoding of the event within the limit of dominant definitions in which it has been connotatively signified” (Hall 2001, 514).

This *work* is revealed in the effort of movement activists and artists to identify the people’s collective demands, aspirations, and interests, and align them with the movement’s goals and collective action. Collective action frames do not *express* injustices and collective grievances; rather frame them as rational and legitimate motives for collective dissent and popular contention. The cultural recoding and subversive framing

mobilize citizen participation, and legitimize protest activities against the power bloc. Activists align “the cognitive orientations” of the movement adherents, with the goals and demands of the movement in order to galvanize activism (McAdam 2000, 255). Collective action frames do not only point fingers at oppressors, but direct the blame towards the oppressors, and demand their downfall. Hence, collective action frames generated and diffused during social movements articulate shared interpretations and consciousness, which not only differ from the dominant ideology, but also challenge and contest it (Benford and Snow 2000, 614).

In addition, the collective action frames must be “consistent with what people have observed and experienced, and address issues seen as important” (Van Dyke and Taylor 2019, 489). As a result, activists construct “common scripts” of the existing suffering and the possible transformations, in response to institutions and ideologies against which the movement arises (Swidler 2004, 38). These common scripts represent the shared grievances, demands and aspirations, as well as the identity of the movement and its goals. During the confrontations with the power bloc and its apparatuses, the common scripts are represented in the movement culture. The movement culture has a mobilizing capacity, because it fosters solidarity, shape collective identities, and ultimately drive collective action (Johnston and Klandermans 2004, 23). The collective action frames that result from the cultural recoding, subversive interpretations, and the meaning-making process in a given movement, among its participants and adherents, construct the movement culture. The present study argues that the collective action frames are generated and diffused publicly and collectively through the cultural texts and the artistic artifacts of the movement culture, particularly protest songs. These artistic and cultural artifacts are deployed during the movement to express, document, and diffuse the movement culture into the wider culture in society.

## **II. Features of the Movement Culture: Creative Articulation of Dissidence**

The creative articulation of dissent is the foremost feature of the movement culture accompanying the Arab popular uprisings. The expression of dissent to the current conditions is legitimized when the injustices are described and accentuated. Young Arab protest singers articulate political dissent, through the creative expression of shared grievances at state corruption, police brutality, miserable living conditions, and suppression

of freedoms. These grievances are galvanized when they are framed as injustices caused by the regimes in power. As a result, they become the legitimate motives for collective dissidence. The injustice frame is further effective when it involves depicting the current conditions as evidence of the regime failures, hence legitimizing the call to end its rule.

Emel Mathlouthi, a young Tunisian protest singer, has been taking to the streets and independent stages of France, Egypt, and Tunisia years before she becomes the voice of the Tunisian revolution. Performed in the Tunisian Arabic vernacular, her song “Kelmeti Horra” (My Word is Free) is considered the anthem of the Tunisian uprising. The song opens with Mathlouthi dedicating her song to the collective calls for freedom of expression. Although debut in a street concert near the Bastille, France in 2007, the song has reached young Arabs, especially Tunisians, through YouTube video footage. In January 2011, Mathlouthi gave a street performance of her revolutionary anthem, as she joined the protestors in a sit-in on Bourghiba Avenue, in Tunisia:

I'm meaning amid the chaos,  
I'm the right of the oppressed,  
Sold by these dogs,  
Who rob their daily bread,  
And slam the doors in the face of ideas.  
I'm the free who do not fear,  
I'm the secrets that do not die,  
I'm the voice of those who won't surrender,  
I'm free and my word is free!  
Don't forget the price of bread!  
Don't forget the cause of our misery!  
Don't forget who betrayed us in our time of need

The song is an articulation of the grievances, miseries, and injustices endured by the people in Tunisia. It is a statement of frustration and indignation at the poor living conditions, the rising poverty, state corruption, and the suppression of freedoms. Although the song makes no political demands, it addresses the Tunisian people, asking them not to forget the causes of their injustices and oppression, while reminding the people that they have the ability to speak up against the oppressors. In 2015, Mathlouthi performed this song at the Noble Peace Prize Ceremony.

This song reflects the definition of the protest song as being statements of dissent that stress “individual indignation” during political agitation, even when they do not propose solutions (Denisoff and Peterson 1972, 18). Although the song has been composed years before the uprising in Tunisia, the song functions as a protest, not just against the poverty, state corruption, and confiscation of freedoms, but as a protest against the regime that betrayed its people, and caused their suffering. While asking the people of Tunisia to always remember the cause of their misery, Mathlouthi’s song employ the injustice frame as accenting device to emphasize and punctuate the existing conditions as intolerable injustices, and to legitimize the eruption of mass dissent in Tunisia. It is important to note that the framing of injustices and suffering does not entail inventing *new* problems or grievances, rather to signify and interpret them in different light. The song describes the roots of the people’s suffering, and frame them as source of moral indignation and frustration. By repeatedly asking the people not to forget, Mathlouthi frames the injustices in order to galvanize righteous anger- the anger that follows the meaningful conscious realization of the human suffering and its causes, and “the kind of righteous anger that puts fire in the belly and iron in the soul” (Gamson 2004, 91).

The creative articulation of dissidence as a feature of the movement culture is accompanied by the injustice frame. By listing the real causes of the suffering, the injustice frame and the righteous anger associated with it cannot be dampened or neutralized. The abstractness and vagueness in the depiction of the injustices diffuses the indignation (Gamson 2004, 91). On the other hand, listing the crimes and failures of the regime concretizes the framing of injustices, and the articulation of moral indignation and righteous anger. This ultimately renders the injustices legitimate motives for collective action. This has been clearly displayed in Rami Donjwan’s rap song “Ded El Hokouma ” (Against the Government), which is a long list of the atrocities committed by the Mubarak’s regime in Egypt. As the Tunisian uprising shook the core of the regime’s dominance, Egyptians shared a call for mass demonstrations to protest police brutality, and state corruption. Accompanying the call for demonstrations, Rami Donjwan’s song was the first Egyptian protest song to be released and propagated on social media. Donjwan’s song can be seen as an introspective eyewitness statement, comprising an “outburst of desperation” (Denisoff 1968, 231). Hence, it focuses on voicing the grievances, in order to highlight indignation, as well as to condemn the official authority and the dominant system. Released January 2011, weeks before the Egyptian uprising, the song raps, in a bitter wrathful tone,

the constant violation of basic human rights, state aggression against ordinary Egyptians, and the humiliation experienced by ordinary citizens under Mubarak's regime.

The song's opening verse states that the words to come are "among thousand evidences" to justify standing against the government,

Your blood is shed,  
Killing you is justified  
Your nation is torn  
Your religion is targeted  
Your voice is muted  
They eat away your rights  
They've just killed your brother  
And the rest of the people are suffering to death!  
If you live, you have no worth,  
If you die, you have no price!

Donjwan's rap song lists the regime atrocities, consistently stressing the degradation of human decency, and worthlessness of human life. The song brings forth the justifications and motives for the popular uprising in Egypt. Listing the regime crimes in the song is a narrative of "horror stories" depicting the negative experiences against oppressors in a dramatic and compelling manner that justifies and mobilizes involvement in the movement (Fine 2004, 135). The regime atrocities are depicted and framed as horror stories in the song to inspire righteous anger and agitate the struggling masses. In addition, the culprit in the horror story is identified as the regime and its associates. The frustration, anger, and resentment are explicitly directed towards the government, described in the song as a "savage gang that snaps its claws in you and me." The collective action frame of injustice in this song legitimizes the call for dissent, and for downfall of the government, to end the 30-year-long oppression. Moreover, the legitimization of collective dissidence comes as reclamation of human worth, as Donjwan calls Egyptians in the final verse to stand against the government and shout out, "I stand against the government, because I have a worth."

Moreover, the creative articulation of dissidence as a feature of the movement culture diffused in the protest songs represents the movement identity, not just in the lyrical component but also in the musical component. The hybridity in music form and lyrical content are employed in the protest songs to reflect the movement identity, particularly in countries where civil divisions are among the collective national grievances articulated in

the movement. This has been clearly illustrated in protest songs in Sudan, such as “La LeI Diktatoreya” (No to Dictatorship), composed and released by Nas Jota, featuring Sudanese rappers el-Sadiq, Mista-D, and Ayman Mao. The song mixes rap with reggae music; and standardized Arabic, with Sudanese vernacular, and the English language. The musical hybridity of the song is a statement of protest against division, and a form of activism towards unity and inclusion. As the Arab uprisings continued their domino effect, the people in Sudan marched in January 2011 against the rising poverty rates, the increasing surge of gas prices, in addition to the regime policies concerning the secession of South Sudan, and the ongoing armed conflict in Darfur. Voicing their opposition to the civil war, social injustice, and state corruption, the protest singers repeat a chorus in Standardized Arabic language stating “no to dictatorship, no to the authoritarian government.” The song’s repeated repudiation asserts the aroused indignation at the failure of the Sudanese regime that combines both Islamic fundamentalist ideologies with military autocracy. In addition to emphasizing the regime violence as a source of collective grievances, the song focuses on accenting the failures of the regime as legitimate motives for collective dissidence.

This stylistic hybridity is employed as both poetic and political strategies to frame civil fragmentation as a collective injustice endured by the Sudanese people, while asserting the unity of the people in their collective demands, despite the regime policies and discourse aiming to tear the people and the land apart. The stylistic hybridity emphasizes a theme specific to the movement culture accompanying the Sudanese uprising, which is subverting the fragmentation caused by state policies and official discourse. The Sudanese Islamist military state under the leadership of el-Bashir has pushed forward their Islamist agenda by excluding non-Islamists from governmental positions, while advertising a discourse that frames this exclusion as reform and ‘empowerment’ (Kadoda and Hale 2015, 217). The song in its form and content highlights the failure of the military Islamist regime at unifying its citizens and its land, especially concerning the secession of the predominately-Christian region of South Sudan, as well as the regime failure to resolve the civil war in Darfur that was instigated by the state persecution and oppression of non-Arab ethnic groups. While al-Bashir’s military Islamist regime has been fueling the sectarian and civil divisions in Sudan, young musicians promoted inclusion and diversity through the stylistic hybridity and musical fusions in their protest songs.

The song produced by Nas Jota subverts the state discourse fueling the civil strife and sectarian divisions, by employing multiple voices from different geographical locations

to contribute to the song using their different languages and musical styles. From North Sudan, el-Sadiq raps in the vernacular commonly used in the northern region in Khartoum, as his verse criticizes the crimes of “the gangs” holding on to their chairs, stating “I am the people; who overruled their fears, and stood up to resist.” Moreover, the South Sudanese Mista-D, residing in the USA, takes stylistic hybridity to a different level. He employs codeswitching in his verse, shifting between the Sudanese vernacular, and English- the official language of South Sudan. Thus, he reveals South Sudan’s dual identities, as well as the hate and division experienced by the people of this geographical territory. That is why Mista D’s opens his verse stating that the people “only ask for love and equality,” as he switches between the English language and the Sudanese Arabic,

Till when we’ll be living like *jobana* (cowards)

*Gowa hilitna* (inside our neighborhood) like a *sojana* (prisoners)

We never speak the truth cause *lisanna* (our tongue)

*Marbot ma fy amana* (tied up, no honesty)

....

Till when we’ll be living in *dolomma* (darkness)

22 years *w ma gadrin netlamma* (and we can’t get together)

In addition to highlighting Mista D’s South Sudanese origins and multicultural identity, the codeswitching is paired with lyrics that articulate the frustration of the people against the regime tearing them apart for decades. By accenting and stressing the regime’s failure to achieve the national demand of the people to come together in peace, the song legitimizes collective dissent against the failing regime.

The movement culture generated during the Arab uprising featured the creative articulation of dissidence using the injustice frame. During encounters with authorities, the subversive framing of injustice calls society’s attention to the authority’s wrongdoings to intensify the mobilization for protest (Gamson 1997, 501). Whether by accenting regime atrocities or regime failures, the injustice frames diffused in the protest songs is crucial in subverting the attempts of the ideological state apparatuses at portraying the uprisings as disruption of peace, and unlawful episodes of public disturbances. The battle over interpretations and cultural recoding discussed earlier is successfully won by the activist-artists and the struggling masses, at the initial stages of the uprisings. This is necessarily attributed to the concreteness of the injustice frames, which were too solid and too real to be contained or neutralized. The powerful eruption of dissidence and the furious explosion

of anger and resentment were legitimized not just because the goals are rightful, but because the indignation is righteous and justified.

The protest songs that articulate the creative dissidence build an elaborate injustice frame through problem identification and punctuation. The function of the injustice frame employed in these songs is to discredit the foundations of the regime legitimacy, by highlighting its crimes and failures. The awakening function of injustice frames associated with the creative articulation of dissidence are crucial for movement development and agitation. Agitation “dislodges” people to take action by changing the notions they have about themselves, and about their rights and demands, particularly in situations when the people take their suffering, abuse, and injustices for granted (Blumer 1995, 65-66). As a result, the creative articulation of dissidence in the protest songs is diffused in the movement culture for the purpose of cognitive liberation of the masses from the hegemonic truths that allow the continuation of oppression as a misfortunate fate. Consequently, the political protest activities, such as the marches, sit-ins, and mass demonstrations were portrayed to the public opinion as the necessary manner to end the injustices and oppression.

### **III. Features of the Movement Culture: Blame Attribution**

Framing and punctuating the injustices, failures, and crimes will be sufficient to raise awareness, yet insufficient for mobilization towards transformative action. Therefore, collective action frames develop a mobilizing function by attributing blame, and assigning responsibility for corrective action (Snow and Benford 1992, 137). In addition to identifying problems, activists are involved in frames of blame attribution. Just as the concrete depiction of the regime’s crimes and failures is crucial for the injustice frame, the explicit identification of the targets of protest is significant for the blame attribution frame. This frame identifies individuals or structures as the “culpable agents” who cause or sustain the unjust and intolerable conditions (137). Blame attribution is one of the frames employed in the protest songs accompanying the Arab popular uprisings. It is revealed in the songs addressing the president, or the state officials. These songs externalize the blame, and point fingers at the autocratic regime, while subverting the internalization of blame imposed on the masses by the regime and its apparatuses. This can be seen in the ‘open-letter’ style of the protest songs.

Almost a month before the eruption of mass protests in Tunisia, the Tunisian rapper

El Général, produced “Rayes Leblad” (President of the Country), addressing the Tunisian president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. He released his song on social media in November 2010, on the anniversary of Ben Ali’s coup against former president Habib Bourguiba. Hoping to remind Ben Ali of a similar fate, the song is a confrontational open letter, calling “Mr. President” to take a look at the miserable conditions of his people. With rage, El Général voices his resentment, illustrating the humiliation witnessed by Tunisians at the hands of the police forces, and their total disregard of constitutional human rights,

Go down to the street and see!  
People are treated like animals.  
See the police with batons,  
lashing around like they don't care,  
There is no one to tell them “no”!  
Even the law that's in the constitution,  
Means nothing to them.

The outrage and the moral indignation in the song are coupled with the direction of responsibility to the president, asking him to see the injustices committed against his people. By addressing the president, El Général holds him accountable for the arbitrary violence committed by the police against his citizens.

Police brutality and state corruption have been the causes of long-standing resentment against the regime in Tunisia, as well as various Arab countries. El Général blames Ben Ali for the police’s violent assaults against citizens, and the total disregard for the laws. It was during Ben Ali’s regime that Tunisia turned into “an oppressive police state,” as the specialized internal security forces “increased fourfold” by orders of Ben Ali (Burns 2018,75). As a result, the Tunisian people grew resentful of the corruption and repression under the firm control of the police state, which stifled the democratic possibilities of the Tunisian society (Burns 2018, 77). As the state president, Ben Ali failed to protect his citizens, implement the laws, and keep his security forces under control. Hence, he is blamed for the injustices and oppression experienced by his people.

Therefore, in addition to identifying the problem, and framing the suffering of the Tunisian people in his song, El Général blames these injustices to the failure of president Ben Ali. The video accompanying the song opens with a footage of Ben Ali, addressing a hesitant young schoolboy, and asking him to speak up freely without worry. The footage itself sets the stage for the direct confrontation with “Mr. President” in the song. Prefacing

the song with this particular footage is significant, since it brings forward Ben Ali's "abortive conversation" with the younger generation, with which El Général identifies (Gana 2013, 215). With the goal of breaking the wall of silence and fear among the Tunisian youth, El Général released his rap song as a "belated response" to Ben Ali's incitement to have a conversation (215). By directly addressing the president, through the open-letter style of the song, along with the video footage, and the lyrical content of the rap song, El Général attributes the blame to Ben Ali, and holds him accountable for the rising poverty and unemployment rates, as well as the miserable social conditions of the people, "eating from the trash" while fearing the violent retaliation of the police if they speak up.

Loaded with resentment and indignation, "Rayes Leblad" broke the climate of fear that persisted in Tunisia for a quarter of a century, during which "no politician had dared to criticize a president in power" (Wright 2012, 116). Realizing that liberty is an illusion, and freedom of expression is nothing but "an empty promise", El Général assigns himself the responsibility to speak up, at a time when the uprising was not a remote possibility,

Mr. President, you told me to speak without fear  
Here it is, but I know I will end up being slapped  
I see too much injustice  
That's why I chose to speak  
Though many have warned me  
I will end up hanged!

El Général released his song 'in the name of the people' to articulate their grievances and demands, and to represent their national consciousness. He admits that the oppressive political reality in Tunisia has led many people to stay silent in fear of regime retaliation. Although El Général reminds Ben Ali of his insistence to initiate a conversation with the young boy, and Ben Ali's comforting invitation to speak without fear, El Général acknowledges his awareness of the violent repercussions of so doing.

The song is a bold open-letter that voices the people's blame to Ben Ali for the pitiable social, economic, and political conditions in Tunisia. As a result, the song legitimizes the popular demand for the president to step down, since he is the cause of the people's suffering. In other words, coupling problem identification with blame attribution, the song develops a mobilizing function, because it legitimizes the collective action to end the suffering, and remove its cause. By identifying the injustices caused by the police state, and holding the president accountable for these injustices, El Général sets the stage for the

growing population of Tunisian youth to break the silence, and to demand the end of their suffering, and the downfall of Ben Ali's regime.

The blame attribution in 'open-letter' protest songs is, also, seen in "Ya Sayed ya Mas'oul" (You, Mr. Official!) performed by Egyptian band, Salalem. Released in December 2012, the song addresses president Mohamed Morsi, the first elected president after Mubarak's resignation. The song blames the Islamist president for the people's growing mistrust, condemning Morsi for "dividing us," and threatening the social fabric of the Egyptian society. This was one of the national concerns arising among the Egyptian citizens under Morsi's regime. Just like having a politically dominant Islamist party, the growing division was alarmingly new. Moreover, the song voices the people's demands for the president to stop shadowing "his party and their sick tongue", and to represent the people, who "see through the cracks of your lies." Mohamed Morsi was supported by the Muslim Brotherhood and its right-winged political party, The Freedom and Justice. During that time, Islamists dominated the parliament and the committee designed to reform the Egyptian constitution (Burns 2018, 121). In addition to driving the young generation out of the political center, and marginalizing the non-Islamist political groups, the band blames the Islamist officials in the government for imposing their Islamists ideology and agenda to the Egyptian society, through proposed constitutional amendments,

Stop messing with my constitution,  
And call it religion.  
For when one demand his right,  
Ends up killed.  
As long as we hope,  
The right to the revolution is granted!  
Mr. Official, say something!

The blame attribution in this song accompanied protests erupting against Morsi in the same month of December 2012. Through January 2013, protests grew massive and spread all over Egypt (Tilly and Tarrow 2015, 136). During the same time, *Tamarod* movement (Revolt), initiated by Egyptian youth activists in 2013, collected signatures for petitions demanding the end of Morsi's regime (Sika 2017, 69). By listing the regime's failures and the people's disappointment, the blame attribution in Salalem's song contributed to breaking the façade of legitimacy, behind which Morsi and his regime were protected.

Another Egyptian protest song directed towards the president is M.C. Amin's

“Mabrouk” (Congrats!). Amin criticizes president Abdel Fatah el-Sisi for receiving support from pro-Mubarak allies, and for running for presidency, despite his original stance against military interventions in Egypt’s democratic transition. The song, also, blames el-Sisi for supporting the anti-protest law, following the revolutionary momentum in January 25<sup>th</sup>, and June 30<sup>th</sup>. The rap song offers a ‘warning’ against oppressing freedom of expression, and disregarding the people’s demand for liberty, because “beware! the third wave will be mayhem.” Released in 2014, this protest song is one of the most sophisticated rap songs accompanying the Arab uprisings, since MC Amin is a professional rapper, who has been active for years prior to the Egyptian uprising.

The most interesting feature of the song has been its intertextual inclusion of reference to four pro-regime and pro-military songs, by major Arab pop stars,

Blessed the Hands that brings back the rights of my brothers,  
Good news! The Revolution still lives in my country,  
Long, Live, Egypt that was sold out by so many,  
Each One of Us is not satisfied with our status quo!<sup>5</sup>

“Teslam el Ayadi” (Blessed the Hands) is pro-military song performed by a group of Egyptian and Arab pop singers in 2013, to support the Egyptian military forces after ousting Morsi and ending the Islamist regime. “Bushret Khir!” (Good News!) is performed by Emirati singer Hussein el Jassmi in 2014, to celebrate the unity of the Egyptian society, following the divisions and conflicts under Morsi’ regime. “Tahya Masr” (Long, Live, Egypt) was performed in 2013 by Syrian pop star Asalah, in support for the Egyptian military. “Wahed Menena” (One of Us) was released by Egyptian pop star Amro Diab in 2008 in celebration of Mubarak’s birthday (*el-Mojaz* 2020). The subversive re-appropriation of the pro-regime songs is employed to produce a protest song that directs blame and criticism towards the same regime the original songs were composed to praise. The subversive re-appropriation in this protest song depends on capturing the discursive tools in the original songs that were used to voice a discourse of praise and support to be used to voice a discourse of blame. Such boomerang effect is caused by the subversive re-appropriation, by which the official discourse is deconstructed and reframed as a self-serving counter discourse. Such efforts resembles the works of culture jamming, which is

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تسلم الايادي اللي ترجع لي حق ولادي<sup>5</sup>  
بشرة خير الثورة لسنة حية جوا بلادي  
تحيا مصر اللي ناس كتير باعوها عادي  
واحد واحد مننا على وضعنا مش راضي

used by movement activists, who take “elements of mainstream culture and put a movement twist on it” (Reed 2005, 301). Artists take over existing cultural content, in order to subvert its meaning, for the purpose of “exposing the ways in which corporate and political interests use the media as a tool of behavior modification” (Dery 1990).

The result is “semiotic defamiliarization,” through which activists-artists contribute to the battle of cultural recoding and subversive interpretations (DeLaure and Fink 2017, 6). Activists engage in “creative acts of popular intervention” when they adopt, rework, and appropriate the existing cultural content and symbols, in order to “contest meanings and challenge dominant forms of power” (6). On the one hand, culture jamming was initiated as a form of protest to delegitimize corporate powers over the market by “parodying advertisements and hijacking billboards in order to drastically alter their messages” (Klein 2009, 280). However, in the case of MC Amin, he delegitimizes the state power over the political market by parodying a regime advertisement, and hijacking their propaganda songs. As a result, he subverts not just the lyrical content of the existing songs, but also contests and subverts the pro-military discourse advertised by the state’s media apparatuses. The ‘subvertising’ of the regime’s discourse, while addressing the president acts as warning against following the pattern of previous rulers.

By directly addressing the president, head of the state, and the regime officials, the protest songs places a concrete target for their protest and criticism. The framing of injustices is associated with blame attribution, in order to direct corrective action towards or against the individuals or social structures responsible for existing suffering (Snow and Benford 1992, 137). Therefore, protest singers identify the causes of injustices, while pointing fingers at perpetrators. In other words, by attributing the blame to the president and the officials, protest singers do not only contest the legitimacy of the regime, but also assert the legitimacy of collective dissent against it. Moreover, protest singers subverts the internalized blame experienced by the disenfranchised masses, or imposed on them by the autocratic regimes and their hegemonic apparatuses.

#### **IV. Features of the Movement Culture: Motivating Hope and Responsibility**

In contrast with the moral indignation, and framing of injustices, the movement culture features the arousal of hope, and the motivation of responsibility as tools for political mobilization. The framing of hope and responsibility is diffused in protest songs

as recitals of the movement's "accomplishments and glories" directed towards solidifying the commitment in the movement (Denisoff 1983, 8). These songs emphasize "the theme of remedy in the movement" which makes people "intellectually and emotionally" involved in the protest activities (Denisoff 1983, 9). These songs inspire hope by framing the movement goals as attainable, in order to subvert the despair and hopelessness imposed by the power holders to encumber calls for change. Moreover, in contrast with blame attribution, these songs emphasize the internalization of responsibility, in order to instill in the masses the sense of duty to join the struggle, and transform their realities. This is why hope and responsibility are important features of the movement culture. When injustices are common sense, and taken for granted, resistance is also framed as "hopeless and fraught with peril" (Gamson 1997, 498). Therefore, injustice frames are not enough without the reframing of liberation and revolutionary transformation as attainable through collective action. The central function of the motivational framing is "moving people from the balcony to the barricades" (Benford and Snow 2000, 615).

So as to articulate hope in movement and motivate responsibility, protest singers address the people, in a call to arms, to empower and motivate collective action. These songs highlight collective agency, and assert the power of the people. In other words, instead of suggesting "that something can be done," they assert that "*we* can do something" (Gamson 2004, 90). This can be seen in El Général's second song, launched as the demonstrations started to gain momentum in Tunisia, and as he became the voice of the Tunisian street. El Général released "Tunis Bladna" (Tunisia is Our Land) in December 2010. Directed towards the demonstrating masses, the song aims to sustain a growing solidarity as the popular protests spread across Tunisia. The song is composed as a declaration of war against "the political mafia" of Ben Ali's regime, while legitimizing the right of the protestors to claim their homeland back from its oppressors (Gana 2013, 219),

Tunisia is our homeland,  
its people will never give up  
Tunisia is our homeland,  
Hand-in-hand  
Tunisia is our homeland,  
Today we ought to find the way!<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The song is originally composed in the local Tunisian dialect. The lyrics are translated into English by Nouri Gana (2013, pp. 219).

The song is a powerful expression of camaraderie in the defiant uprising against Ben Ali's regime. The song motivates the people to join the protest activities by internalizing the responsibility to reclaim their country together, "hand in hand," and to end the suffering by all means possible, "by politics or by blood." El Général's growing popularity and the wide spread of his songs made him a target for the regime, and an important icon of liberation for demonstrators. While his song propagated widely as a national call-to-arms, he was detained by the local police. The people organized a protest against his detention demanding his release, while demanding the ouster of Ben Ali. Realizing the danger, as well as the magnitude of his artistic activism, El Général "stopped being scared, and I had this huge pride" (Walt 2011). His arrest by the local authorities intensified the pride in being part of the movement. Arrests and suppression are recognized as confirmations of the power of the movement as a threat to authorities (Gamson 2004, 95).

Shortly after his release, El Général produced another rap song "Tahya Tunis" (Long Live Tunisia!) to sustain the solidarity. This song is "a message to the state officials," who got so comfortable in their seats. However, it is not a message to attribute blame, rather to invite them to witness the glory of the Tunisians who are engaged in self-liberation, and "moving mountains" for their land. Dedicating his song to the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the movement, and to his comrades, the Tunisian youth, El Général glorifies the movement "against twenty-three years of oppression and colonialism,"

The Tunisian to the Tunisian shows mercy  
Together we worked this out  
2011 is the uprising and all thanks to the youth  
We're the solution, not the problem  
We are claiming our freedom back,  
Hand in hand, all the nation!

The song emphasizes the shared determination and togetherness in the fight for freedom, and frame them as sources of hope and further mobilization. The movement's persistent endurance against adversity, and towards a "collective purpose" is the morale of the movement (Blumer 1995, 70). This morale is fortified by deep conviction in the "rectitude" of the movement and its demands, as well as the attainability of its goals (70). By celebrating the youth of Tunisia, and their national solidarity to reclaim back their freedom, El Général fortifies the conviction in the rectitude and righteousness of the movement, and reinforces the commitment and endurance in the collective action. That movement morale

is based on the shared utopian faith that “what is evil, unjust, improper, and wrong will be eradicated with the success of the movement” (Blumer 1995, 70). El Général’s first public performance was held two weeks after Ben Ali had fled the country, and sharing the stage with him was Bouazizi’s mother (Wright 2012, 118).

While the framing of injustices include horror stories of regime atrocities, the framing of hope is expressed as an overly-idealistic utopian world. Motivating hope and responsibility is a feature of the movement culture that empowers the masses to sustain their protest activities, particularly when the confrontations with authorities become violent. This is reflected in the song “Ithbat Makanak” (Stay Put), released in January 2012, by the Egyptian rock band, Cairokee, a year after the ouster of Mubarak. The band prefaces the song’s music video with a disclaimer, dedicating the song not just to the martyrs who lost their lives, but also to the comrades still holding on to the revolutionary dream of democratic transition of power, particularly after the violent confrontations with authorities during the first wave of the Egyptian uprising in January 2011, and the second wave in December of the same year. In response to the growing mistrust and persecution of the opposition by the military body then in power, the Egyptian band Cairokee released their song, to empower the people to keep holding on to their dream of freedom,

You demand dignity,  
They respond with insults  
You call for justice,  
They call you a traitor!  
Stay put!  
This is exactly where you belong.  
Fear fears you.  
Your conscience never betrayed you.  
Stay put!  
You are the light at dawn  
Your chants are louder  
than the sound of bullets and betrayal

While emphasizing the contrast in the political discourse between the protestors and the regime, the song glorifies the movement and its adherents, in order to intensify the collective determination and the morale of the movement. The tenacity in the call to stay put despite the adversities motivates responsibility in the collective struggle, especially

when combined with the assertion of agency and courage. Cairokee managed to assign responsibility to every Egyptian to “stay put, shoulder to shoulder” with their “brothers” and comrades. Motivating responsibility is intensified with the emphasis of the esprit de corps during protest activities. The recognition of the shared struggle motivates the identification with the shared responsibility towards collective action.

After the downfall of both the Egyptian and Tunisian regimes, Libyan rapper Ibn Thabet addressed the people in his song, “Nedaa l Shabab Libya” (A Callout to Libyan Youth). Ibn Thabet released his song in February 2011, as the uprising broke out, with a direct call to young Libyans to join hands in a mass protest, and flood the streets,

The oppressed should now become a mad dog  
to reveal his rage,  
for barely living on change,  
certainly the cost is calculated,  
certainly loved was the one who is sacrificed,  
it was certainly written by God,  
freedom is our demand, and justice is what we seek.  
the number of the people who are fed up is magnificent  
the reason is simple; it is the ignorant colonel  
the entire nation wants complete transformation  
we will fight to the end like Tamil tigers!

The song strikes a balance between inspiring hope and expressing rage, between the determination and faith in the movement and its rightful demands, and the cost of the lives lost and sacrificed during the movement. It reflects the view of protest songs as being innately “unpleasant and disturbing,” because they are influenced by the political and socioeconomic circumstances, in which they emerge (Greenway 1953, 3). They are unpleasant and disturbing towards the oppression and the oppressor, as they voice the people’s resentment and anger. The resentment in the song is directed towards the “ignorant colonel” Qaddafi. In his address to the Libyan people, Qaddafi described the protests as sedition, and forms of deviance, ‘*fitna*.’ Ibn Thabet responds that the true *fitna* is the “nonsense” Qaddafi spreads. Ibn Thabet has contended that protest singers are not leaders, but voices of the people in their communities, stating “we put into rhymes what our people are thinking, but are often too afraid to speak” (Ibn Thabet 2012).

These protest songs motivate responsibility by highlighting the collective loyalty and devotion to the goals of the movement, after decades of collective suffering under autocratic regimes. By asking the people to recognize the power of their voice, and legitimacy of their demands for freedom, justice and democratic transformation, the protest singers intensify the esprit de corps, solidarity, and shared experience of camaraderie that echo the shared experience of suffering. As a result, they motivate collective responsibility to end the oppression. In addition, the songs counter despair by motivating hope of the inevitable success of the movement. The hope of a better future subverts the fatalistic acceptance of the status quo. To contest and delegitimize state hegemony, the people must subvert the fatalistic fearful acceptance of oppression. The popular masses challenging oppressive power blocs “must lose the sense of fatalism, inevitability and personal inefficacy which ordinarily prevails among oppressed groups, so as to develop a sense of their own collective capacity to change society” (Crossley 2002, 114). However, protest songs do not counter despair by drawing a false image of the current conditions. They rather subvert the despair associated with the struggle for transformation, by associating the protest movement with hope for a better future. Yet, they, also, frame and emphasize the strength, courage, and agency in the struggle. The assertion of hope and the ultimate achievement of movement goals are significant in sustaining the collective responsibility, particularly during hardships and setbacks, such as regime backlash, and the ideological state apparatuses to reduce the movement and its adherents to traitors. By portraying the movement as “a sacred mission,” the hardships and setbacks are viewed as “occasions for renewed effort instead of disheartenment and despair” (Blumer 1995, 71).

## **V. Features of the Movement Culture: Peaceful Dissidence**

The representation of the movement as deviant and destructive- by the ideological state apparatuses and official media- hinders the development of the movement, threatens the legitimacy of its collective action, and jeopardizes the public opinion’s support for its demands. This “stigma of criminality” restricts the development of the movement, delegitimizes the protest activities, and limit participation. It, also, legitimizes the exercise of violence and repressive power against the movement under the guise of maintaining public order, and protecting public property (Denisoff and Merton 1974, 261). Anarchy, deviance, destruction, and immorality are images that official media discourses have associated with youth movements and dissenting collective action, during the initial stages

of the Arab uprising in the turn of 2010. As a result of advertising such hostile images, the public opinion may stand unsympathetic when the riot police ushers “unwarranted force” to disperse, arrest, injure, or murder the protestors (Denisoff and Merton 1974, 261). Ultimately, the stigma of criminality facilitates the curbing of the movement’s protest activities, including demonstrations and marches, while legitimizing violence against movement participants, such as beatings and arrests (Denisoff and Merton 1974, 262).

In order to counteract and subvert this hostile portrayal and representation of the movement, the young Arab protest singers asserted the movement identity as peaceful. The movement identity is articulated in the lyrical content of the protest songs that repeatedly declare the peacefulness of the Arab uprisings, and the rejection of any armed violence. In addition, the peacefulness of the Arab uprisings is illustrated in the use of artistic activism, even during violent confrontations with repressive authorities. Non-violent collective action is a powerful weapon “especially in a situation where the opponent had a near monopoly on the tools of violence, and where the use of that violence was often legitimated by public opinion” (Reed 2005, 30). The brutality of the repressive state apparatuses was always followed by “the anesthetization of violence, including martyrdom” (Werbner et. al 2014, 16). The movement identity of the Arab uprisings as non-violent collective action has been emphasized in the chant “peaceful” shouted out by thousands of protestors in various countries of the Arab world. During the Arab popular uprisings, young protestors “devoted considerable energy to defining themselves as peaceful actors and demarcating themselves from armed actors” (Beinin and Vairel 2013, 5). The hegemonic attempts to exclude opposition by framing and interpreting their collective actions as disturbances to the public order is subverted by reframing collective actions as collective work of art.

In December 2011, Egyptian security forces walled the streets leading to Tahrir Square with concrete blocks, barricading street entrances into the Square. The police had managed to violently evacuate the Square and the streets in its vicinity by dispersing the sit-in, and attacking protestors, during the events known as the Mohamed Mahmoud Massacre (Sika 2017, 68). As an act of revenge, Egyptian graffiti artists turned the concrete blocks into murals. The wall was a live representation of everything the Egyptian uprising stood against: the violence, oppression, and exclusion. Egyptian activists painted the cement blocks that were built to restrain them. Instead of being the state’s repressive tool, it is reframed and reinterpreted as the artists’ activist tool. Instead of portraying the state discourse of control, the wall is used to deliver the people’s discourse of agency. This subversive re-appropriation of the wall becomes intensified when looking at the content of

the paintings. The wall that what was supposed to be a tragic reminder of the massacre was covered with portraits of the martyrs, commemorating the victims of the massacre. Instead of being the state's warning to people in the movement, the wall is subverted as a reminder of state crimes, and the victims murdered. The wall that was supposed to suppress the protest was covered with cartoons mocking the army officials in power. The wall was re-appropriated by activists to subvert and deconstruct the state agenda, and voice self-serving discourse. This subversive re-appropriation of the 'wall' deconstructs and subverts the exclusion and oppression intended by the state's decision to build the wall. For months, the walls surrounding Tahrir Square were painted clean by the state after every graffiti appeared; but a new graffiti appeared the following day. In response to violence and exclusion, young Egyptian activists resort to non-violent activism.

Yousra al-Hawary, an Egyptian female independent singer, collaborated with poet Waleed Taher, and released "el Sour" (the Wall), in April 2012, about what the wall represents to ordinary Egyptians, reinterpreting and reframing the political and social significance of this wall. With a colorful music video that documents the graffiti work produced by her fellow activists, she plays her accordions in front of the cement-block wall to sing,

In front of the wall  
In front of who built it  
In front of the wall  
In front of who made it higher  
And in front of who stands to protect it  
Stopped a poor man, and peed!  
On the wall,  
On who built it,  
On who made it higher,  
On who protects it,  
The poor man just peed!

The collective action frame employed by al-Hawary's collaboration with Taher is not to interpret injustices, but to dramatize the vulnerability of the state. The song, with its smooth melody, humorous tone, and colorful music video, does not only belittle and demean the state's agenda to constrict access to the Square, but also expresses how the 'poor man', and the masses on the street interpret the wall, and the state erecting it. The song voices the

people's re-appropriation and reinterpretation of the wall, in contrast with the regime's intended agenda. In addition to underlining the vulnerability of the state, the song asserts the ability of the 'poor man' to recognize such vulnerability by simply 'peeing' on the regime's display of its power. The dramatization of state vulnerability is a collective action frame employed for purpose of mobilization against state suppression. This frame is displayed through murals commemorating the martyrs, comics satirizing the regime, and songs reflecting the popular view of state exclusion, and reframing the image of 'the wall'.

The hostility associated with the wall is re-appropriated and subverted in al-Hawary's song to be reframed as a site for humor. Even if the wall does not come down, it is no longer the prison it is intended to serve. It is a canvas for protest, or site for poor people to practice their defiance. The boomerang effect of the subversive re-appropriation is irrevocable. So is the active agency behind recuperating the state's display of power to be claimed by the people as a display of their own power. In addition, it counters the ideological state apparatuses' representation and framing of young protestors as violent outlaws responsible for civil destruction. The song and the other forms of activism assert the peacefulness and creativity of popular protest. As a result, al-Hawary's song legitimizes dissent, not just to the violent state, but also to the quiet non-participants through the public display and performance of non-violent peaceful protest.

The episodes of state violence and police brutality "generated a tremendous outpouring of artistic responses" (Werbner et. al 2014, 11). Ayman Mao, a self-exiled Sudanese hip-hop artist, renowned for his strong rap, and blunt criticism of al-Bashir's policies, collaborated with Nas Jota in their song "*la lel dictatoreya*". Unlike his counterparts who address the people to say no to dictatorship, Ayman Mao addresses al-Bashir, with a goal to "scandalize" him and his security apparatus for the arbitrary arrests, and the excessive use of force, with "snippers" and "mercenaries" to curb demonstrations. Ayman Mao articulates the popular demand for a peaceful movement. He reminds al-Bashir that despite the excessive violence, the people came together in peaceful protests to say "no,"

In Abou Rowf [North], people said no!  
In Ras Lanof [West], people said no!  
They broke the silence, and said no,  
With no Molotov!  
It is a peaceful, peaceful protest,

though people are thrown in jail.  
For my country to stay protected,  
I hold the mic instead of a riffle.

The song describes the peaceful resistance, along with national solidarity against the state-induced civil division. The song emphasizes the unity in the collective demand for a peaceful non-armed protest, in the face of the regime's violent retaliation. The movement identity as peaceful, unarmed, and artistic is diffused in the lyrical components of the protest songs, as well as the choice to engage in activism during the protest activities. This becomes particularly important since concepts of protest and collective dissent are alarming and new in a region seemingly quiescent for decades under autocracy. The official discourse advertising state authority as keepers of peace and order has to be contested and delegitimized, for dissidence to be delegitimized. During the Arab uprisings, the violent and disruptive agents have been the regime and its state apparatuses. Framing and defining the collective "we" should be typically in opposition with "they," while highlighting the different values and interests (Gamson 2004, 99). The decision to opt for artistic protest and non-violent dissent is emblematic of the movement culture of the Arab uprisings, because it asserts the distinction between the movement's self-image against the regimes' attempts to criminalize it.

It is noteworthy to add that Arab youth have been progressively taking a stand against the troublesome living conditions, the rising poverty and unemployment rates, as well as political exclusion and state corruption in their local communities. Young Arabs successfully managed to mobilize the ordinary masses who were excluded under authoritarian regimes (Sika 2017, 11). Through their political, social, and artistic activism, they manifested their power in altering the dynamics of politics in the region. They have engaged in "creating and disseminating messages and images to define themselves on a public stage" (Herrera and Bayat 2010, 363). In Arab countries, "youth and students had taken the place of the proletariat as the major agents of political change" (Bayat 2013, 108). They were the direct victims of rising unemployment rates, poor living conditions, and police brutality symptomatic of Arab realities. Youth and students' mass actions were, as Touraine argues, "the beginning of an active critique of society" since they realized oppression, articulated demands against hegemony, and contributed in mobilizing mass movements (Touraine in Jones, 1969, 26). However, Arab youth remains constantly pushed to the political margin by the regime and its apparatuses. Arab youth have been recognized

in the regimes' official discourses as "the builders of the future" yet remains chased by the stigma of being "disruptive" agents prone to political, social, and moral deviance (Herrera and Bayat 2010, 3). Yet, during the recent acts of political dissent in the Arab world, the young people opted for peaceful artistic activism in the face of violent repression. Through their peaceful articulation of dissidence, and their non-violent attempts to achieve political transformation, young Arab protest singers embodied the faith and doctrine, which Tawfiq al-Hakim has hoped the young generation will bring; "noble ends are reached by noble means!" (al-Hakim 2015, 38).

## **VI. Features of the Movement Culture: Pan-Arab Camaraderie**

One of the defining features of the Arab popular uprisings has been "the diffusion of protest across state borders" (Dupont and Passy 2011, 448). The ripple effect of the Arab popular uprisings were accompanied by a heightened sense of connectedness, both in suffering under autocratic regimes, and in the struggle for political transformation. Upon Ben Ali's flight and the downfall of the Tunisian regime, the rest of the autocratic Arab regimes and their ideological apparatuses insisted on portraying the popular uprisings as isolated events. Determined to disrupt the domino effect from reaching their borders, the ideological and media state apparatuses continued to advertise a 'national' discourse that highlights that 'we are not them'. The popular uprisings, however, spread across national borders, and motivated further protests as they flowed. The correlation between the uprisings was motivated by their shared grievances and demands. This connection was evident "most saliently through tangible aesthetic allusions and inter-textual citations" (Werbner et.al 2014, 14). The allusions and inter-textual citations are manifested in the shared slogan "The People Demand the Downfall of the Regime." Activist-artists adopted slogans and musical refrains from protest activities that existed outside their country. The back-and-forth "audio citation and intertextuality" in the artistic activism of Arab youth have been key elements in the spread of the protests (Werbner et.al 2014, 15). Subverting the regime state-national discourse, young Arab protest singers managed to bridge their national-popular consciousness, to reflect pan-Arab connectedness arising among the people of the region.

The collaboration between Lowkey, the British rapper of Iraqi origins with Libyan American rapper Khalid M, in "Can't Take Our Freedom" in March 2011 is reflective of the rising pan-Arabism and camaraderie among activists in Western diaspora. The collaboration between diasporic Rai singers in the 1990s differs from the collaboration

between Khalid and Lowkey since the two young artists do not share the same country of origin, but share the Arab identity. Their collaboration represents the sentiment of pan-Arabism associated with the recent waves of Arab uprisings. The song addresses how the struggle for justice and freedom overcomes national identities, and crosses borders of both exile and homeland, despite the regime shutdown of communication networks,

From Millbank Tower (London) to Tahrir Square (Cairo)

Nobody can deny it's a fact we are there

....

You must have known from the rust on your throne

That you couldn't maintain by cuttin' the phones

Justice alone will sustain our presence

Tunisia to Libya, Bahrain to Yemen

The song, composed and performed in the English language, mobilizes comrades everywhere in the Arab world and Western diaspora to take a stand against oppression, as the waves of popular protests ripple from one Arab country to the other, spreading hope at the possibility of toppling decades of autocracy. The collaboration between Khalid and Lowkey was not the first of its kind, where Arab protest singers in diaspora came together to produce one song, voicing the same national-popular consciousness, despite not sharing the same country of origin.

Palestinian-American composer Sami Matar, Syrian American rapper Omar Offendum, Canadian R&B singer Ayah, Iraqi-Canadian rapper The Narcicyst (Narcy), American Rapper Freeway, and American dub/def poet and rapper Amir Sulaiman came together, releasing the song “#Jan25 Egypt,” in February 2011, days before the ouster of Mubarak. Omar Offendum explains in an interview that although none of the artists are of Egyptian or of Egyptian descents, the song is composed in solidarity with the Egyptian uprising in Tahrir Square, and in alignment with the “universal struggle for human rights,” for which the Arab uprisings call (Offendum 2011). The rap collaboration “#Jan25 Egypt” reveals a growing pan-Arab unity among young people, who collectively engage in “chanting down dictators.” As the protest movement travels from one Arab city to the next, the collaboration between protest singers in Western diaspora transcends nationalities, and extends to a communal opposition to all autocratic regimes in the region,

Bouazizi lit the poof and it slowly ignited

the fire within Arab people to fight it

From Tunis (Tunisia) to Khan Younis (Palestine),  
the new moon shines bright as the man's spoon was,  
as masses demand rights  
And dispel rumors of disunity,  
communally removing the tumors  
Of rotten hukoomas (governments)

The artistic coalitions between young Arab protest singers stand in stark contrast with the “rumors of disunity” advertised by the authoritarian regimes and their ideological state apparatuses that persisted in their attempts to break the domino-like momentum of the uprisings. As news of Ben Ali fleeing Tunisia reached Egypt in January 2011, the regime in Egypt and its ideological state apparatuses propagated a discourse that “Egypt is not Tunisia” (Saeed 2016). Al-Basheer addressed his citizens in January- ironically enough- *before* the protests erupt in Sudan, stating that the Sudanese people would not start an uprising as the one in Tunisia, calling those expecting the protest movement to reach Sudan “delusional” (El-Sawy 2011).

After the ouster of Mubarak in February 2011, Qaddafi’s son addressed the Libyan people in hope of reminding them that “Libya is not Egypt nor Tunisia” (Abdel Sattar 2011). Ibn Thabet responded to Qaddafi’s statement that Libya is not Egypt nor Tunisia, by opening the music video for his song “Nedaa l Shabab Libya” with statistics. He compares the number of martyrs fallen, as well as unemployment and poverty rates in Libya to those in Egypt and Tunisia. He then reminds the people, “so it's true what they say, Libya is not like Egypt or Tunisia!” The ouster of both the Tunisian and Egyptian presidents encouraged Libyans to pursue their own liberation. Ibn Thabet recounts how Libyans celebrated the ouster of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, as they realized that the revolutionary transformation will find its way into their lands, and that “it would be our turn next” (Ibn Thabet 2012). Libyan American Khalid M. shares the same sentiment with his fellow Ibn Thabet, as he articulates in his “Can't Take Our Freedom,”

And now I'm having visions and dreams I shouldn't see  
Like could it be this close? Nah it couldn't be!  
But if the people in Egypt and Tunis could do this,  
decide their fate...then why wouldn't we?

The contrast between the state discourse, and the dicourse disseminated by young protest singers in their songs reveals a deeper disparity in the national and pan-national

consciousness of the people in the movement, and the false national consciousness the state imposes by means of the hegemonic ideological apparatuses. Unified by one slogan traveling across the Arab world, “The People Want the Downfall of the Regime,” the movements swept the region. The young protest singers formed coalitions, beyond boundaries of geographical location, languages, and national ties. Through their musical collaborations, they motivated and celebrated pan-national solidarity and camaraderie, and articulated the collective struggle under oppressive regimes. Realizing that their predicament as well as their remedy are the same, young Arabs collaborated to express shared demands for freedom, human dignity, and social and political transformation.

## **VII. Artistic Activism as Alternative National Archive**

Thus, the struggles for and against hegemony produce the competing versions of national history, as different factions in society always struggle for the power to represent the ‘nation’ and to voice the national consciousness (Billig 1995, 71). This explains why, in his interview with Bill Moyers, Chinua Achebe describes storytelling as a threat to anyone in control, “a storyteller has a different agenda from the Emperor” (Achebe in Moyers 1988). Storytelling, according to Achebe, ensures the creation of history, a memory of survival. At the heart of this history are the people, giving necessary meaning and context to their struggles. Therefore, the agenda of the storyteller is to articulate and document the national struggle, as conducted and perceived by the people, not as mandated by the Emperor. The narrative of the struggle recorded by the storyteller becomes part of the collective memory, shaping the people’s national consciousness, “the knowledge that people have suffered here...have battled here” (Achebe in Moyers 1988). The result is the creation of a struggle narrative reflective of the people, and their interests, demands, grievances, and the way they see themselves. Activism is a counter-hegemonic platform, through which people’s struggle narratives and their national consciousness are articulated and documented. Surviving the struggle, as Achebe puts it, “will be meaningless” if the popular history of the struggle is not told.

The *artivistic* documentation of the narrative of the popular struggle poses two threats to hegemonic power blocs. First, it is a documentation of an alternative consciousness where the people’s national ideologies are not in the margin. This alternative history breaks the singularity of the official narrative, through which the hegemonic power bloc and its ideological apparatuses popularize the particular national interests of the state

as general and public. The documentation of an alternative history becomes counter-hegemonic articulation of the struggle. It guarantees the continuation of the national-popular consciousness as well as the national-popular collective will in the movement, as opposed to their interruption or omission from the grand official narrative of the nation. Second, the *artivistic* documentation is an alternative documentation of history by which the artists depend on their own creative talents to document the national-popular consciousness. In addition, artists devise modes of expression, and generate public platforms outside the direct grip of the state. The creative documentation of the struggle narrative shapes the consciousness of the people regarding the struggle itself, predominantly the popular agency. Whereby the struggle is popular, so is the narrative documenting it. This agency is reflected not just in the ability to articulate self-reflective and self-serving national ideology, but also in managing to generate alternative channels to voice this ideology, when the state exercises violent suppression. The national-popular consciousness becomes embedded with new definitions and aspirations of the national struggle, which does not correspond and may not be assimilated into the official state-national consciousness.

Historicizing and documenting counter-hegemonic narratives and resistance literatures usually follow the conclusion of the struggle with liberation, and does not occur concurrently with the revolutionary struggle (Kanafani 2015, 7). This can be attributed to the political and cultural siege enforced on any active production of ‘storytelling’ by the struggling masses. Furthermore, the hegemonic monopoly of the means of expression and documentation denies the oppressed people the right to get their demands and aspirations heard, propagated, and archived. The national-popular consciousness may exist, but its documentation is interrupted. The national-popular discourse risks omission from the official state-national narrative, and means of expression. Such interruption and risk of omission become of great concern, raising the question: where does the national-popular discourse stand *during* the revolutionary struggle, and before it ends with liberation? The power dynamics of contestation and safeguarding of hegemony determine how “national histories” are being written or rewritten, as the unofficial becomes official (Billig 1995, 71). During the Arab uprisings and popular political contention, the national-popular consciousness collided with the state-national. However, the national-popular consciousness remained archived through youth activism, in the cultural and artistic artifacts constituting the movement culture. Artistic activism, hence, becomes an alternative national archive of the struggle, documented *during* the struggle.

A year after the Egyptian uprising successfully managed to bring about the downfall of the regime and mandated freedom of expression, the Egyptian Minister of Media decreed the ban of Cairokee's song "Matloub Zae'em" (Leader Wanted). The first wave of the Egyptian uprising had ended when the song was released, in March 2011. The song has been consumed and shared through social media for a year, before its annoying debut on the national radio music station in 2012. Upon hearing the song, the Minister immediately called for its ban from national radio, in March 2012, because of its "offensive" lyrics (Abdel-Gawad 2012). Written as a vacancy advertisement, the song calls for a leader, listing down all the characteristics and responsibilities to be assumed by this leader,

A Leader wanted  
Who doesn't call a coward wise  
Who has a good ear,  
Who can hear our heart beats,  
Who belongs among us,  
Never to live in mansions,  
While some of us, unfortunately,  
Live in graveyards,  
To drink and eat our food,  
To love like one of us,  
To hear us,  
To consult us,  
To accept our opinions,  
And at times of danger,  
We surround him,  
And sacrifice our lives,  
With him.

The song is a direct listing of the demands of the people concerning their upcoming president. The song demands that their leader guarantees the young Egyptians the freedom of expression, social equality, and human dignity, absent during Mubarak's regime. The song was released at a time when Egyptians were ready for their first democratic election after the ouster of Mubarak.

This song expressed the national demands of the young generation, who were seeking a leader to bring about the revolutionary transformation, or as Amir Eid, Cairokee's

lead singer, puts it, the song called for “a savior” (Kamal 2019, 161). For 30 years, Egyptians have been denied the right to choose a president. When the chance came, they decided to make direct demands, exercise their active agency, and express their national consciousness. This song and similar cultural productions accompanying the popular struggles shall always remain excluded from the official channels. In other words, the state will not allow the expression of freedom and popular agency as part of its official national discourse, to be disseminated to the entirety of the constituency through official media and platforms, despite being the shared national interests of the people. Whether it was the wording of the song that called for its ban, the exercise of self-governance, or the sheer fact of its propagation on a national radio station, it was clear that state would not tolerate the national-popular discourse to be advertised through its official channels. However, this song and many others around the Arab world survived as a form of instant historicizing of an alternative narrative. This narrative will continue to articulate and archive the national consciousness of the people.

## **Conclusion**

The repertoire of protest songs accompanying the Arab uprisings presented a counter national discourse during key episodes of political contention. The young Arab protest singers engaged in cultural recoding and framing processes for the purpose of cognitive liberation and micro-mobilization. Through the framing and reframing, the protest songs subvert the state-national discourse, delegitimize the regimes’ interests and ideologies, and legitimize the calls for freedom of expression, economic reformation, social justice, and regime change. The protest songs identify and accentuate regime failures and crimes in order to contest its legitimacy, reinterpret the current conditions as unjust and oppressive, and ultimately, legitimize dissidence and communal rage. The youth protest songs do not only *express* collective grievances, rather frame them as rational causes for moral indignation and righteous anger, hence legitimate motives for mobilization against the regimes. Coupled with blame attribution, the protest songs identify the perpetrators by externalizing blame, and internalizing responsibility and active agency to end the suffering. Moreover, the protest songs assert solidarity within the movement, announcing collective loyalties and devotion to the movement goals, particularly when the protest activities are under attack by regime violence. The loyalties and solidarity extend across borders, as the youth protest songs emphasize pan-Arab camaraderie in the popular struggle towards

human rights, social justice, and democratic transition of power. Moreover, while the state and its ideological apparatuses employ a discourse that criminalize the protest activities, and associate its participants with disruption of peace and order, the protest songs assert the identity of the protest movement as peaceful and artistic. The protest songs frame the movement goals as attainable in order to subvert the fatalistic acceptance of the status quo advertised by the ideological state apparatuses.

## Conclusion

The popular uprisings erupting in various Arab countries in late 2010 were accompanied by a rise in youth protest songs. As ordinary citizens took to the streets to protest against oppression and corruption, in their respective countries, calling for social, political, and economic reformation, young Arab activists composed and performed protest songs to voice dissent and mobilize collective action against autocratic regimes. While being critical and subversive of the state-national consciousness advertised by the regime, and its media and cultural apparatuses, youth protest songs articulated and documented an alternative national consciousness that is reflective of the people's national aspirations, interests and demands. Arab protest singers have produced artistic productions that accompanied the popular movements in their respective countries, giving rise to an authentic self-expressive national-popular consciousness that replaces the state-national consciousness imposed on the people.

Youth protest songs are a form of activism against hegemony. They are the creative articulation of protest against police brutality, state corruption, unjust social conditions, and degradation of human dignity. These protest songs are, by their very existence, a symbolic protest against exclusion and marginalization. The explicit political activism in the songs is an act of communal reclaiming of the voice and public space. They disrupt the public amnesia imposed by the singularity and centrality of state-national discourse. By representing the national-popular consciousness of the disenfranchised masses, as well as their identities and sentiments, these protest songs document the narrative of the popular struggle, and resist omission from the state-national history. To make claims, voice demands, and articulate dissent under repressive conditions, young Arabs used protest songs as instrumental and expressive tools of artistic activism. The protest songs composed and consumed during the popular movements in their respective countries are significantly tied to their political and sociohistorical contexts. In addition to being instrumental, they are transient and temporal in their subversion and reframing potential.

Protest songs are instrumental in communicating and documenting the people's collective demands, interests, and their national consciousness during the popular uprisings. Yet, the aim of the present thesis was not to solely analyze the lyrical content of the protest songs deployed during the Arab uprisings. This thesis attends to the sociopolitical context, opportunities, and constraints through which the protest songs as

movement cultural artifacts were produced and disseminated. Moreover, the thesis recognizes the powerful limitations, which young Arab protest singers had to maneuver during their artistic activism, in order to voice the demands of the people, and solidify the identity of the movement.

The point of departure of this research is Antonio Gramsci's model of a total revolution examined vis-à-vis the popular uprisings erupting in various countries of the Arab World at the turn of the year 2010. The theoretical framework of ideological hegemony, its apparatuses and mechanisms is critically investigated pertaining to the Arab reality, to address the overarching research question; how Arab young protest singers voice the people's political grievances, interests, and demands, while deconstructing the regime's cultural and ideological hegemony, in order to set the foundations for counterhegemonic self-defining consciousness that is both national and popular. It is realized that Arab protest singers utilize their songs to engage in militant activism against the autocratic regimes in their respective countries. Singers like Rami Essam and Emel Methlouthi launched public performances on the street, among the demonstrating protestors. Rami Donjwan, El Général, Cairokee, el Haqed, MC Amin, Salalem, Ibn Thabet, and Yousra al-Hawary released their protest songs online. Nas Jota and Khalid M. launched their activism in diaspora in collaboration with other young Arab activists such as Lowkey and Omar Offendum in different diasporic communities. The selected songs are either, essentially, made available by their producers for public use via street performances, or small-scale recordings released on social media channels simultaneously upon market release, or via social media channels as the only medium.

The first question this research tackles is concerned with the political context of cultural hegemony, in which protest songs and activism emerge. This has been done by reviewing Gramsci's concepts of hegemony, national-popular collective will and consciousness, and the organic intellectuals, as well as Althusser's ideological state apparatuses. The limitations of the Gramscian model have been studied and investigated, in order to address the key concept of repression emblematic of the Arab reality. It is realized that Gramsci's conception of the total revolution does not pay enough attention to the effect and extent of state repression and regime violence omnipresent in the Arab reality. The research offers an insight on the violent confrontations between young protest singers and the repressive security apparatuses. The unlawful detention of El Général in Tunisia, the beating of Rami Essam in Egypt, and the persecution of el-Haqed in Morocco are forms of repression practiced by the autocratic regimes against peaceful artists who

commit their artistic activism to the service of the people. The research also highlights that these episodes of violent repression are continuation of the legacy of regime repression, censorship, surveillance, and persecution of militant protest singers.

The second question this research investigates is regarding the interaction of protest singers with society. Gramsci's models of the organic intellectual and the traditional intellectual were examined, along with the model of the popular intellectual proposed by Baud and Rutten. While Gramsci's organic intellectual depend on placing the proletariat at the heart of the revolutionary struggle, the popular intellectual reflects the commitment of the intellectuals and activists to the entirety of the struggling masses. This research contends that the political directives and the social significance of the protest singers in society are revealed in their commitment to the people during the struggle. The sociopolitical context of the popular political contention determines the significance of the artist in society. In addition, the commitment of the protest singers is revealed in their artistic contribution to the struggling masses, and not necessarily in their association with a political party or movement. Some protest singers are movement intellectuals who associated themselves directly with the political movement, such as el-Haqed who explicitly expressed his political affiliation to the 20 Feb movement in Morocco, and Nas Jota that coordinated their activism with the political activities of the *Girifna* Movement in Sudan. Protest singer such as Rami Essam engaged in street politics as he joined the demonstrating masses, coordinating his music performances with the protest activities in the street. Yet, this does not reduce the political directives and social significance of the protest singers who committed their artistic activism to the service of the people in the movement, without being present on the political street, and without explicitly announcing their political affiliation with the movement. This point in particular underlines the limitations of the models of intellectuals proposed by Gramsci, and calls for the need to theorize a model that represents the Arab reality and its hostile conditions.

It is worth-mentioning that protest singers did not depend on a specific genre. While Emel Mathlouthi used soft indie-folk tunes, Rami Essam wavered between acoustic music forms to rock. Cairokee and Salalem bands depended on soft and hard rock in their protest songs. While rap has been an effective tool utilized by youth around the world, it was not the only genre used by young Arab protest singers during the popular uprisings. Young Arabs employ rap music in their political activism to voice their defiance against the regimes, and to vent "long-standing and pent-up frustrations and grievances" (Monshipouri 2017, 190). Yet, the emphasis on rap at the expense of other protest songs leads to the

“virtual exclusion” of other genres, especially local and nationalist forms of music (Swedenburg 2012). This exclusion may identify the movement in Western media, but undermine the role of local and nationalist art forms in mobilizing the movements (Swedenburg 2012). However, young Arab protest singers struck a balance by using rap as a genre of music along with lyrics in variations of the Arabic language, and vernacular dialects of their respective languages. The hybrid they created by mixing their various local dialects, with standardized Arabic, and foreign languages such as English and French, in their rap protest songs reflects the identity of these young Arab activists.

In addition, the research examines the forms and platform used by the protest singers to communicate their activism. As they recognized their moral obligation to surrender their artistic talents to the service of the popular movements, young protest singers, both in the homeland and in diaspora, announced their commitment to the people. Protest singers redefined oppression as intolerable and unjust, and framed the liberation and transformation as possible and attainable. As movement intellectuals, young protest singers managed to document the national-popular consciousness of the people, as well as the movement culture of the popular uprisings. Online social media has been a tool utilized by protest singers in their public performance while maneuvering state censorship. It facilitated the instant propagation and diffusion of protest ideas among the movement communities, across countries of the Arab region. The young protest singers managed to employ political synchronization between their digital and non-digital activism. For activists in diaspora, online social media platforms have been significant in communicating and diffusing the movement culture and movement identity. In addition, the online platforms allowed the diasporic protest singers to contribute to the movement culture. By producing and disseminating artistic productions from the margin through the virtual public space, Arab protest singers circumvent the state repression. Moreover, the online channels allowed the Arab activism to travel beyond borders, and spread expansively. This is due to their ability to bypass the severe repression of the authoritarian regime, and simultaneously connecting people “across the globe, and across the street” (Elsewi 2011, 1198).

The synergy between spontaneous on-street compositions, and recorded online productions; and between the physical and digital presence of protest singers and their activism spread the ripple effect across the Arab region. It, also, facilitated the immediate engagement of expatriate protest singers in the struggles of their comrades in the homeland. Yet, more than this, such synergy has a further significance in documenting the movement culture. This “multi-presence” sustain the movement culture, as well as movement

solidarities and aspirations. The multi presence of Arab activism in the street and through the digital stage guarantees the survival of the movement culture after the movement itself is concluded; in other words, “after the streets have become empty of protestors, and the joy of revolutionary exuberance becomes the grind of struggles against counterrevolutionary forces that have learned from the mistakes that led to the original outbursts” (LeVine and Reynolds 2016, 72). The multi-presence of Arab activism strategically participate in the documentation of the alternative archive, and the alternative movement culture that emerged with the Arab uprisings. The online channels facilitate the engraving of the movement culture, and its artistic artifacts in the collective memory, even when excluded from the grand narrative of the nation.

Moreover, Arab autocratic regimes employ their ideological state apparatuses to advertise and manipulate a state-national discourse that impose blame on the masses for unjust social and economic conditions. Hence, the ideological state apparatuses propagates enduring injustices and oppression as a national duty, in order to maintain a façade of social order. In addition to disputing the legitimacy of this state-national discourse, Arab activists employ protest songs as alternative documentation of an alternative national-popular consciousness. Youth protest songs reflect the features of the movement culture, which in turn reflect the national-popular consciousness of the dissenting masses in their respective Arab countries. These features include the creative articulation of dissidence, blame attribution, motivating hope and responsibility, peaceful non-violent protest, and pan-Arab camaraderie. During popular uprisings, Arab protest singers subvert the state-national consciousness by attributing blame to the state and its officials. Instead of accepting the internalization of blame, youth protest singers list the atrocities committed by Arab despots, in order to externalize blame, and delegitimize the despotic regimes, hence legitimize dissidence against them. The protest songs voice a national-popular discourse, through which blame attribution is directed towards the corrupt state, while the responsibility to act is shared by both the people and the reformed regime. Motivating responsibility is another feature of the movement culture and the alternative national-popular consciousness, by which protest songs communicate a call to arms, to end oppression, and take a powerful stand against autocracy. The inspiration of hope diffused in the protest songs subverts the fatalism and fear leading to acceptance of oppression.

Young protest singers have constantly highlighted their commitment to non-violence, and to peaceful protests, as one of the features of the movement culture. They have articulated this commitment, not only in the lyrical content of their songs, but also in

their choice to sing-back at the regime, even during the most violent confrontations with authorities. This decision to sing-back at the regime has affected the people who would tune in during the popular protest activities to find their demands and interests articulated in artistic and cultural productions. As “peaceful” was the main slogan chanted by millions of protestors around the Arab region, non-violent opposition is a main feature of the movement culture and the national-popular consciousness. Therefore, the protest singers highlight and reflect non-violence through the lyrical content of their songs, as well as their commitment to sing-back to the regime, even after being brutalized, harassed, or imprisoned by the authorities. The furious rage against police brutality is pronounced in the songs, not in violent confrontations.

Therefore, youth protest songs facilitate the process of cognitive liberation, deconstructing passive consensus to the state-national discourse, on which the regimes’ hegemony is constructed. By disputing the dominant ideologies and representations advertised by the ideological state apparatuses, Arab youth protest songs contest the intellectual leadership through which hegemony is manifested in society. In addition, Arab youth protest songs subvert the legitimacy of the regimes by contesting their ideologies and discourse. By asserting that injustices will end, instead of being unsusceptible to change, Arab youth protest singers liberates the masses from the fatalistic acceptance of injustices as a status quo, beyond change. The hegemonic power bloc and its ideological state apparatus, as discussed earlier, do not restrict awareness, but restrict the expression and any active exercise of such awareness. The subordinate masses under hegemony recognize their suffering, but fail to act upon this recognition. Adding the elements of repression and surveillance significantly evident in the Arab reality, autocratic regimes impose cultural and ideological constraint on the people, which is conducted “not by limiting what people can think, but by limiting what they can say” (Polletta 2008, 90). In addition to deconstructing the imposed state-national consciousness, protest singers express and articulate the national-popular consciousness and discourse, which were restricted for decades under despotism.

The most evident success of Arab protest singers is how they reflected and disseminated the movement culture into the mainstream culture, which previously encompassed only the state-national discourse. This study of Arab protest songs revealed that the songs are a documentation of the national struggle and the national-popular consciousness, which will outlive the political activism. The protest songs, which are by their very nature ephemeral, will lose their mobilizing function, when political contention

fades. Most protest singers who committed their artistic productions to the popular uprisings found it difficult to continue the same line of work as the movement was constrained by the transition towards reform and stability.

The protest songs composed and performed by young Arab artists are the cultural and artistic artifacts deployed during the Arab popular uprisings, in order to mobilize for collective action in their respective countries, and diffuse the movement culture into society. These songs empower the people to assume the responsibility of ending their suffering under hegemonic regimes. They recruit and mobilize participants to join the protest activities. They strengthen the attachments and commitment to the movement. They inspire hope against the dominance of fear. They voice the movement identity, and its values, aspirations, and demands, particularly to the public opinion witnessing artistic forms of mass dissidence and civil disobedience. Youth protest songs are a performance of the movement culture, and the movement identity. They present subversive re-appropriations and reinterpretations of the existing conditions, and the dominant ideologies. In the most pessimistic sense, when the popular uprisings attain none of their demands; when the movement culture is contained; and when the contestation of hegemony is defused by the ideological state apparatuses, the national-popular consciousness remains successfully documented in the protest songs, and the diverse forms of activism deployed during the Arab popular movements. The cultural recoding and the self-agency through self-representation are irrevocable. Hence, these specific moments will always be part of the national-popular history of the region. That is why it is crucial to document activist art and the movement cultures in close connection to their context of production, dissemination, and consumption during popular uprisings; this is the aim of this thesis.

Moreover, the Arab citizens recognized the need for active citizenry, what Asef Bayat coins as “art of presence,” which refers to “the skill and stamina to assert collective will in spite of all odds by circumventing constraints, utilizing what is possible, and discovering new spaces within which to make themselves heard, seen, felt, and realized” (Bayat 2010, 249). This thesis concludes that the irrevocable transformation has occurred in the Arab world as Arab citizens recognize the position of cultural transformation, as preceding to political transformation. Their ability to detect interpretations and reinterpretations, in addition to their capacity to engage in meaning-work and cultural recoding that are self-serving and self-representative are evidence that the Arab popular uprisings have transformed the normal politics and the official culture of the region. If these changes are overlooked, it will seem like the Arab uprisings have failed.

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## Discography

- Amin, MC. “Mabrouk/ El Moga Al Talta” [Congratulations/ The Third Wave].  
Asalah. Tahya Masr [Long Live Egypt!]  
Cairokee. “Ithbat Makanak” [Stay Put].  
Cairokee. “Matloub Za’eem” [Leader Wanted!]  
Cheb Khalid. “el Harba Wain” [Where to Flee?].  
Darwish, Sayed. “ya ommy lih tebky a’lia” [Why Mother Weep for Me].  
Diab, Amr. “Wahed Menena” [One of Us]  
Donjwan, Rami. “Ded El Hokouma [Against the Government].”  
Dylan, Bob. “Masters of War.”  
Dylan, Bob. “The Times They Are A-Changin.”  
El Général. “Rayes Leblad” [President of the Country].  
El Général. “Tunis Bladna” [Tunisia is Our Land].  
El Général. “Tahya Tunis” [Long Live Tunisia!].  
El-Hawary, Yousra. “el Sour [The Wall].”  
El-Haqed ft. Jihane. “Baraka Men Skat” [No More Silence].  
El-Haqed. Kilab el-Dawla [Dogs of the State]  
Ibn Thabet. 2011. “Nedaa l Shabab Libya” [A Callout to Libyan Youth].  
Jassmi, Hussein. “Bushret Khir” [Good News!]  
Kamel, Mostafa. “Teslam el Ayadi” [Blessed the Hands]  
Khalid M. and Ommar Offendum. “Can’t Take Our Freedom.”  
Mathlouthi, Emel. “Kelmti Horra” [My Word is Free].  
Nass el-Ghiwane. “Ma Hamouny” [I Cared Only].  
Nass el-Ghiwane. “Ghir Khodoni” [Take Me Only to God].  
Nas Jota. “b-Sotak” [with Your Voice/Vote].  
Nas Jota. “La lel Diktatoreya [No to Dictatorship]  
Omar Offendum, The Narcicyst, Freeway, Ayah, Amir Sulaiman, and Sami Matar. “#Jan25  
Egypt”  
Rachid Taha, Cheb Khalid, and Faudel. “Yal mMenfi” [Oh, the Exiled]  
Rami Essam. “Erhal!” [Leave].  
Rami Essam. “Taty” [Kneel].  
Salalem. “Ya Sayed ya Mas’oul [You, Mr. Official!].

## Synopsis

The study presents an interdisciplinary cultural analysis of the role of songs and music in articulating the national popular consciousness in selected countries of the Arab world. The research studies protest songs as a form of *artivism* -artistic activism- during popular movements, such as the songs produced by Sayyed Darwish and Badie' Khairy during the popular movement against the British Occupation in Egypt in the twentieth century, the songs performed by Bob Dylan during the civil rights movement in the 1960s USA, and the songs produced by Rai artists such as Rachid Taha during the youth movement against the Algerian Islamic Front in the 1970s. The study focuses its investigation on recent productions by young Arab activist-artists during the waves of popular contention in the period between 2010 and 2013, in Tunisian, Morocco, Libya, Egypt, and Sudan. The selected protest songs are studied as cultural practices against hegemony, and as creative articulations of political and social demands. They voice and document a counter-discourse reflective of the national consciousness of the people in the movement.

This study reviews the location of culture under hegemony, with observations on cultural practices that challenge constituted political power, particularly through artistic activism. Chapter one, entitled "The National-Popular, and the Location of Power," offers a theoretical framework that investigates Antonio Gramsci's notions of hegemony, the ideological state apparatuses, and the national-popular consciousness. The chapter discusses artistic activism as a defiant gesture against hegemony, examining the distinctive features of *artivism*, in order to distinguish between activist art and political art. The chapter studies the relationship between artivism and the dislocation of hegemony. The study highlights the rise of protest songs as songs produced by activist-artists to express dissidence and voice the demands of the movement.

Arab artivism ushered subversive forms and media through which the deinstitutionalized people gain agency and visibility, especially when the nationalist ideology is contested during popular contention. Chapter two, which is entitled "Arab Protest Singers as Movement Intellectuals under Repression," focuses the discussion on the *artists* and their social and artistic responsibilities. This chapter reviews concepts of the 'organic intellectual', the 'traditional intellectual', the 'popular intellectual', in order to examine the tripartite relationship between the artist, the people, and the power bloc. The

study sheds light on the experience and engagement of some protest singers, in the Arab world, the USA, and in Western diaspora.

The research explores the function of protest songs and the role of the activist-artist in the peaceful contestation of power, and in documenting the movement culture. Chapter three, entitled “Protest Songs and the Movement Culture,” studies how protest singers participate in the peaceful micro-mobilization during popular movements, through cultural recoding and framing processes. This chapter reviews the repertoire of forms and genres, as well as themes loaded in the protest songs. This research argues that the features of the movement culture accompanying the waves of contention in the Arab world are presented in the selected protest songs. These features include the creative articulation of dissidence, the choice to adopt peaceful dissent against violence, the attribution of blame to point fingers at the culprits, the motivation of hope and responsibility to battle the fatalistic acceptance of the status quo, and the inspiration of pan-Arab camaraderie and solidarity among youth in the homeland and in diaspora. Such features of the movement culture appearing in the protest songs reflect the defining features of the national-popular consciousness.

## **Findings and Recommendations**

The study concludes that Arab youth have contributed to the cultural phenomenon of *artivism* by releasing protest songs that articulate and document the national demands, interests, and grievances of the people during contention. Their protest songs are reflective of the popular struggle, and instrumental to the archival of the national-popular consciousness. The features of this national-popular consciousness are displayed in the protest songs, through its lyrical, stylistic, and aesthetic components. Moreover, the study concludes that the role of artistic activism in the cognitive liberation, cultural recoding, and the deconstruction of hegemony precedes the role of political activism. Finally, the study concludes that the Arab artivism during the period between 2010 and 2013 is part of the national struggle of the people, and the collective memory of the respective countries. As a result, the study recommends that the studied protest songs and the experience of the young Arab artists behind them should be placed in their social, political, and historical contexts, and to be reviewed as a continuation of the long legacy of protest songs and artistic activism in the Arab world.

## الملخص

### هدف الدراسة

تقدم الدراسة تحليل ثقافي لدور الأغاني والموسيقى في التعبير عن الوعي الوطني في دول مختارة في العالم العربي، وذلك تأكيداً على دور الفن الملتزم في تجسيد ضمير الشعب وهوية الوطن. وتعتبر هذه الدراسة بينية حيث تجمع بين الدراسات الثقافية والدراسات الموسيقية ودراسات الانسانيات. تتناول الدراسة أمثلة لدور الفن وخاصة الأغاني في التعبير عن الوعي الوطني في أوقات الحراك الشعبي، سواء ضد الاحتلال مثل أغاني سيد درويش وبديع خيرى في مصر في أوائل القرن العشرين، أو ضد الممارسات العنصرية في أمريكا مثل أغاني بوب ديلان في الستينات، أو ضد تهميش قضايا الشباب في ظل الحكم الإسلامي في الجزائر مثل أغاني رشيد طه في السبعينات، ثم تركز الدراسة النظر على الإنتاج الفني المعاصر للشباب العربي في إطار الحراك الشعبي خلال الفترة من 2010 إلى 2013. تتناول الدراسة أمثلة مختارة لأغاني الاحتجاج أطلقها شباب من تونس والمغرب والسودان ومصر وليبيا، كأحد أشكال النضال الفني، وواحدة من الممارسات الثقافية المناهضة للهيمنة. تتناول الدراسة أغاني الاحتجاج كظاهرة ثقافية تعتمد على استخدام الفن الملتزم في التعبير عن الرفض الشعبي للأوضاع في المجتمع، وفي تشكيل وتوثيق وعي وطني ممثل للشعب.

### محتويات الدراسة

تتضمن الدراسة ثلاثة فصول أساسية، بالإضافة إلى أجزاء المقدمة والنتائج والمراجع المستخدمة في الدراسة.

يحتوي الفصل الأول وعنوانه "الوطني-الشعبي وموقع القوى" على الإطار النظري للدراسة، وتعريف المفاهيم المستخدمة، أهمها مصطلحي "الهيمنة" و"الوطنية الشعبية" عند انطونيو جرامشي، ومبدأ الموافقة التلقائية، ومكونات الأجهزة الأيديولوجية ودورهم الثقافي والفكري. كما يقدم الفصل شرح لظاهرة النضال الفني كبادرة تحدي ضد الهيمنة الثقافية. يشير الفصل الأول لصعود مصطلح "أغاني الاحتجاج" للإشارة إلى الأغاني المصاحبة للحركات الاجتماعية، التي ينتجها الفنان-المناضل بهدف التعبير عن الرفض والإدلاء بمطالب. كما يحتوي الفصل الأول على المقارنة بين الفن السياسي والفن المناضل، مع توضيح أهم السمات التي تميز أغاني الاحتجاج عن الأغاني السياسية.

تتابع الدراسة النضال الفني للشباب العربي وما ينتج عنه من صراع ثقافي وسياسي عندما يتم التنازع على مفهوم الوعي الوطني بين الشعب وكتلة القوى، خاصة في أوقات الحراك المطالب بالتغيير. يقدم الفصل الثاني وعنوانه "مغنون الاحتجاج في العالم العربي: مثقفي الحركة تحت القمع"

تحليل لدور الفنان-المناضل أثناء الحراك الشعبي، مع تسليط الضوء على ديناميكيات العلاقة ثلاثية الاطراف بين السلطة والفنان-المناضل والمجتمع، مع عرض الفرق بين "المتقف التقليدي"، و"المتقف العضوي"، و"المتقف الشعبي"، ومناقشة نماذج سابقة لمشاركة الفنان-المناضل من خلال أغاني الاحتجاج. في هذا الفصل تسلط الدراسة الضوء على انماط مختلفة للفنان-المناضل في العالم العربي وفي أمريكا، مع تحليل بعض تجارب الشباب العربي في دول المهجر الأوروبي.

تعتمد الدراسة على التحقيق الثقافي في التعبير الإبداعي للشباب العربي عن طريق دراسة أغاني الاحتجاج كوسيلة للمشاركة السلمية في الأنشطة الاحتجاجية المختلفة، وكتوثيق بديل للحراك الشعبي وأهدافه. من أهم مكتسبات النضال الفني خلال الحراك الشعبي العربي هي إعادة الترميز الثقافي لفكرة الاحتجاج، حيث يكون الاحتجاج فني سلمي عن طريق الأغاني التي تنبذ العنف وتؤكد الولاء للوطن. يحتوي الفصل الثالث وعنوانه "أغاني الاحتجاج وثقافة الحراك" على تحليل لمجموعة مختارة من أغاني الاحتجاج. تربط الدراسة بين السمات الثقافية للحركات الشعبية في الوطن العربي منذ 2010، وبين السمات الفنية والاسلوبية لأغاني الاحتجاج قيد الدراسة. اهم تلك السمات كان التعبير السلمي والإبداعي عن التمرد، وتوجيه مشاعر الغضب في مسار فني، وإعلان الرفض للمعارضة المسلحة ولإستخدام العنف، بالإضافة إلى القاء اللوم على الافراد والمؤسسات التي تهدد النسيج الوطني. وكان الأمل وتشجيع الجماهير على تحمل المسؤولية من سمات الحراك الشعبي التي انعكست في أغاني الاحتجاج لمحاربة اليأس، بالإضافة إلى بث روح التضامن وظهور القومية العربية.

## نتائج وتوصيات

هذا الدراسة تستنتج أولاً، ان الشباب العربي قدم اشكال من النضال الفني التي لعبت دور ادائي في التعبير الجاد عن الرفض والاحتجاج في أوقات الحراك الشعبي. أفصحت أغاني الاحتجاج عن مطالب وواجع الجماهير، فرأى فيها المواطن تعبير صادق عن الروح الوطنية. فأصبحت الروح الوطنية التي يرى فيها الجماهير تمثيلاً لأمالهم وأوجاعهم متجلية في أغاني الاحتجاج. وبذلك حملت أغاني الاحتجاج ملامح الوعي الوطني-الشعبي البديل، وظهرت مكونات ذلك الوعي البديل في السمات الاسلوبية والجمالية واللغوية للأغاني. ثانياً، استنتجت الدراسة ان النضال الفني له قدرة أكبر على التحرير المعرفي والادراكي للشعوب مقارنة بالنضال السياسي. أخيراً، استنتجت الدراسة أن دور الشباب العربي في النضال الفني خلال الفترة من 2010 إلى 2013 جزء من تاريخ الوطن وذاكرته، وأن أغاني الاحتجاج هي توثيق للوعي الوطني الشعبي.

وعليه توصي الدراسة بوضع تلك الأغاني في سياقها السياسي والاجتماعي والتاريخي لتكون متابعة لأرث طويل من أغاني الاحتجاج والنضال الفني في العالم العربي.

## المستخلص

تستعرض الدراسة استخدام الشباب العربي لأغاني الاحتجاج كأحد مظاهر النضال الفني في أوقات الحراك الشعبي، خلال الفترة من 2010 إلى 2013 في بلدان مختارة من الوطن العربي. تقدم الدراسة تحليل ثقافي لظاهرة النضال الفني، وذلك من خلال تحليل أغاني الاحتجاج وسماتها الاسلوبية واللغوية والجمالية، في سياقها الاجتماعي والسياسي والتاريخي. تسلط الدراسة الضوء على مفهوم الفنان-المناضل ومشاركته الفنية والاجتماعية في الحراك الشعبي المطالب للتغيير في مجتمعه. تسترشد الدراسة بالمنظور الثقافي لمناهج الماركسية الجديدة وما بعد الماركسية، حيث تنطلق الدراسة من مفهومي "الهيمنة" و "الوطنية الشعبية" لأنطونيو جرامشي. تناقش الدراسة أغاني الاحتجاج كأداة فنية للتعبير عن الرفض الجمعي للأوضاع، وكتوثيق للوعي الوطني المنبثق من طيات الحراك الشعبي، لتصبح أغاني الاحتجاج انعكاس لوعي وطني شعبي بديل في الوطن العربي. تركز الدراسة على مشاركة الشباب العربي في الممارسات الفنية السياسية من داخل ارض الوطن وخارجه في دول المهجر.

## الكلمات الدالة

أغاني الاحتجاج، النضال الفني، الفن الملتزم، الشباب العربي، الحراك السياسي، الوطنية الشعبية، الوعي الوطني، الربيع العربي، الهيمنة، التأطير، الحركة الشعبية



Cairo University

# الشباب يرد بالغناء: أغاني الاحتجاج وظهور وعي وطني-شعبي بديل في العالم العربي

رسالة مقدمة من

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