

Making media public

On revolutionary street screenings in Egypt

Mollerup, Nina Grønlykke; Gaber, Sherief

Published in:
International Journal of Communication

Publication date:
2015

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Citation for published version (APA):
Mollerup, N. G., & Gaber, S. (2015). Making media public: On revolutionary street screenings in Egypt. International Journal of Communication, (9), 2903-2921.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain.
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact rucforsk@ruc.dk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Making Media Public: On Revolutionary Street Screenings in Egypt

NINA GRØNLYKKE MOLLERUP¹
Roskilde University, Denmark

SHERIEF GABER
Mosireen, Egypt

This article focuses on two related street screening initiatives, Tahrir Cinema and Kazeboon, which took place in Egypt mainly between 2011 and 2013. Based on long-term ethnographic studies and activist work, we explore street screenings as place-making and describe how participants at street screenings knew *with* rather than *from* the screenings. With the point of departure that participants' experiences of the images cannot be understood detached from their experiences of everything around the images, we argue that Egyptian revolutionary street screenings enabled particular paths to knowledge because they made media engage with and take place within everyday spaces that the revolution aims to liberate and transform, and because the screenings' public and illegal manner at times embodied events portrayed in the images.

Keywords: Egypt, revolution, street screenings, information activism, media

Introduction

Tahrir Cinema, summer, 2011 (Sherief Gaber's experience):

Tahrir Square is full once again. The tents in the middle of the square are in place, and people are determined not to leave before Mubarak is held accountable and the hundreds killed and thousands wounded are given justice.

I hear from friends about a plan to set up a screen in the square and show footage collected over the past months to remind people why we are here. And to show others who may not have seen these images. I go, without much to offer but happy to help. I

Nina Grønlykke Mollerup: ninagm@ruc.dk

Sherief Gaber: sgaber@gmail.com

Date submitted: 2015–01–07

¹ Nina Grønlykke Mollerup's part of this research was carried out under the auspices of International Media Support. We are indebted to Annette Markham and the anonymous reviewers from the *International Journal of Communication* for their very valuable comments on this article.

Copyright © 2015 (Nina Grønlykke Mollerup & Sherief Gaber). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at <http://ijoc.org>.

help spread out a tarp for the floor, raise the wooden frame, and stretch the canvas for the screen—simple things like that.

I take pictures that night of what turn out to be hundreds of people gathering and watching. In the photographs they are totally transfixed, with intent expressions and concentration showing on their faces (Figure 1). For much of the event, however, people are not silent but vocally engaged with the events on the screen, with everything they see, with the people around them, with the presenters and the presentation. They argue, they discuss, they laugh at what they see and at each other.

One video shows protesters attacking a police station.

A man objects. "This should not be shown," he argues. "It is not in the spirit of the revolution!" A woman stands up and defends the video. "I was there," she declares, and starts to tell her side of the story, justifying the attack. Others join in the conversation as the screening continues.



Figure 1. Participants at one of the first Tahrir Cinema screenings. (Photo: Sherief Gaber).

About six months after Mubarak was ousted, protesters occupied Tahrir Square again. During this summer occupation, activists in the square realized that many of the protesters who had also participated in the January and February protests leading to Mubarak's ouster had not seen many of the iconic images from the initial 18 days of uprising across Egypt. The occupied square provided a space to collect images filmed by ordinary people on mobile phones and cameras—images that had not received public media exposure—and show these images to people collectively. Thus the idea behind these public screenings originated, modestly, to show images to those in the square who had not seen them and to remind others of them. A projector, speakers, a computer, a makeshift screen, and electricity from a nearby lamppost, deftly rewired by an electrician in the crowd, made the screenings possible. Most crucial to the screenings, however, were people who had filmed events they participated in and seen fit to share those images with others. The first screenings in Tahrir Square, called Tahrir Cinema, were organized by a group of people who, with these screenings and other events, were in the process of becoming the activist media collective Mosireen. But Mosireen was by no means alone in producing Tahrir Cinema. Rather, the videos' curation was an interactive engagement between participants and organizers, participants and the screen itself, and different participants in discussions and arguments. As Mosireen repeated Tahrir Cinema at other sit-ins and demonstrations in Tahrir Square and elsewhere, the concept of street screenings also spread to residential neighborhoods and other locations across Egypt with the *Aaskar Kazeboon*² (The Military Are Liars) campaign, often just referred to as *Kazeboon* (Liars).

Kazeboon and Tahrir Cinema have been only briefly covered in academic literature. Mona Abaza (2013) and Sahar Khamis, Paul Gold, and Katherine Vaughn (2014) spoke of *Kazeboon* as an attempt to produce a counternarrative to the military's narrative. Similarly, Walid El Hamamsy and Mounira Soliman (2013) described *Kazeboon* as an attempt to expose the lies of the military. Amy Austin Holmes (n.d.) described Tahrir Cinema as a way to reach people without Internet access. These approaches to *Kazeboon* and Tahrir Cinema accord with descriptions of similar street cinema campaigns in other places (e.g., Ceccon, 1994 on TV Maxambomba in Brazil) and also correspond with some of the aims organizers described to us. Miriyam Aouragh and Anne Alexander (2014) use *Kazeboon* as an example to illustrate "that parts of the popular movement have transitioned from reliance on old and new capitalist media as simply carriers of their voices and hopes toward media practices seeking to develop media voices and infrastructures of their own" (p. 891), pointing to the significance of looking beyond distribution. All these approaches highlight important aspects of street screenings that we seek to add new layers to by examining the particular interaction with images that street screenings enable. We chose this focus because like Sherief, all other organizers we spoke with were deeply affected by the immensely transformative potential they experienced through street screenings.

They saw people change their minds, become convinced of new opinions, support something they had moments ago renounced. They saw screenings turn into marches, sometimes spontaneously, and

² *Aaskar Kazeboon* is usually transcribed *3askar Kazeboon* by people involved with the campaign, though *Aaskar Kazeboon* is used, e.g., in the campaign's YouTube account. This article transliterates everyday Egyptian Arabic to make terms recognizable and searchable. However, to improve readability for readers unfamiliar with this system of transliteration, we use *a* for the letter 'ayn and ' for hamza and silent qaf instead of using the numbers 3 and 2 as is customary in this system.

they watched people go from unresponsive bystanders to active participants in a political demonstration in the course of a screening. And they were amazed by the discussions between participants at screenings and affirmed that they always take place. That is, organizers saw a potential for changing media from an object of individual consumption to a tactic for producing new environments and collectivities. Thus, besides the goals of reaching the most people possible, reaching people who had not seen the images before, and producing a counternarrative, the Kazeboon and Tahrir Cinema initiatives had the goal of changing the relationships between media and publics. In other words, activists sought to make media public and make it work as something other than a tool for the transmission of information.

Therefore, we are less interested in who the initiatives reached than in how they reached them. Street screenings enabled a particular way of engaging with video and surroundings. They also often led to collective action such as marches, demonstrations, and even initiatives like Mosireen, which to a considerable extent developed with Tahrir Cinema. The most important thing about these screenings, then, is that they did more than merely show images people had not seen. This article will explore this “more.” We argue that revolutionary street screenings enable particular paths to knowledge because they make media engage with and take place within quotidian spaces that the revolution aims to liberate and transform, and because their public and illegal manner sometimes embodies the very events portrayed in the images. Tim Ingold (2013) argued that “knowing *is* movement” (p. 1) and that it is misleading to separate knowing from being (2000, 2013). Thus, he rejected “the epistemology that drives a wedge between the world of practical activity on the one hand and, on the other, the world of symbolic representation” (2011b, p. 324). That is, people know from the inside—from being of the world, not from standing outside observing it. Ingold also explained that “to know things you have to grow into them, and let them grow in you, so that they become a part of who you are. . . . The mere provision of information holds no guarantee of knowledge, let alone of understanding” (2013, p. 1). Looking at street screenings with this approach to knowledge, we are able to show that participants at screenings did not know *from* the images they watched or *from* other participants. Rather, they knew *with* the screenings as the latter became part of who they are.

Our Positionality

This article grew out of our shared fascination with street screenings and recurrent discussions about what makes these screenings so compelling. Writing together, we shared the goal of understanding street screenings, but our purposes and methods differed. Sherief sought insights into street screenings that could be used to inspire change through screenings and other activism. Nina’s purpose was to produce academic knowledge that might indirectly contribute to media initiatives such as Tahrir Cinema and Kazeboon. Sherief—a lawyer, housing rights researcher, and founding member of the Mosireen Collective—participated in initiating both Tahrir Cinema and Kazeboon. He has taken part in countless street screenings, often as an organizer, and contributed to the creation of many of the screened videos. His extensive work to document the revolution through video and photos has included many of the specific events mentioned in this article. Though academic research was not the purpose of this documentation, his photos and recordings of screenings served to supplement his memory and experiences of them in writing this article. At street screenings and elsewhere, he has taken part in discussions about screenings and the events they refer to. Nina is a media anthropologist whose ethnographic research with the

Mosireen Collective took place mainly during seven months she spent in Cairo in 2012 and 2013 as part of her PhD research. She interviewed Mosireen members who had taken part in both Tahrir Cinema and Kazeboon, and did participant observation at the Mosireen office and elsewhere. Though she has not participated in street screenings, she has joined in screenings in such settings as universities. She has also watched videos and footage from screenings as well as videos shown at screenings, followed tweets from screenings, read accounts about screenings, and supervised a group of students researching Kazeboon (Nasser, Rømer, Larsen, & Jørgensen, 2012). The indented vignettes in this article describe some of our different experiences. Some are explicitly based on our individual experiences while others interweave several different events and experiences, but each is a patchwork of insights gained from diverse sources: memories, field notes, videos, recordings, photos, interviews, discussions, tweets, articles, blogs, conference talks, pictures, and more.

Our claims to knowledge thus derive from our having been observers of and participants in the revolution in very different ways. We are acutely aware of the importance of our own positionality in the events we describe, and we acknowledge the substantial disagreement about the intangible notion of the revolution. Therefore, we are at pains to clarify our positionality respecting the revolution, as it naturally has implications for what we write. We understand the revolution as a process rather than a series of events defined by their outcome (Armbrust, 2013). It is particularly interesting, then, as Mark Allen Peterson (2011) pointed out, that “as [revolutions] break down pre-existing political, economic and social structures, they usher in periods of enormous creativity and imagination” (para. 3). Thus, we see the revolution as suffering and disagreement as well as creativity and cooperation. We recognize that many different people and groups have different claims to the revolution and different perceptions of what the revolution should achieve. In this article our stance toward the revolution corresponds with that of Tahrir Cinema and Kazeboon (which of course still includes different claims and perceptions): We hold the goals of the revolution to be an end to torture, corruption, police and army violence against citizens, unjust detentions, and particularly military trials for civilians, as well as achievement of a transparent and accountable state, equitable distribution of wealth, and the freedoms of speech, assembly, organization, movement, and religion. We do not see our positionality as problematic in the context of this article. Like Ingold (2013), we hold that “only because we are already of the world, only because we are fellow travellers along with the beings and things that command our attention, can we observe them” (p. 5). And following his vein, our aim here is not to accumulate information *about* the world, but to *correspond* with it (2013, p. 7).

Emplacing Media

We are inspired by the way practice theory (Bräuchler & Postill, 2010; Couldry, 2004), nonrepresentational theory (Moores, 2005, 2012b; Thrift, 2008), and non-media-centric media studies (Moores, 2012a; Morley, 2008) have broadened understandings of media beyond representational theory and highlighted the importance of studying the emplacement of media. We follow Shaun Moores’ (2012a) description of media uses as “place-making” that “need to be explored alongside other such meaningful practices in everyday living” (p. 3). Our notion of place-making draws on an anthropological notion of place that is particularly inspired by the work of Sarah Pink (Fors, Bäckström, & Pink, 2013; Pink, 2009, 2011a, 2012; Pink & Leder Mackley, 2013). By places, then, we mean “integrations of space and time”

(Massey 2005, p. 130) that are “composed of entanglements of all components of an environment” (Pink, 2011a, p. 349). These elements should be understood as “being in movement” (p. 349). This means that we see places as “intensities of activity and presence, as experienced by embodied human subjects, from specific subjectivities. In this sense place is also an ‘event’” (p. 349).

This notion of place posits screenings as place-events, acknowledging that screenings entail much more than people looking at a screen. In our view, participants sitting on the concrete; the projector lighting up the air; images enlarged on makeshift screens; recorded sounds interweaving with sounds from cars and participants; participants hearing, seeing, feeling, and talking to each other; and much more contributed to the way people experienced images on the screen. Whether they actively watched the screen or not, they engaged with the images through the surroundings’ engagements with the images. Arguing with others, sensing others crying, and feeling fear became part of the experience of watching the images on the screen. In other words, participants did not engage with the images in isolation. Vaike Fors, Åsa Bäckström, and Sarah Pink (2013) pointed out that “sensory-embodied experience is multisensory; it is not in any essential way reducible to being of one or another sensory modality, but rather each is contingent on and indeed part of the production of others” (p. 175). That is, the sensory experience of sitting on concrete, feeling its hardness, became part of seeing images of people being thrown against the very same concrete. Images are influenced by and influence the situations and places they circulate in as they engage and become entangled with things and people. Our aim here is not to discuss what can be called “things”; but we are thinking broadly of concrete, sheets, walls, buildings, streetlights, cars, sounds, breezes, dust, heat, tear gas, images, light from projectors, computers, bits, thoughts, and more—roughly, everything, while agreeing with Hodder (2012) that humans are a particular type of thing. People participating in screenings are entangled with things beyond the screen, and what they see on the screen is interwoven with other sensory impressions. The one cannot be understood when detached from the other.

Mosireen, Tahrir Cinema, and Kazeboon

Kazeboon screening, spring, 2012:

It is night, and the streets are dark. A screening is about to take place in a Cairo neighborhood. Streetlights and lights from shops provide the only islands of illumination. A projector is turned on, and its light brightens the air reaching a sheet hung as a makeshift screen. People are tightly gathered, some standing, others sitting on the concrete that on most days is a pathway to their homes.

Across the screen appear some of the most horrid and iconic images of the revolution so far:

The Maspero massacre, where the army killed 28 peaceful protesters when soldiers frantically drove armored military vehicles into the crowd, shooting live bullets from the hatch.

Toussi, a dead protester dragged to a pile of garbage by a military police officer.

Sit al-binat ("the woman of all women"), also known as "the woman in the blue bra" because her disheveled clothes revealed her blue bra as she was beaten unconscious by about 15 soldiers in riot gear. The video shows her lying on the ground by Tahrir Square. The soldiers kick her viciously and beat her with rods. They continue beating her as they drag her unconscious body down the concrete. The blows start to ease as most soldiers move on to other victims, but suddenly, with a seemingly renewed anger, one soldier lifts his leg in the air and forcefully kicks her in her chest, the force bending her body unnaturally.

As these images move across the screen, people in the street watch determinedly with serious faces—until the images become too horrid.

Then some move protectively away from the screen, seeking cover by shielding their heads with their arms or hiding behind the shoulder of the person next to them.

Some cry.

Eyes start to wander away from the screen, finding refuge on the ground. Breaths start getting longer and deeper. A woman and a man turn their heads away from the screen and toward each other at the same time, their eyes meeting briefly as they seek respite from the images.

"Can you show something from Port Said?" a woman asks, referring to the recent police-condoned attack on soccer fans in a stadium in Port Said, where more than 70 people were killed. Some were kids.

"Show this video," someone suggests, holding up a cell phone. Shortly after, the video arrives on the screen by way of Bluetooth, the computer, and the projector.

As the screening proceeds, discussions begin to flourish.

Some participants, confronted with the extent of police violence for perhaps the first time, speak up with passion. Their stories seem to start with incredulity but finish with new conviction, as if the speakers are bolstered by the confirmations and reactions of the listeners around them.

After the screening, people start chanting "batel" ("illegitimate"), referring to the military council in charge of the country. The chant leads to others, and the screening

*turns into a march. Some are prepared and have brought banners. Others join spontaneously.*³

Kazeboon screenings were carried out in cities across Egypt, including El Mansûra, Alexandria, Asyût, and El Mahalla El Kubra. In Cairo, they took place in upper-class areas like Maadi, Roxy, and Zamalek as well as poorer neighborhoods like Embaba, Abbassia, and Al Sayeda Zeinab. Our experiences confirm that both Kazeboon and Tahrir Cinema reached people who had never seen such images and people who did not have Internet access. Participants at screenings often asked organizers how to get the videos in order to share them further. When organizers during early screenings replied, "YouTube," people asked for something physical that did not depend on Internet access. Therefore organizers started bringing DVDs with videos and footage. Bluetooth became another important means of distribution. Many of the images shown at Tahrir Cinema and Kazeboon had not been televised and were available to people mainly via the Internet, if they were publicly available at all.

Whereas Tahrir Cinema took place in Tahrir Square and was enabled by Mosireen's equipment, Kazeboon screenings were carried out with people's own equipment or equipment borrowed from people who were active in the campaign. Kazeboon screenings appeared on the walls of the presidential palace and the state TV building as well as on makeshift screens consisting of sheets hung up in residential areas. Often Kazeboon screenings were organized by residents of the neighborhoods where they took place, and the screening participants were neighbors and passers-by.

Whoever organized a screening chose the material to be screened (in collaboration with participants), where they would screen it, and how they would publicize the screening.⁴ Whereas the initial Tahrir Cinema screenings mainly showed raw footage, Kazeboon screenings have mostly featured edited videos, not least because throughout 2011, editing skills were learned or used for organizing in different ways by a growing number of people, including Mosireen. The activist collective Mosireen grew out of the 18 days in Tahrir Square in January and February, 2011, and the subsequent events. Mosireen has taken several different shapes, and many different people have contributed to it at different times. Part of its purpose is to support the revolution by filming, editing, and distributing videos about things of importance to the revolution, and holding workshops to teach people how to do these things themselves. Their YouTube channel is a key outlet for their work.⁵ From 2011 to 2014, Mosireen ran an office where activists could meet, edit, plan, conduct workshops, and more. The office closed in 2014 due to severe security crackdowns and restrictions on civil society, but the collective's work continues in modified ways. Many videos shown at Kazeboon screenings were made by Mosireen. The videos often depicted army and police

³ Some of the images and videos mentioned here are available online. For the Maspero massacre see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mh5F0ot_p3s and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00t-0NEwc3E> (English); for Toussi, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xz3Rg_heqAg; for the woman in the blue bra, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YNAOLf1rX_U, for Port Said, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bYiYb9yT7bA>.

⁴ Many screenings have been listed on a Facebook calendar in addition to other publicity; see https://www.facebook.com/3askar.Kazeboon/app_208195102528120.

⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/user/Mosireen>.

violence as well as moments of triumph, celebration, and small victories against the state's oppression, but screenings have also been dedicated to issues such as workers' rights, health, housing, and detainees' rights. At present in mid-2015, both Tahrir Cinema and Kazeboon are inactive, but they are not unlikely to reemerge in one form or another at some point.

Kazeboon notably took its name from the front-page headline of the newspaper *El Tahrir* on December 18, 2011, which simply (and bravely) read "Kazeboon" (Liars), next to a photograph of Egyptian military soldiers beating a woman who was unconscious and, also because of the beatings, half-dressed—"the woman in the blue bra." On several occasions the army had declared that they would never harm Egyptians. Many people took this newspaper into the streets and held up the front page at demonstrations, or stood in the streets showing it to people in cars in the often slow-moving Cairo traffic. Significantly, the way people literally took newspapers into the streets paralleled the way videos of the assault would soon be shown at Kazeboon screenings by people literally taking videos into the streets.

Maspero Screenings: The Significance of Images

University screening, spring, 2012 (Nina Grønlykke Møllerup's experience):

The room is tense with anticipation as Mosireen activists Lobna, Omar, Jasmina, and Philip start playing their video about the Maspero massacre. This is a presentation at Cairo University rather than a screening in the streets as they are used to.

A shaky video shows a guy lying on the ground being beaten by army soldiers with rods. We hear shooting, yelling.

Sounds of horror.

The picture quickly moves as if the photographer is running for cover.

Then we see images of armored army vehicles driven frenetically into the crowd, crushing protesters.

These images are accompanied by screams. Then the screams are accompanied by unmoving bodies in the street.

People carrying bodies.

More screams.

Crying.

At this point I have stopped watching, but the pictures play vividly in my memory as I hear their sounds. I watch the crowd. Some are crying. Some look down, away from the

screen. Others close their eyes and breathe slowly and deeply, as if trying to regain composure. Many are physically protecting themselves from the images with their arms.

I feel like a part of the crowd. And for the first time, I physically feel like a part of the revolution.

Kazeboon screening at the Maspero building, January, 2012 (Sherief Gaber's experience):

A sit-in is taking place in front of the Maspero state television building.

A projector is set up, and images from the Maspero massacre are shown—not on a screen or sheet, but on the building itself. The building, ringed with fences, a wall, and barbed wire, and guarded by armed police and soldiers, is physically inaccessible to us. But the projector bypasses these security measures, effectively breaching the building and taking it over in some small way, making it serve a purpose antithetical to itself.

The images are difficult to see on the uneven "screen" of the building, but we know what they show. The people here are protesters, and most of them have seen and felt army and police violence up close by now.

After the screening, people break into a chant: "Yangeeb ha'ahom, yanmoot zaihom" (we'll get justice for them or die like them).⁶

The Maspero massacre occurred on October 9, 2011, when the army suddenly and violently attacked a march organized by the Coptic Church as the march reached the Maspero state TV building to protest attacks on churches. In less than a half hour, soldiers killed 28 protesters, several of whom were crushed by armored vehicles racing erratically through the streets. As the army was killing people in the street, state TV presenters went on air and urged "mowatenoon shorafa" (honorable citizens) to take to the streets to "protect the army." These calls led to increased violence (Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights et al., 2011). The above descriptions of two different screenings of the same images from the Maspero massacre exemplify how images are not the same in different places. With them, we wish to illuminate how images *become* in different ways as they move and are moved by the things and people they are entangled with. That is, images never *are* in a finite sense. Rather, they are in a process of continual becoming, and in each place they move through they become differently. As they become differently, they move things and people differently or, in another sense, they act differently.

⁶ A video from the Maspero screening can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SSRiyLFKMeU>.

The point is that the images shown at screenings, shocking as they may be, are meaningless alone. Only when they enter into a conversation with their surroundings, and when people see them and reflect on what they see, do they become alive and become actors in the revolution themselves. As Sarah Pink (2011b) has pointed out, "images only become meaningful in the context of their viewing, and as such do not 'carry' precise or universal meanings that can be read from them" (pp. 8–9), though here we find it more pertinent to speak of their showing than their viewing, since people can still engage with images when they are not viewing them, as when they hide their heads in their arms. To understand how the images can be meaningful, then, their entanglements with their surroundings must be considered. The participants in the Maspero screening were already protesters in a sit-in, so their very presence hinged on their knowledge of and stance on the events in the images screened on the building and other such events. The images shown on the building were crucial to the significance of the screening, yet whether people saw the images was not essential. The purpose of screening the images was not to pass on information to an audience. People were present exactly because they *knew*. Rather, what the screening did was breach security measures and take over the building in perhaps the only way possible for protesters.

At the university screening, people engaged intensely in watching, discussing, and relating to the images. The images created a shared sense of danger that people physically tried to protect themselves from, even though it was not immediate. It also enabled a discussion that united people in wanting to act. Perhaps it even led to new initiatives. People at the Maspero screening were already engaged in collective, revolutionary action through the sit-in. The danger there, tangibly present even before the screening, was embodied by the presence of tanks and armed soldiers. Protesters were aware of this danger, and the images of others getting killed materialized the danger that was already there rather than creating a sense of danger. Thus, these images—the "same" images shown at the university screening—were not the same in the two different screenings. The screen did not just physically alter the images, in that their appearance on a building made into a huge, makeshift screen differed considerably from their look on a traditional, dedicated screen in a university lecture hall. More significantly, the images acted in completely different ways in the two different screenings. Yet at both the university screening and the Maspero screening, the images shown were crucial—not because they had significance on their own, but because they became significant by meeting with the other elements of the screening.

Entanglements

Tim Ingold (2011a) has asked, "What kind of meaning can there be in the absence of symbolic representation?" (p. 77). Arguing for incorporating Ingold's work in media studies and media anthropology, Shaun Moores (2012a) has suggested this question is particularly pertinent for these fields "because it might lead to a further reconsideration of the objects of investigation, allowing a non-representational or more-than-representational approach to complement a non-media-centric one" (p. 3). How, then, can Kazeboon and Tahrir Cinema screenings be understood in the absence of symbolic representation, and what are the objects of investigation? We have shown how images became images as they were projected on a "screen." But just as images became images only when light met a screen, the wall or sheet was not a priori a screen but rather was constituted as such by a projector illuminating it with images streamed from a computer, and by people looking at it. The concrete that people sat on while

watching the screen was not just street pavement; it was also a battleground, not symbolically but in the sense that people were sometimes literally sitting on the dried blood of people who died in and for the revolution. The paving stones were the same stones that were pulled up and thrown, or used to build barricades. And the streets that people walked on daily were not just a way home; they were seats in a revolutionary cinema. Thus the revolution materialized through people's everyday spaces and was brought to neighborhoods through the revolutionary actions of screenings.

Tahrir Cinema and Kazeboon screenings were revolutionary actions in several regards: They criticized authorities and questioned their legitimacy; they were illegal; they drew on the history of revolutionary practices in Egypt; they claimed public space that authorities tried to control through violence, checkpoints, arrests, stone walls cutting off streets, and more; and they created opportunities for other revolutionary actions, such as political discussions, marches, and chanting. Because the Kazeboon screenings brought events that had occurred in other places into neighborhoods, and because they were revolutionary actions, they demonstrated that the revolution was not an isolated occurrence happening only in Tahrir Square or around the parliament. Rather, screenings emplaced the revolution in the neighborhoods they moved through. The events in the videos and other events of the revolution had left perceivable traces. Burned-out buildings, holes in the concrete, huge stone walls the army erected in downtown Cairo to control people's movement, and increased levels of security personnel and barbed wire outside the state TV building, as traces of previous events in the revolution, embodied how space was contested. By exposing the connections to past events and providing connections to future events, such traces were also part of screenings. Likewise, the screenings themselves left traces that continued to influence, albeit subtly, the neighborhoods where screenings took place. These traces took different forms, from an abandoned sheet hanging in the street, the fleeting vestige of a makeshift screen; to graffiti, sometimes visible years after being written on streets and walls as screenings turned into marches; to people's perceptions of their everyday spaces. Screenings were part of the continual making of the streets and squares they moved through.

As the streets and squares were continually being made and remade, people present at screenings became participants through engaging with a screen. The screen was turned into a screen by images being screened on it with a computer or a projector, and by people looking at it. When angry opponents of a screening tore down and broke the screen, participants ceased to be spectators at a street cinema. As they sat or stood on the street watching a projector light up the air without a destination to turn the flow of light into recognizable images, participants became part of a tumultuous, discordant crowd or protesters in a march—and, always, much else. The participants' engagement drew on their different connections to the events in the videos and other events of the revolution. Some had participated, others had lost loved ones, and all had a stake in the revolution. And the way participants engaged in turn influenced the videos and other participants, as well as other elements of the screening. As one organizer explained:

There's something very powerful about street screenings that I personally really love. I remember making a video about a kid that was arrested in August, the year before [2011], it was the 1st of August; it was the first day of Ramadan. And the mother of the

kid was looking for him everywhere and I filmed her testimony and it ended up on television, fragments of it, and they called her on Mahmoud Saad's talk show.

And, you know, she was very shy at the beginning and then with time she became this, not only the mother, but also this persona, this strong individual that speaks to people. Speaks to other mothers, takes care of other mothers in similar situations.

And she was at the street screening in Tahrir. People watching, she's in the crowd and she's on the screen at the same time. Everyone's cheering, and then she stands up all of a sudden, like, uncontrollably, she stands up: "I'm here, this is me" and she speaks of her son to the public, to the audience, while the video is running. And she's saying all these beautiful things, and she's crying and everyone's cheering and it's such an, not only emotional moment, but it's just, it's something; there's something very powerful about this, you know, cinema. Cinema in general, but these public screenings, they unleash something that you didn't know of until it happened. Like you've been unleashing these different layers to it. And I think this is the political here. Right there. Filming that woman speaking in front the screen in which there's another mirror and that is her, speaking of the same thing. And the audience mirroring that in their response. This is the political moment.

It's not the image itself. It's what happens with it. With it or in relation to it.

—Jasmina Metwaly, Mosireen

Jasmina's story about the mother of the imprisoned boy shows how different elements of the screening depend on each other. By standing up, the woman moved in relation to the cheering and supportive crowd, her own words and images on the screen, the setting of Tahrir Square, and more. Concurrently, in this particular event, her words and images flowing from the screen depended on her standing up and commenting on them. Standing up and enabling other participants to engage directly with her allowed still others to engage in new ways with the images on the screen. Through the screening, the woman-on-the-screen became a personalized voice of the revolution. Then, with her own image as a background, the woman-in-the-crowd was able to stand up and speak as a voice of the revolution, with authority added by her own larger-than-life image playing beside her and by the crowd cheering both the woman and the images. As she stood talking, the images helped transform and mediate relationships between different participants. That is, the different elements of the screening depended on each other as they became meaningful in the screening.

Part of the Revolution

Tahrir Cinema, summer, 2011:

Footage from the battle of Qasr el Nil on January 28 is shown. On that day, protesters defeated security forces and conquered Tahrir Square.

The same square that they are now sitting in, watching the battle on a screen.

The video shows how protesters tried to cross the bridge into Tahrir Square as security forces used live bullets, tear gas, water cannons, and more to keep them on the other side of the Nile, away from Tahrir Square.

The video shows how the daylong battle raged back and forth as protesters and security forces advanced in turn until eventually, as the sun started setting, protesters defeated security forces and crossed the bridge into the square.

The video does not show what many people in the crowd know: Protesters were killed on that day. People in the crowd saw others lose their lives on that day.

As protesters sit watching the video in Tahrir Square, they can glance over their left shoulders to see the Qasr el Nil Bridge, the site of the battle on the screen in front of them. And even as they watch previous attacks on the screen, they are once again awaiting the inevitable attack of security forces.

Security forces will arrive on August 1, the first day of Ramadan.⁷

A particular feature of street screenings was that at times they both showed and embodied what was at stake. The images in the videos shown at screenings demonstrated what was at stake while the event of the screening embodied what was at stake. Screenings showed what was at stake by bringing images and sounds from other violent events into the event of the screening. At the same time, the event of the screening embodied its own potentiality, because screenings themselves were potentially subject to the same types of violent assaults often shown on the screen. They were often attacked by the authorities, "baltageya" (paid thugs), or just people who disapproved of the screenings. Organizers knew this well. Even before they started setting up the equipment for a screening, they often had already discussed how they would escape, if necessary. The screening equipment was often borrowed and too expensive to lose, so they divided it amongst themselves, determining who would take the computer and who the projector if they had to run. Being present at a screening was a potentially dangerous action, and participants at screenings were watching a past as well as a potential future. When watching a video of people being killed from—or in an Ingoldian sense, *with*—the same square where the killings happened, facing the threat of the same perpetrators once again attacking and killing people, participants were not just connected to the revolution: They were *part* of what they were watching. Through the screenings they explicitly became part of the revolution because by taking part in a revolutionary event, they became endangered like others with and before them.

⁷ A video from the battle of Qasr el Nil Bridge can be seen here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PujwO_iY5BU.

Conclusion

The concrete of Tahrir Square was a bed of protesters during sit-ins but abruptly became a battleground when the military charged. As stones were laid out to highlight the blood trail of a dead protester, it turned into a memorial for martyrs. As the blood dried and merged with the sand and dust of the city, the concrete became seats in a cinema that brought all the previous contexts to life while still being something entirely new. Shifting the focus from what moves to the movement itself reveals that things do not stay the same; they are transformed in the movement as they become entangled with other movements. Nothing can ever stay the same; it is what it is in its current form only in that specific place. In this article we have argued that the screenings under discussion, rather than simply showing images to people who had no other way to see them, enabled a particular way of experiencing images. The images shown at street screenings did not have a priori significance, yet they were absolutely crucial to the screenings. The significance of images lay in the movements and entanglements of different elements of a screening. The "same" image could become something totally different in interaction with different audiences, surroundings, and moments of its screening. Our argument is not simply that the screen and the images flowing through it, the speakers and the sounds flowing from them, the darkness of the sky, the hardness of the concrete, lights from homes and shops, the warmth of others participants, and discussions between participants all influenced how people engaged with or understood the images being screened. The point is rather that they were all part of what the images were at the particular event. Similarly, images became part of the continual making of the streets and squares they moved through as they emplaced the revolution in people's everyday neighborhoods. Screenings enabled particular ways of knowing because they embodied the togetherness, danger, discussions, resistance, and other characteristics of the revolution. That is, participants at screenings knew *with* the screenings

References

- Abaza, M. (2013). Cairo dairy: Space wars, public visibility and the transformation of public space in post-revolutionary Egypt. In C. Berry, J. Harbord, & R. O. Moore (Eds.), *Public space, media space* (pp. 88–109). London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan. doi:10.1057/9781137027764
- Aouragh, M., & Alexander, A. (2014). Egypt's unfinished revolution: The role of the media revisited. *International Journal of Communication*, 8, 890–915. doi:1932–8036/20140005
- Armbrust, W. (2013, February 5). Transformations in Egyptian journalism since the January 25 revolution [Talk at book launch, London, UK]. Retrieved from <http://www.frontlineclub.com/2013/01/11/transformations-in-egyptian-journalism-since-the-january-25-revolution/>
- Bräuchler, B., & Postill, J. (Eds.). (2010). *Theorising media and practice*. Oxford, UK: Berghahn Books.
- Ceccon, C. (1994). Et eksempel på alternativ vidensproduktion: Maxambomba i Brasilien [An example of alternative knowledge production: Maxambomba in Brazil]. *Mediekultur*, 10(21), 56–61.

- Couldry, N. (2004). Theorising media as practice. *Social Semiotics*, 14(2), 115–132.
doi:10.1080/1035033042000238295
- Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement, Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, New Woman Foundation, Egyptian Foundation for the Advancement of the Conditions of Childhood . . . Land Center for Human Rights. (2011). Maspero: State incitement of sectarian violence and policy of extrajudicial killings. Retrieved from <http://eipr.org/en/pressrelease/2011/10/16/1268>
- El Hamamsy, W., & Soliman, M. (2013). The aesthetics of revolution: Popular creativity and the Egyptian Spring. In W. El Hamamsy & M. Soliman (Eds.), *Popular culture in the Middle East and North Africa: A postcolonial outlook* (pp. 246–260). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Fors, V., Bäckström, Å., & Pink, S. (2013). Multisensory emplaced learning: Resituating situated learning in a moving world. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 20(2), 170–183.
doi:10.1080/10749039.2012.719991
- Hodder, I. (2012). *Entangled: An archaeology of the relationships between humans and things*. Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Holmes, A. A. (in review). *Mass risings in Egypt against the Mubarak regime, the military junta, and the Muslim Brotherhood*.
- Ingold, T. (2000). *The perception of the environment: Essays on livelihood, dwelling and skill*. Oxford, UK: Routledge.
- Ingold, T. (2011a). *Being alive: Essays on movement, knowledge and description*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Ingold, T. (2011b). Reply to David Howes. *Social Anthropology*, 19(3), 323–327. doi:10.1111/j.1469-8676.2011.00165.x
- Ingold, T. (2013). *Making: Anthropology, archaeology, art and architecture*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Khamis, S., Gold, P. B., & Vaughn, K. (2014). Beyond Egypt's "Facebook revolution" and Syria's "YouTube uprising": Comparing political contexts, actors and communication strategies. *Arab Media & Society*, 15. Retrieved from <http://www.arabmediasociety.com/?article=791>
- Massey, D. (2005). *For space*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Moore, S. (2005). *Media theory: Thinking about media and communications*. London, UK: Routledge.

- Moore, S. (2012a). Loose ends: Lines, media and social change. *European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA) Media Anthropology Network E-Seminar Series, 40*, 1–15. Retrieved from http://www.media-anthropology.net/file/moores_loose_ends.pdf
- Moore, S. (2012b). *Media, place and mobility (key concerns in media studies)*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Morley, D. (2008). For a materialist, non-media-centric media studies. *Television & New Media, 10*(1), 114–116. doi:10.1177/1527476408327173
- Nasser, K., Rømer, K., Larsen, M., & Jørgensen, S. G. (2012). Kazeboon—A military liars campaign: Studying innovative campaigning in Egypt. Roskilde University. Retrieved from http://www.rucsdigitaleprojektbibliotek.dk/bitstream/1800/8378/1/KAZEBOON_2012.pdf
- Peterson, M. A. (2011). Egypt's media ecology in a time of revolution. *Arab Media & Society, 13*. Retrieved from http://www.arabmediasociety.com/countries/index.php?c_article=250
- Pink, S. (2009). *Doing sensory ethnography*. London, UK: SAGE Publications.
- Pink, S. (2011a). From embodiment to emplacement: Re-thinking competing bodies, senses and spatialities. *Sport, Education and Society, 16*(3), 343–355. doi:10.1080/13573322.2011.565965
- Pink, S. (2011b). Multimodality, multisensoriality and ethnographic knowing: Social semiotics and the phenomenology of perception. *Qualitative Research, 11*(1), 261–276. doi:10.1177/1468794111399835
- Pink, S. (2012). *Situating everyday life: Practices and places*. London, UK: SAGE Publications.
- Pink, S., & Leder Mackley, K. (2013). Saturated and situated: Expanding the meaning of media in the routines of everyday life. *Media, Culture & Society, 35*(6), 677–691. doi:10.1177/0163443713491298
- Thrift, N. (2008). *Non-representational theory: Space, politics, affect*. London, UK: Routledge.