Chapter 12
Can Revolutionary Media Be Made Online?

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents Mosireen, a non-profit media collective and an alternative media outlet founded by a group of activists, writers, journalists, and filmmakers in the midst of a political change in Egypt. This group developed a special interpretation of the concept of "revolutionary media," and for more than two years have been executing their ideas on the ground. Thus, Mosireen is a case to study the instrumentalization of the Internet in political activism, and the revolutionalization of the use of digital and social media at the time of struggle against the regime.

INTRODUCTION

The 2011 uprising against the former Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak, furthered the use of the Internet in activism enormously. After Mubarak stepped down in February 2011, Egyptians relied on online news resources as a strong predictor of credibility, while traditional media did not provide the same assurance (Hamdy 2013). Therefore, the number of Internet users in Egypt reached 32.62 million in June 2012. The increase continued the following year. In January 2013, the number of Internet users in Egypt grew to 38.75 million (Ministry of Communication & Information, 2013).

Organically, a convergence between the employment of the Internet in the political struggle and the practices of citizen journalism in reporting and documenting events was taking place. Political activists such as journalists, creative writers and artists translated their engagement in the protests into content. Social media became a tool for civic engagement. Users of social network sites primarily used their accounts for documentation purposes (Willson & Dunn 2011). Numerous documentation projects were run by citizen journalists, such as Thawaret 25 Yanaer (egyptrev.net), a website run by volunteers who collected digital materials covering the 18 days of protests in January 11 to make them available in one place, and Wiki Thawra (wikithawra.wordpress.com), a project to document all the incidents from 2011 onward.

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This chapter presents Mosireen, a non-profit media collective and an alternative media outlet founded by a group of activists, writers, journalists and filmmakers in the midst of political change in Egypt. This group developed a special interpretation of the concept of 'revolutionary media', and for more than two years have been executing their ideas on the ground. Thus, Mosireen is a case to study the instrumentalisation of the Internet in political activism, and the revolutionalisation of the use of digital and social media at the time of struggle against the regime.

The data for this chapter was collected in 2013 and 2019 through participant observation and in-depth interviews. The researcher used observation as a method of data collection in Mosireen, the group knew who she was, what she was researching and why she wanted to observe their work. The observation lasted for almost six weeks at Mosireen (5th April - 14th June, 2013). Although this time sounds short, it was actually enough to meet most of the members and observe their work. On average, the researcher spent eight hours a week in their office. Her main work task was writing descriptions for the videos produced by Mosireen, as well as carrying out research, a short film treatment and scripting new videos.

A common problem for the researcher is the conception that an individual's behaviour may change if they know they are being studied – what is known as the "observer effect", "researcher effect", "reactivity" or the "Hawthorne effect". To a great extent, I did not feel an observer effect in Mosireen, because staged behaviour is a tactic used to appear as an ideal person or entity, while ideality involves meeting the highest standards. In the case of Mosireen, it was not presented by its members as an ideal media outlet, or as a collective meeting the highest standards in the media industry; on the contrary, Mosireen is an alternative form of media, where standards of excellence do not exist. The researcher was not able to repeat the use of this research method in 2019, as the Mosireen premises were shut down in 2014.

The researcher also conducted in-depth interviews with a number of Mosireen's co-founders. As she started to collect data and spend time at the office, she was able to set informability and power as criteria for selecting participants. Informability here means awareness of the history of the institution as well as its current structure, administrative, financial and editorial position. The key sources at Mosireen were Philip Rizk, an independent filmmaker and writer for some local and international media, Salma Said, who studied English Literature in Cairo and used to work for AlMawrad AlThakafi, a leading cultural NGO in the Arab region and who was also an actress in a number of independent movies, and Lobna Darwish, who had been studying Sociology and Comparative Literature in the U.S. after obtaining a B.A, in Engineering in Egypt. Darwish was living abroad between 2006 and 2013 and came back to Egypt in February 2011. Thus, Darwish was not part of the online or grassroots activism against Hosni Mubarak between 2005 and 2011.

The researcher was not able to conduct in-depth interviews with all the participants again in 2019, as most of them were living abroad, and therefore communication with them might not be digitally secure enough on their part. Alternatively, the researcher relied on secondary sources, mostly the work of Omar Hamilton and Philip Rizk, to obtain the updated data she needed. The communication with these participants only involved double-checking their agreement to reveal their names, because of the change of circumstances. All the participant agreed to keep their identity uncovered.

The chapter starts with introducing the foundation story of Mosireen, its administrative and financial policies and major projects, and then explains their vision of the revolutionalisation of media, and the role of the Internet. Subsequently, identifies the circumstances of the emergence of the 'revolutionary media' as explained by Mosireen co-founders, by asking Why the Revolutionary Media was needed? Lastly, it explains the agency of the Internet in the work of Mosireen, as regarded by its members.

The Internet as a Space to Revolt

Historically, citizen journalism was utilised in the Egyptian opposition movement before 2011 as a mobilisation tool. Blogging was not only a way of publicising protest events and reporting the corruption and human rights violations which had little opportunity to appear in local media, but it also stirred massive rebellion against social institutions. The bloggers used their Web pages to assess and critique their education, social culture, traditions and even religions. This was notable to many of the researchers who conducted qualitative research about the Egyptian blogosphere before 2011. For instance, in its study of the bloggers‟ representations of the body, Yasmin Rifaat (2008) argues that Egyptian bloggers "often aspire to challenge and expose what is otherwise either ignored or denied by the state" (p. 51), such as the human rights violations, the religious minorities rights and the domestic violence. The politicisation of the early practices of Egyptian citizen journalism, represented in blogging, happened in line with the foundation of Kefaya (Enough!, also known as The Egyptian Movement for Change) in late 2004, which was a coalition of leftists, Islamists and different opposition figures who wanted to protest against the regime of Hosni Mubarak and denounce the potential inheritance of power by his son, Gamal.

The early protests against Mubarak were never reported on the local media, before they were misrepresented later on. Similarly, in the interim period after Mubarak step down and the election of President Mohamed Morsi in 2013, protestors often expressed dissatisfaction with the performance of the Supreme Council for Armed Forces, which ran the country at that time. The chant Down with the military regime in particular was prevented from being heard on television, even the privately-owned stations.

Before all, the state control the mass media created an urgency to have activist media. Since the first Egyptian republic in 1952, the state has had full control of the country's mass media. The relationship between the political regime and the media industry was similar to the authoritarian media system in Siebert et al.'s *Four Theories of the Press* (1956) or the loyalist revolutionary system (Gunter et al., 2013) which is characterised by full state control and employment in the media, in order to maintain the power of the elite ruling classes. Also, it sits under the authoritative category in Rugh's typology, in which:

[…] the regime exercises strong controls over all media, whether direct or indirect. It is able to do so through agents of the regime such as a single political party that is the only one allowed. The regime also controls the press through personnel it appoints, and guidance it issues through a single national news agency; moreover, its control is facilitated by self-censorship in the very restricted political environment that exists. (Rugh, 2007: 6)

Scholars and media observers explain the actions that seemed to liberate the media from the state's control in the era of Hosni Mubarak, President of Egypt from 1982 to 2011, as a manoeuver of the political regime to preserve its stability. For instance, allowing privately-owned media in Mubarak's time was linked to the pressures George Bush's U.S. administration placed on the Egyptian regime to undertake democratic reform (Cooper 2008).

Other scholars have linked such liberation of the media to the justice of the state. For instance, Hafez (2008, 2010) considers the allowance of privately-owned media companies as compensation given by the governors of totalitarian Arab states to their people. According to the author, these regimes lost their legitimacy because of poverty and social diseases with which the state was unable to cope. Shouman (2007) too observes that, in general, Arab regimes have gradually become less authoritative. But, unlike

Hafez, he does not link this notion to the financial status of the political regime or to their performance regarding economic and social problems. Shouman argues that this transformation was not motivated by the appearance of the Internet and the spread of digital communication. He asserts the fact that the Internet could not be entirely controlled, even in countries that impose restrictions on its use, and so the regimes opted to alleviate their control, or had no choice in the matter.

The establishment of privately-owned media thus resulted in coverage of political activism. Practically, the media coverage of stories related to a political regime is profitable, because at a time of general dissatisfaction, audiences search for outlets that, on their behalf, do the job of justifying and expressing their feelings of anger and dissatisfaction against the regime. For instance, in 2005, the AlMasry Alyoum newspaper ran news about the parliamentary election fraud in November 2005, which accompanied the emergence of outspoken opposition against the former president, Hosni Mubarak. This saw the newspaper's circulation jump to 40,000 in December of the same year, compared to just 3,000 copies sold in December 2004 (Salahddin 2014). Effectively, the broadcasting of 'negative' political news gives implicit support to the regime, because it enables it to ensure liberalism and negates any accusations of authoritarianism.

CASE STUDY: MOSIREEN

Mosireen مُصِرّين (translation: We are Determined) mainly produces short clips, usually video reports on events, interviews with strikers or torture survivors, and short documentaries. The primary platforms for disseminating these videos are social networking sites, particularly YouTube. Mosireen was introduced to the world in English (on its website and social media) as a 'media collective', while the term 'co-operative' was used only in Arabic. Although Mosireen called itself a 'media co-operative', this was not a familiar term in Egypt, due to the lack of such a culture. The operational meaning of a 'media co-operative' in the Egyptian press is the print media that covers the news of a co-operative and which is circulated locally. For Mosireen:

[…] the term is used for a progressive model of collective ownership and self-management for an alternative media platform, a modern trend that started in Europe in the 1970s, particularly by left-wing journalists. (interview with Said, 2013)

Mosireen's YouTube channel was the most viewed non-profit channel in the world in January 2012, and it is one of the most viewed non-profit channels of all time (interview with Darwish, 2013). In addition, Mosireen holds a public archive of more than 100,000 MB of footage from the revolution, collected from January 25th 2011 onwards, making it arguably the largest archive of media of the January 2011 uprising (interview with Rizk, 2013, Said, 2013 & Hamilton, 2013).

Mosireen undertakes several activities in which the group communicates with citizen journalists. One of these is Rahal, a project developed to convene media literacy workshops across Egypt. The workshop curriculum includes photography, video-making, citizen journalism, and open publishing. There is also a bi-monthly public screening of documentaries at Mosireen's office. The collective was involved in similar media campaigns for human and civil rights, such as No Military Trials for Civilians, and against torture and sexual violence by police. The earliest projects of Mosireen produced a number of videos

about economic and social rights, and a workshop to teach citizens how to capture video on a mobile device (interview with Rizk, 2013, & Darwish, 2013). In April 2012, Mosireen started Rahal, a media literacy project. Every four to six weeks the project visited a city and held a workshop. This training project was called 'Mosireen-Rahal', and workshops were organised and publicised through Mosireen's local partners, offering the services mentioned previously.

Another project of Mosireen is Kaziboon (Liars) in 2011. This was a public-awareness campaign aimed at providing counter-narratives to state media through displaying videos in neighbourhoods in and outside Cairo. The campaign started after military personnel attacked protesters at a sit-in outside cabinet headquarters in December 2011, then issued statements that downplayed its role in the brutality. This appeared to be completely untrue when a video which went viral online and appeared on television showed soldiers dragging, beating and stripping a woman.

The most recent Mosireen project was the 858 Archive, released in 2018, described on 858.ma as "one collection of memories, one set of tools we can all use to fight the narratives of the counter-revolution, to pry loose the state's grip on history" . This online archive is home to a total of 858 hours of footage at the time of release. These videos feature many protests that took place in Egypt between 2009 and 2013. The core of such archive was made during the 18 days sit-in at Tharir square in 2011 calling for the end of Mubarak's regime (Interview with Darwish, 2013). In the first days of the uprising, a Media Tent was established in the Square as a media hub where protestors could share their mobile recorded videos in one place, thus hundreds of videos were collected from dozens of people (interview with Hamilton, 2013). During my internship at Mosireen in 2013, several members mentioned that they were storing the collected videos from Tahrir in a safe place and aspired to code them and make them available to the public, however, at that time they were unable to do so because they were too busy covering the current events. Five years later, the 858 Archive went online.

Foundation

The idea of a media collective took almost a year to develop, and there were many milestones. It started with a conversation in Tahrir Square in Cairo in January 2011, between four people seeking to topple the then president, Hosni Mubarak. Omar Hamilton, a member of Mosireen, told me:

The group began discussing the videos taken by protesters, and between them, us and others we established a collection point for all the videos and images taken by people, regardless of their quality. The footage and images were eventually gathered into an archive of the revolution and made available to media workers in the square. (Interview with Hamilton, 2013)

Although Mosireen was not founded at this point, the fact that mainstream media were using content made by protestors to cover the uprising alerted the group members. An act of activism occurred shortly after the uprising and crystallised the idea of a co-operative media. In February 2011, military police forces used force to clear a sit-in at Tahrir Square (in Cairo). The sit-in was calling for a civil alternative to military rule. The group of media activists who later co-founded Mosireen were at the sit-in and experienced the terror of its clearance at 2 a.m., when very few others were in the square because of a curfew announced weeks earlier. Every time one of the Mosireen co-founders group told the story of the sit-in clearance to their peers, nobody believed them:

Basically, the army was portrayed in the media as the guardian of patriotism and, at the time, there was no evidence for their version of events except for a single video that showed a dark screen and the sound of screams of horror. (Interview with Darwish, 2013)

A few days later, the Superior Council for Armed Forces, which ruled the country at that time, apologised for the use of violence to clear the sit-in. For the co-founders of Mosireen, the significance of this story was that no one would stand in solidarity with victims if there was no evidence of abuse, and "if the army had not apologised for its dispersal tactics, the story of the brutal clearance of the sit-in would not have been believed" (Interview with Darwish, 2013). Thus, this group of activists decided to form an independent media outlet which would side with the victims and keep a record of the stories which otherwise would not to be heard in mainstream media.

Such vision was radicalised later in the same year, in October 2011, when the military police attacked a rally for Copts (Egyptian Christians) in downtown Cairo, near the state television and radio building, known as Maspero, and killed tens of protesters (Mosireen, 2011): "The army was keen not to have the massacre recorded. Three professional cameramen were shot that night, and one of the Mosireen group was forced to hand over the memory card from his camera," Hamilton told the researcher. He himself had to flee and hide his camera in order to maintain his personal safety.

The Maspero rally provided the momentum for Mosireen to take strategic action to document current events. Subsequently, Mosireen was selected as the name of the group. Khalid Abdullah, one of the group members, donated office space in the offices of his media production company, and yet Mosireen had no clear vision or plans as to what it wished to achieve, or how to achieve it. However, gathering in one place was a good idea for the co-founders, because it hastened the process of planning, producing and shaping their initiative (interview with Said, 2013 & Hamilton, 2013).

Throughout the second half of 2011, Mosireen started to shape its brand online by creating a logo, starting a YouTube channel under the name 'Mosireen', defining its goals tactics and management policies and, eventually, launching a website.

Mosireen's members have a strong determination to sustain their citizen media institutions. When the researcher asked Rizk, 'When do you think Mosireen will stop its activities and do you feel its objectives have been realised?', he confidently answered, "We [the members of Mosireen] should never stop our activities, and we may spend our lifetimes without achieving all our goals!". This clarified his willingness to dedicate time and effort to Mosireen despite his awareness that his efforts would not all pay off quickly. Other members of Mosireen had similar answers to Rizk, such as "we will stop when they stop" (interview with Said, 2013), referring to the authorities and mainstream media, and "we will stop when we have people everywhere capable of telling their own stories" (interview with Darwish, 2013), noting the importance of media literacy, so that "we have many narratives of one event and the voice of the victim heard, instead of one narrative broadcasted in all mass media,".

However, things did not go the way Mosireen members wanted; a year later the office shut its doors after a severe closure to the public sphere. "Our role became uncertain and soon we stopped working entirely. We needed to take a break to deal with the feeling of defeat and to find a way to work within the new political reality"(Rizk p.30). Mosireen's members scattered across three continents and almost no reporting videos were produced. However, they were "organizing, indexing, logging and geo-locating hundreds of hours of footage to prepare it for public use." (Hamilton, 2017), footage which eventually emerged in the 858 Archive.

At this time, the website of the dissent groups was made inaccessible in Egypt. It is unclear when exactly the Mosireen website was banned, but in 2017, deadly attacks took place in a number of churches, and a state of emergency was declared shortly after, thus granting the authorities absolute power to monitor and censor communications. In the same year, at least 20 news websites were blocked. This number has been rising as it includes independent news websites, as well as websites of local and international rights groups, as they publish content critical to the political regime. "The ban not only affected news and NGO sites, but also 261 VPN and proxy sites, as well as 17 other websites, on 29 August 2017." (Sayadi 2018)

Administration Policies

All management, financial and editorial decisions at Mosireen were taken unanimously during the board members' plenary meeting, which was held once a month and which everyone attended (interview with Said, 2013). There were no members of staff, except the two ladies who were paid as full-time workers, two co-ordinators, who were also co-founders, and board members. They carried out a number of diverse tasks, including communication, planning, marketing, campaigns and video-making. It had a non-hierarchical structure, with the words 'manager' or 'senior' omitted in describing the positions of the two coordinators, "because such words indicate a hierarchical structure, [which is actually] absent in Mosireen" (interview with Darwish, 2013).

Although the Mosireen website had a section for those who wish to volunteer, the members of Mosireen had a cautious attitude towards outsiders; there were no office staff, and the site was operated only by its members, which was linked to the issue of trust. As Rizk explains, "we prefer to do things ourselves instead of bringing to the group people who might not be trustworthy." In the case of the researcher, as an intern, she was welcomed because most of the members knew me from my political activism and human rights advocacy beforehand, and she knew Rizk personally, which supported her request to work with them for six weeks.

Moreover, crowdfunding was a major source of capital for the collective. On March 2012, Mosireen held a fundraising party at its office. People from their 'pro-revolution' circles were invited, as well as some public figures. The event raised 90,000 LE (15,000 USD at the exchange rate of that time) in donations of cash and video equipment. In September of the same year, an online fundraising campaign was launched, and in just two months it had collected 40,000 USD (240,000 L.E) (Hamilton, et al., 2012), which saw IndieGoGo, the online crowdfunding platform, list Mosireen's fundraising actions among the Top 12 Community Campaigns of 2012 (Nunnelly, 2012).

THE 'REVOLUTIONARY MEDIA'

At this point we may wonder whether the work at Mosireen premises is citizen journalism or activist media. From an expert point of view, we find that:

Mosireen videos sit between the tradition of Third Cinema, militant cinema, citizen journalism and essayist forms of experimental filmmaking, reportage and documentary. The speed of the production and the short length of their videos, however, position Mosireen closer to citizen journalism, newsreel, and Youtube practices that allow for an immediate, almost chain-reaction like response to unfolding events.

The mass distribution of their work [Mosireen] on Youtube also places their work in a different context from traditional forms of alternative-politcal film-making. Interestingly, the art world has shown interest in Mosireen and has presented their clips in the form of video projections inside the institutional walls of white cubes. (Zoller, 2014 p160)

Nevertheless, the co-founders of Mosireen did not see themselves as 'citizen journalists', because they were particularly in disagreement with calling their input 'journalism'. Salma Said, general co-ordinator of Mosireen, told the researcher "What we do [at Mosireen] is activism, not journalism; media are just our tools for that." When the researcher asked Hamilton to explain how he saw the difference between journalism and activism, he replied, "journalism is making content the way your employer wants, which means you prove their views, and your professionalism is decided according to how you achieve that in line with different media ethics." Darwish did not regard herself as a journalist, either, citing the lack of objectivity in her work as a reason for not seeing herself in this way. She Said:

If I am a journalist, I should be objective and tell the two sides of the story, but here I am not. We co-founded Mosireen to give a voice to the people, not to all parties, and in any story the narrative of the people is the only side that gets reported. (interview with Said, 2013)

Indeed, in avoidance of subjectivity or bias, in 2018 the Mosireen team published the videos they had previously edited and published, alongside hundreds of hours of unedited footage, in the 858 Archive.

Effectively, the emphasis of Mosireen co-founders that they were not journalists implicitly meant that they considered themselves to be free from all the conventional and moral restrictions of mainstream media. For the co-founders who had been interviewed, the definition of 'journalist' is 'someone who is committed to making media content in accordance with the traditions and ethics of mainstream media', a definition with which they were not satisfied and to which they did not commit to.

"Citizen media" is sometimes referred to as a form of "amateur" media, a way to distinguish it from the traditional journalism practiced by professional journalists. However, the term 'amateur' "draws a correlation between 'loving your work' and being disinterested in money, implying that amateurs always draw satisfaction from their pastimes while professionals necessarily dislike their work and need financial compensation as inducement" (Hamilton 2013: 179).

These terms are completely different. On the contrary, they overlap and sometimes describe the same media activity. In fact, most scholars disregard the simple question of what they are actually ascribing these names to. For instance, the prominent new media scholar, Chris Atton, uses "alternative media", "radical media", "counter-discourse" and "activist media" in his books to refer to citizen media (2002, 2004, 2008). He uses "activist media" to describe the topic of the media, while "radical media" and "alternative media" are, according to Atton, descriptions of approaches taken by content makers in an organisation, whereas "counter-discourse" describes the function of the media.

The co-founders of Mosireen describe what they have been doing as 'revolutionary media', yet the term held different interpretations in each outlet. In my interaction with Mosireen's members, phrases such as "the media of the revolution" and "the media of the people" were reportedly used by them to explain the role of Mosireen. The revolutionary media Mosireen's members aspired to holds minimal distance between the content maker and the audience. Salma Said cited Tahrir Cinema as an example in this regard:

Tahrir Cinema was an open-air cinema which was convened by Mosireen members for a protest sit-in in July 2011 in Tahrir Square. It screened some elements of the video archive of the 18-day protests in January and February 2011; mostly raw materials. There were videos screened in the square every day with a live voiceover by one of the media co-operative members. Sometimes the audience requested videos to be repeated or shown in slow motion, and also videos shot at specific times or locations. (interview with Said, 2013)

What is different with Tahrir Cinema is the direct interaction between the organisers and the audience, in that the viewers were not just spectators, they decided what content they wanted to watch (by requesting specific videos) and the way they wanted to watch them (repetition, video effects). Besides, the videos they watched were originally shot by citizens, not the organisers. When we watch recordings of the Tahrir Cinema events on YouTube, we observe that in the daytime, when the screening used to take place in a small venue, there was not even a physical distance between the organisers and the audience.

In the revolutionary media, the content is circulated instead of being broadcasted. This means instead of the same people, in this case the members of Mosireen, sending the video/content to a massive audience, they outreach, and their audience share the content with others. An example of this is the Kaziboon campaign in 2011 and 2012; Mosireen collected and edited videos and then made them available online for the public to download to allow screenings in their own communities.

Another aspect of the 'revolutionary media', as regarded in Mosireen, is being a grassroots practice; Mosireen encouraged audiences to institutionalise their citizen journalism. The Rahal project "encourages people in different cities and communities to start their own media collectives" (interview with Darwish, 2013). Therefore, in their media literacy workshops, Mosireen encouraged trainees to access the social networking sites and to make content with the devices they already had, instead of renting or purchasing new cameras or mobile phones. Moreover, a 'revolutionary media' is created by people, not journalists who create content about the people or on their behalf. The members of Mosireen believed that the message is the priority, and that the medium can be adapted to make and spread it. Rizk thought that, ideally, everyone should be capable of being a journalist in their own right. He clarified that he rejected the idea that the role of a journalist had become mediating people's news for an audience (interview with Rizk, 2013).

Financial autonomy is a characteristic of the 'revolutionary media' model the members of Mosireen attempted to create. Upon receiving a donation from the Arab Digital Expression Foundation (ADEF) to launch the Rahal project in 2012, the board of Mosireen decided to self-sustain through raising funds by providing services and activities. As such, they would assign a fee for the use of their professional equipment, as each hour's use of professional cameras or other video equipment incurred a small charge. The members collected donations at film-screening events and placed a glass box in another room, often in the kitchen, inviting attendees to donate a fixed amount (often this would be 10. LE), with the understanding that people could provide more or less than this amount if they so wished. Besides this, Mosireen made use of digital crowdfunding, as I explained earlier. Here, the conception of 'revolutionary media' as a tool of resistance for the media against the political regime yielded unusual policies in the Egyptian media scene, such as the Mosireen's financial plans. The citizen journalists noted that differentiating their output from that of the traditional mainstream media achieved the aim of being revolutionary.

The 'revolutionary media' is participatory; all footage of Mosireen is published under Creative Commons copy rights licenses, plus the 858 Archive project, which means people can share this content, provided that they keep it in context and attribute it to Mosireen. Lastly, collaboration is key in the revolutionisation of media; it is in the workflow at Mosireen where video clips, the primary media content, are created by several members, and in the Rahal project, as the training materials of the workshops are prepared by five people,kept in a Wiki and depend mostly on open-source software.

Here, a banal question emerges: Why did these activists need a revolutionary media? In point of fact, one major motivation for the participants becoming citizen journalists was covering activist actions. Philip Rizk, a member of Mosireen, had previous experience of protest recording in 2009. He launched a channel on YouTube entitled Intifadat (youtube.com/user/intifadatintifadat), where he covered the labour protests with video reports, many of which were shot with his professional camera. Rizk did not target mainstream media to promote his videos. Adding to that, the co-founders of Mosireen needed a revolutionary media to spread the news of the protests in Egypt around the world, not only to inform and inspire, but also to enable solidarity with other revolutionaries. Since its start, all Mosireen videos were subtitled in English, and later translated into other languages by people in solidarity (Baker 2014: 229). Besides, the local and global media coverage of the 2011 protests and the events that followed relied on the activists, who were often politicised before 2011, and therefore interpreted events through their ideological lenses. Rizk puts it as "we [middle class activists] became the translators of a collective uprising of which we were far from its representatives" (2014: 30).

In an unstable political sphere like that of Egypt (during the time of conducting this research), media owners prioritised the preservation of their businesses, which could be threatened if the media messages broadcasted by their establishment disturbed the authorities. Media outlets could easily be harmed by the state, because it is the media regulator for both broadcast media and the press. Therefore, privately-owned media do not cover subjects that will harm their owners' businesses. This is clearly articulated by Salah Diab, the founder of *AlSharq AlAwsat* newspaper: "We launched the newspaper as an independent newspaper, not as an opposition one" (Hatita, 2013). Often, local media outlets change the terms of content gatekeeping in parallel with the political milieu. The sacrifice of content could be as significant as stopping an entire publication. Hence, the voice of the activists was not heard, not in the state-owned mainstream media, and carefully cited in the privately-owned media, or sometimes, disregarded completely.

Yet, after the 2011 uprising, the relationship between the state and its citizens influenced media activism and reshaped the environment in which these two media types converged and diverged. This changed the psychology of citizen action, by directing it to collectivism rather than individualism, and made mass media journalists more reflective about the content they created, which in turn led to many of them quitting their job if it required them to write or say things that contradicted their position.

The researcher was able to see how the co-founders see themselves as founders of unique media outlets, which grew into a notable feeling of self-fulfilment over the four months of my personal communication with them. They had great ambitions for the business. The members of Mosireen had such a feeling of success and uniqueness, too, because in all the interviews the participants underlined the singularity of their media institution in being a co-operative and crowdfunded. Effectively, the emergence of these sentiments should be linked to the circumstances of 2013, when the data was collected, because at that time events were happening at a fast pace and the public sought their coverage, which was proved with the news portals topping the lists of the most visited websites in Egypt in 2013. Thus, the pride of these co-founders and members of Mosireen would not have been as remarkable as it was if there were high

political stability, and therefore less interest in news content. The feeling of being the creators of a different media organisation benefitted my research because it made the participants provide accurate data and be critical of themselves. In most cases, they did not need to exaggerate numbers or events, because they felt they had already done something impressive.

THE 'REVOLUTIONARY MEDIA' AND THE INTERNET

The nature of social media as communication and networking sites, besides being publishing and sharing platforms, granted them an interactive role inside media outlets and helped citizen journalists at Mosireen to deploy the social networking sites in administrative as well as editorial work, such as in communications between staff members, fundraising and as an alternative to legal contracts for personnel. For instance, the social media played a role in fundraising for independent citizen media institutions, for example in the founding of Mosireen in 2012, as a means of running crowdfunding campaigns. Also, in many cases, the online social networks as communication tools have altered face-to-face interactions in citizen media institutions. Furthermore, the Internet enabled Mosireen to archive alternative narratives of events, a goal they determined essential to achieve. It is meaningful to find the tagline of the 858 archive is 'an archive of resistance'. Even prior to the launch of 858.ma video archive, the Mosireen YouTube channel is "a digitally preserved chronological narrative of the revolution from October 2011 to the end of the 2014." (Hamilton 2017).

As we observe the benefits Mosireen had from using the Internet, we may assume an enthusiasm of its members for the cybersphere. On the contrary, even before the actual establishment of Mosireen, the co-founders were mindful of the digital gap, yet did not intend to make the Internet their sole publishing space (in 2012, the year Mosireen was founded, only 20 percent of the rural population and 34 percent of urban households used the Internet). Therefore, in Tahrir Cinema, the Mosireen members tried hard to stream the videos on mobile phones through Bluetooth. They contacted software developers to enable the Bluetooth streaming to take place. However, the research in that regard was in a very early stage, and the technology was not necessarily capable of allowing Mosireen to stream video to the huge number of people in Tahrir square (Baker 2015: 229). In fact, many of the videos produced by Mosireen were screened on television in 2012 and 2013. Yet, Mosireen were not always happy with this, because, as Philpp Rizk explains, besides widening the audience of the videos, the television screenings "involved all the pitfalls of following the television guidelines, and placed us on the whims of the editorial line of commercial TV stations. As far as I know, after 30 June 2013, not a single television screened any of our new videos" (Baker 2015: 229).

New media has promoted the abstract thoughts of its users and created a space for turning these ideas into actions. This takes place across four stages. First, citizen journalists are the spectators of an old medium and observe its weaknesses. The second stage is when they individually or collectively start to explore a recent technology. At this point, citizen journalists attempt to handle the defects of the old medium by integrating the new medium into it. While doing this, some more abstract thoughts may arise about the social role of the media or their relationship with the state. The third stage starts with the collective decision of citizen journalists to organise the creation and publishing of content. The fourth stage involves customising the new medium and often developing it to fit the abstract thoughts it generated in the second stage.

In the case of Mosireen, the first stage involved the participants' "perceptions of and disagreement with the bias of mass media in favour of the political regime. The second stage saw their attempts to change the agenda-setting of mainstream media by getting their citizen reports broadcasted. For instance, the collaboration of Rizk, the co-founder of Mosireen, with the mainstream media to broadcast video recordings of the protests which he captured and published on his YouTube channels. In the third stage, some of Mosireen's co-founders collected video recordings of protestors in Tahrir Square during the 2011 uprising. The citizens did not have a ready-made format for their "revolutionary" form of citizen media, but gradually the norms governing their conduct emerged and became guided by social order and rationality. The emergent norm theory, proposed by Turner and Killian (1957), suggests that the work norms of a group emerge as they discuss their potential behaviour, which explains the time gap between the foundation of Mosireen and its launch. The fourth and final stage is the creation of new roles for the medium. Citizen journalists at Mosireen did actually reach the last stage and generated new uses for the medium in the operation of their media initiatives.

CONCLUSION

Mosireen experimented with an alternative model of the media institution, despite its uniqueness in different editorial and administration aspects, but few local journalists are aware of Mosireen and its work, as almost all the literature about the collective is in the English language. Moreover, news features and academic articles covering Mosireen have scant information about its origin and administration. Adding to that, Mosireen did not have an official paper to be recognised as a 'real' media institution.

The work of Mosireen draws the feature of 'revolutionary media' as grassroots organisation, with a short distance between the content makers and consumers, financially autonomous participation, bias against political regimes, and the use of archiving and documentation to create evidence of events. The goal of revolutionary media is to provide a voice for the unvoiced in the mainstream media, which are often backing the regime, allow counter-narratives to the mass media, and present the uprising to the world whilst connecting protestors with the global community, where support and inspiration is exchanged.

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