

The Interaction Between Citizen Media and the Mainstream Media

Media Organisation in Egypt during 2011, 2012
& 2013

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I declare that this is a true copy of the examined manuscript of my PhD thesis in 17th January, 2017, which was further submitted on 10th March, 2017 with minor changes approved by the examiners.

Abstract

THE INTERACTION BETWEEN CITIZEN MEDIA AND THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA

Media Organisation of Egypt during 2011, 2012 & 2013

This research explores the mutual influences between citizen media and the mainstream media, through studying two phenomena occurred in Egypt during the years 2011, 2012 and 2013; which are the institutionalisation of citizen journalism and the employment of a number of citizen journalists in the mainstream media. The thesis answers the question: What is the nature of interaction between citizen media and the mainstream media?

I argue that the citizen media -mainstream media interaction is driven by the medium, which is the social media, the media organizer; or the individuals who control the media outlet, either by having editorial authority, such as Editors-in-chief, or owning it. In addition, the mass media are another driver of the interaction between citizen media and the mainstream media. Plus, the relationship between the citizens of the state and the political regime too, it influence the convergence and divergence of citizen media and the mainstream media. And in the authoritarian regime, such as Egypt, where the state controls these three sides, it becomes the focal point of interaction between citizen media and the mainstream media.

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Abbreviations

AMAY	<i>AlMasry AlYoun</i> Newspaper
ADEF	Arab Digital Expression Foundation
CAPM	Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics
ERTU	Egyptian Radio and Television Union
ESJ	Egyptian Syndicate of Journalists
IDSC	Information and Decision Support Center
IT	Information Technology
MCE	Media Credibility in Egypt
RNN	Rassd News Network
SCAF	Supreme Council of the Armed Forces
SMD	social media department
SMS	Short message service
SNSs	Social networking sites

Introduction

This research addresses the question: what is the nature of the interaction between citizen media and mainstream media? The ‘interaction’ in question involves the mutual influences of each media type on the other, and I use the word instead of ‘convergence’, because the latter involves an assumption that citizen media and mainstream media have combined, whereas a broader term such as ‘interaction’ does not infer this notion. In this research, ‘mainstream media’, ‘mass media’ and ‘traditional media’ are used interchangeably to denote traditional channels of broadcasting, such as print press and television, while ‘citizen media’ or ‘citizen journalism’ represent the action of producing content outside the mass media, often by using social networking sites (SNSs) as reporting tools and publishing platforms.

To answer the research question, I use the case of Egypt in the years 2011, 2012 and 2013, specifically two concurrent media phenomena of that period which crossed the paths of the two media types mentioned above. The first is the institutionalisation of a proportion of the work of some citizen journalists, which means the organisation of certain citizen journalism initiatives from social network sites to actuality, by having a physical office, agreed editorial policies and managerial strategies. The second phenomenon is the employment of citizen journalists in mainstream media outlets, either to use the social element to spread content that was originally written by journalists or to generate new content from material produced by other citizen journalists. For each phenomenon, I determine the following: how does it occur? How does it happen from the perspective of citizen journalists? And what are its implications on the media landscape? Subsequently, I take a step back and underline the factors that have stimulated and fashioned the two phenomena.

I argue that there are four directors in this respect: (1) technology: which is the social media (2) media organisers: a term I use to denote people who have the power to produce content and own or establish a media outlet. They are journalists, media owners and citizen journalists. I use this term as an alternative to ‘human agency’, which I find very broad and covers more people than the number I believe drive the interaction. For instance, in the context of my research, the word ‘human’ would denote all users of the medium, although I do not mean every single human influences the interaction; (3) mass media performance and structure and (4) the relationship between citizens of the state and

the political regime. Here, 'the state' is an umbrella term for the political regime and the bodies attached thereto.

In an authoritarian regime such as Egypt, where the political regime controls technology, the mass media and media organisers, the state becomes the focal point of interactions between citizen media and the mainstream media. For nearly three decades, under the rule of the former president Hosni Mubarak, the state monopolised media ownership, and even after permitting privately owned newspapers and television stations, significant numbers were loyal to the state. Thus, over time, the mainstream media, especially state-owned outlets, became representative of the regime, and along with the political mobilisation against Mubarak in 2004, citizen journalism emerged as a voice of the opposition. The toppling of this regime in February 2011 did not affect the position of the state as the focus of interrelations between citizen media and the mainstream media, because it remained the controller and organiser of the mass media, while the numerous media channels that opened in 2011 and thereafter remained loyal to the 'state'. Meanwhile, the 2011 uprising framed citizen journalists' visions within their chosen media and accordingly fashioned how they operated.

This thesis suggests a strong influence of social media in media outlet structures, either in the citizen media or mass media industries. The spread of social networking sites and their constant technological advances have created a need to hire a new group of workers in mainstream media to take charge of these sites as information sources, content promotion tools and communication channels. The relevant medium has shaped the work routines of this new group of workers, as well as their users in citizen media institutions, where social media are given many roles and is integrated into the management process.

Furthermore, I argue that citizen media is rooted in the mainstream media, even though it is decidedly geared toward altering the mass media. This idea comes from the fact that citizen journalists are also part of mass television and newspaper audience, and as such they observe the performance of mass media and assess its strengths and weaknesses. When these audiences become citizen journalists, they make a cognitive choice whether to simulate mass media or not. Nonetheless, when they opt to contradict the conventions of the mainstream media and create alternatives, this decision in itself proves the influence of mass media on alternative media.

In addition, mass media organisers and citizen journalists shape the media scene according to subjective factors, such as their personal life histories as, perhaps, political

activists or investors, and their objective to establish media outlets. Also, media organisers fashion the media landscape according to objective reasons, mainly the political economy of communication in their societies, media laws and the political and social environments.

In 2011, Egypt witnessed large scale protests against the regime of Hosni Mubarak, calling for the step-down of the president. The protests started in the capital and big cities on 25th January, and these metropolitan protests were quickly galvanised into nationwide demonstrations and sit-ins calling for the step-down of the president. Mubarak did leave his position on 11th February of the same year, and ever since Egypt has been going through a fast-paced change in political life. In the following three years, three regimes governed the country: the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) (February 2011 to June 2012); Mohammed Morsi (June 2012 to July 2013); and Adly Mansour (July 2013 to 8 June 2014).

In many cases, the international mainstream media have credited Egyptian citizen journalists with a pivotal role in the political change in 2011 and beyond. This position can be seen explicitly seen in documentaries broadcast during 2011 and 2012. *Seeds of the Revolution* (Aljazeera, 2011), *How Facebook Changed The World – The Arab Spring* (BBC, 2011) and *Tweets From Tahrir* (Aljazeera, 2012). Citizen media, in this context, is often used as a term for the technology of the social networking sites, or the action of using the internet for political mobilisation.

There is evidence that this glorification of the role of social media in these narratives about the deposing of Mubarak, and the celebration of Facebook in particular, seems to have encouraged citizens to join the social networking sites. In January 2013, Egypt ranked the first among the Arab region countries for Facebook use. In September of the same year, there were 16 million users of Facebook registered their location as ‘Egypt’ (Farid, 2013), this number equates to only 18.84 per cent of Egypt’s population.

Many academics became interested in studying the Egyptian citizen media after the 2011 uprising. Their research looked broadly at the role of social media and citizen journalism in mobilising political action. The first – and probably most studied – topics were the use of social networking sites in the 2011 unrest (e.g. ElTantawi, 2011; Storck, 2011; Sheedy, 2011; Gawhry, 2011; Choudry et al., 2012; Khamis & Vaughn, 2011; Lim, 2012) and the impact of social media on civic engagement (e.g. Khamis & Vaughn, 2011; ElNawawy & Khamis, 2013; Lim, 2012). Other topics have emerged but attracted less scholarly attention, such as the use of media in the creation of a ‘counter-revolution’

(Alexander & Aouragh, 2014) and government involvement in broadcasting before, during and after the uprising (Harper, 2014). Furthermore, other studies have covered the whole Egyptian media scene rather than focusing on citizen media; for instance, there was a range of studies, journal articles and NGO reports on the status of the media in a country 'in transition' (e.g. Abdallah, 2011; Mendel, 2011; ElGendi, 2013; Issawi, 2014; Abdulla, 2014).

At the same time, the Egyptian citizen media underwent tangible and significant change in its structures, goals and tactics after the uprising against the political regime of Hosni Mubarak in 2011. This is most apparent in the emergence of two phenomena. Firstly, the institutionalisation of the work of some citizen journalists; small media outlets were established by citizen journalists, some of these outlets were originally on the web, in a format of a Youtube channel or Facebook page, and shifted from being virtual activities to having a physical premises, a group of workers, an agreed management system, and common work values. The second phenomenon was the hire of citizen journalists in the mainstream media outlets, where they were assigned to use social media either to disseminate the stories developed in the mainstream outlets online, to selectively digest their content for social media or generate mainstream media content from social media sources. As I set out earlier in this introduction, I use these two phenomena to explore the drivers of the interaction between citizen media and the mainstream media. I will go on to show through the samples I chose to analyse, that the interaction here is symbolised by two phenomena.

In fact, researchers have been engaged in assessing the impact of content produced by citizens, and its influence on the social and political levels, but they have seldom studied the actual citizens themselves. In addition, academics often treat citizen journalism as a tool of activism or in connection with communication technologies rather than as an institutionalised form of media.

Furthermore, while the academic literature about the relationship between citizen media and politics has certainly increased, scant attention has been paid to the relationship between citizen media and other types of media. Hence, this thesis does not aspire to investigate media conditions in Egypt, a subject that has been covered extensively over the decades by researchers scrutinising transformations in Egyptian media laws, structures and practices (see, for example, Megid, 2005; Khamis, 2001; Hafez, 2015; Abdulla, 2014; Mendel, 2011; Sakr, 2013). Effectively, what relates to this thesis is the niche question of

how the legal, political and professional circumstances of journalism in Egypt have affected the relationships between citizen media and the mainstream media.

The key finding of this thesis, which will lead to the ultimate conclusion, is that the emergence of a number of citizen media outlets in Egypt has opened up a new domain for early-career journalists, one in which they are better paid than traditional journalists and quickly promoted. It has also attached a new function to citizen journalism, namely being 'revolutionary', which means acting as a voice for victims of political oppression. This also includes supporting the 2011 uprising against Mubarak and being a journalism watchdog, too.

Additionally, the phenomenon has led to the emergence of progressive models of ownership, administration and fundraising which are new to the Egyptian media landscape. Meanwhile, the employment of citizen journalists in the mainstream media has pushed the management of these media outlets to take on board more administrative flexibility to cope with the nature of these new jobs, while it has also revealed the need to adjust the internal laws of the Egyptian Press Syndicate (EJS) to absorb and apply to citizen journalists. Furthermore, mixing citizen journalists with journalists in the same media outlet has encouraged the latter to boost their social media literacy and emphasised how they view journalism as a whole, i.e. practicing a set of skills and moral values. It could be argued that the job of citizen journalists in the mainstream media affects the nature of citizen journalism as an alternative form of media. However, verifying the impact of this phenomenon on the role of citizen media requires long-term research and observation, thereby allowing a good period of time to compare differences between the past and the present.

I have built the thesis around four sample media outlets, all of them run by citizen journalists. First is the social media department of *AlMasry AlYoum*, an Egyptian privately owned newspaper. Second is OnTube, a television programme produced by the satellite channel ON T.V. (2011-2012), which covers discussions and various types of citizen journalism in the Arab world by hosting citizen journalists on Skype, broadcasting viral videos shot by Arab citizen journalists and digesting the topics trending on Twitter in the Arab region. Third is Rassd, a citizen-sourced news network which has several social media platforms, a news website and a paid mobile updates service. Rassd relies on a network of citizen journalists to send news and videos to professional journalists who in turn filter, curate and publish the content. Rassd launched in 2010 on Facebook as a group

of citizen journalists looking particularly to monitor the parliamentary elections scheduled for that year. Afterwards, it continued to be active until it was registered as a stakeholder company in 2011. Fourth is Mosireen, a media co-operative which provides alternative video coverage to events through its dedicated YouTube channel. These videos are produced collaboratively by the 11 board members, who are filmmakers and civil society and media workers. This media co-operative conducts a range of activities for fundraising and knowledge transfer, such as training workshops and, outside Cairo, weekly film screenings and video equipment rental.

The choice of these media institutions was based on convenience and purposive sampling. The selection criteria were topicality and visibility, i.e. the samples of citizen media and mainstream media used in this thesis enjoyed a level of popularity with an audience, which was decided according to viewership statistics on social media at the time of sampling. Accessibility was also a criterion, and so I deliberately chose media institutions located in Cairo, because at the time of the data collection process in 2013, political instability had affected the mobility of individuals and created barriers to travelling around the country and, on many occasions, even across the same city. Deviation was another sampling criterion, in that each of the selected cases should have an exclusive privilege or unusual characteristic. For instance, Mosireen as a media co-operative with a one-of-a-kind model of ownership, as the Egyptian media industry had not seen collective ownership until the foundation of Mosireen in 2012.

I intentionally selected subjects that had differing levels of and approaches to autonomy. The social media department of *AlMasry AlYoum* (AMAY) and OnTube programmes, for example, are made by the mainstream media, while Rassd and Mosireen are independent. In AMAY, citizen journalists do not generate content, so their main job is the online promotion of the newspaper's content, while an OnTube citizen journalist will digest the content produced by Arab citizen journalists on social networking sites and then clarify and comment on it accordingly. Furthermore, the models of ownership vary in the selected organisations – while mainstream citizen journalism institutions are owned by holding companies, the two independent institutions have collective ownership, namely Rassd is run by a group of co-founders, and Mosireen is a media co-operative. Moreover, the management of each of the selected institutions is different, in that some operate a top-down structure, while others are managed collectively.

I formulated my epistemological position by gaining an understanding of the two phenomena from the accounts of citizen journalists and journalists. Understanding these phenomena involved two processes. The first was data collection and verification. I used in-depth interviews as the primary method of data collection, involving meetings with journalists, citizen journalists, ‘journos-bloggers’ and one member of the EJS. Nearly of the interviews were carried out on a one-to-one basis, with only one being done collectively with a group of professional journalists working for Rassd. The interviews sought information about the foundation of these institutions, the work tactics citizen journalists employ, their personal experiences of the institutionalisation of their media (in Rassd and Mosireen) and entering the mainstream media industry as citizen journalists (in *AlMasry AlYoun* and On T.V.)

Most of the scholarly work on media engagement with citizen journalists has focused primarily on mainstream media using social networking sites or the content generated by their users. However, in this thesis I reverse the topic and study it from the viewpoints of citizen journalists, namely why they engaged with mainstream media and how they went about achieving this goal. Throughout the following chapter I unearth their motivations relating to the institutionalisation of citizen media and joining the mainstream media, how they organised their output channels, how they regard themselves and what ambition they have for themselves and their outlets. Moreover, I propose ongoing and potential implications of these phenomena on Egyptian media ecology.

The thesis takes a phenomenological approach to developing some of the core primary data. I used phenomenology to deal broadly with interview material that has been seldom used in the citizen media research. Most of the literature about citizen journalism is written from the account of the researcher, who designs questionnaires, sets specific questions for the participants or analyses selected content from social media. This thesis, however, introduces the phenomena through a citizen journalist lens, which proved to reveal details that would not have been visible without having the phenomenological approach, such as the reasons for citizen journalism institutionalisation. Furthermore, I root additional analysis in more observational sociology and political economy.

Political economy is the study of the relationship between production, distribution, and consumption of resources (Mosco, 1995). It focuses on structures for the production of the media and communication industries. Wittel (2012) observes the absence of a consensus regarding what questions the political-economy of communication is answering.

He compares a number of introductions to the political-economy of communication (such as Mosco, 1996; Devereux, 2003; McQuail, 2005; Laughey, 2009; Burton, 2010) to prove his observation.

In the late 1960s, political-economy was developed in the economic realm and subsequently applied in the communication industries, mainly by Harold Innis and the Frankfurt School. This research area came into existence in the early 1970 when the West was in a phase of stagflation (stagnation and inflation); privatisation became policy to solve high inflation, and in many cases the cultural sector was privatised too. This raised concerns about the influence of private ownership on labour.

“The obvious starting point for a political-economy of mass communications is the recognition that the mass media are first and foremost industrial and commercial organisations which produce and is tribute commodities .”

(Golding & Murdock, 2009. P. 205-206).

Epistemologically, phenomenological approaches are “based on a paradigm of personal knowledge and subjectivity” (Lester, 1999, p. 408), which is what makes personal communication the best methodology for this research. In addition, I used observation to understand deviations in the samples. Specifically, I observed Rassd as an external and frequent visitor to the work premises, while I was a participant observer in Mosireen, where I was an intern for six weeks in 2013. I was not able to use observation as a research method while studying OnTube, because, at the time of data collection, the programme was suspended. Furthermore, I did not observe the social media department at *AlMasry AlYoum* because I was able to investigate it fully through personal communication with its head and the managing editor of the newspaper.

On the academic level, this thesis is contributes to citizen journalism research, which, to date, has been dominated by quantitative research. Qualitative literature is required in order to grasp a deep understanding of changes in media ecology, where surveys and questionnaires become arguably less indicative. The findings of this thesis add greater detail to this niche area, identify the staff responsible for social media in mainstream media outlets and provide a rich and systematic perspective on how citizen journalists organise their media, an area that has, until now, seen little study.

Moreover, the thesis takes an overview of the structure of citizen journalism instead of treating it as a form of cyber activism or a communication technology – a common approach in citizen media literature. Thus, the circumstances behind the samples' foundation sit amongst the research objectives, and the elements that fashioned these citizen media samples are the core of the research question.

Notably, my research approach, methods and analysis focus on the human element, by giving them a very active role in making and driving the interactions between citizen media and the mainstream media. The thesis treats citizen journalists as only the producers of content, though it considers multiple positions as part of the mainstream media audience, media practitioners and media owners. Traditionally, in mass communication theories, the audience is either passive (for example, in the hypodermic needle theory, they are influenced massively by mass media and voice their opinion according to what is being broadcast) or semi-passive (e.g. in the two flow theories, some influence others to become opinion leaders, but their leadership transpires through mass media and the rest of the audience remains passive). The activity of the audience often revolves around the message they receive via mass media; for instance, in the reception theory, the audience decodes the content of the media in accordance to their backgrounds. And in the areas of use and gratification, the audience is active in choosing what content to consume. Moreover, the thesis emphasises a connection between the media and social behaviour, by using the cultural and political backgrounds of citizen journalists to interpret the organisation of citizen media.

Studying the powers which drive the interaction between citizen media and the mainstream media deepens understanding of the recent changes in the media landscape and draws attention to connections between object and subject elements which are seldom highlighted, such as the influences of technology literacy on the relationships between personnel in a newsroom. The conduction of this research holds industrial value, because understanding the major factors in interactions between the media types should help media investors decide on the way to converge with citizen media and the level of this convergence, while organisers of citizen media and the mainstream media will learn how other parties consider these interactions. Also, the research provides citizen journalists with a polarised picture of four citizen media organisations.

The choice of Egypt's citizen journalism as a case study is based on the fact that the two phenomena (the institutionalisation of citizen journalism and the hiring of citizen

journalists by mass media) are very noticeable in Egypt, probably because of the country's high number of internet users. As a result there are multiple citizen journalist initiatives, each with a different level of popularity. The institutionalisation of citizen journalism has happened in Tunisia, too. For instance, Nawat (nawat.org) is a citizen journalism website created and run by political activists in diaspora since 2004. In 2011, it was turned into a non-governmental organisation carrying out media and technology projects, including training workshops for citizen journalists.

I completed this thesis between 2011 and 2016, and most of the data were collected in 2013. Egypt's situation at the time was changing both politically and socially. There were curfews, roadblocks and diversions to control protests throughout the three years, and in some cases these affected the mobility of me and my participants. Moreover, my affiliation with a British media institution would occasionally raise doubts about me personally, because throughout 2011 and 2012, xenophobia had a strong presence in the state-media discourse. Furthermore, there was a notable polarisation in Egyptian society after the election of the Muslim Brotherhood member Mohammed Morsi as president in 2012, and this escalated further after his removal by the army a year later and raised the issue of trust between people, thus requiring me to prove my trustworthiness.

However, a range of factors facilitated my work on this thesis and helped me overcome difficulties in the fieldwork. Being an Egyptian national helped me travel around Cairo, which considerably lowered the risk to my personal safety. Moreover, I was able to read the content of the selected media in its original language, and speaking Arabic as my mother tongue, as well as my background as both a journalist and a citizen journalist, facilitated my contact and communication with the participants in this research.

This thesis is structured through a series of chapters that build and support my central arguments. In Chapter One, I illustrate the research question by reflecting ontologically on its key elements, specifically citizen media, as the core subject of the thesis, social media, the technology of citizen media and a crossing point of interaction, as it has been used as a primary editing and publishing tools in citizen journalism and, recently, in the mainstream media, too. Furthermore, I introduce the concept of Web 2.0, which is the environment in which citizen media and mainstream media interactions occur, because it is where citizen media institutions started as virtual communities before having a physical presence. Also, it is the domain of work for citizen journalists who work for mass media outlets. Additionally, I discuss the meaning behind institutionalisation.

In Chapters Two and Three, I review the key literature about the relationship between technology and the state and mass media. I dedicate Chapter Two to the illustration of the medium theory, by Marshal McLuhan, in particular the suggested power of technology in relation to the media message, social culture and media ecology. I use this chapter mainly to discuss the validity of using theories which preceded the invention of Web 2.0 in modern-day research. I contend that we can use these notions tactically to deepen our understanding of new media; in other words, we should compare intellectual work about old media and ask why does it not apply to new media? Consequently, we create new meanings relating to current communication technologies and update old paradigms. In this chapter, I also present examples of gatekeeping and agenda-setting as two concepts which emerged a long time before social media but have been updated recently.

Subsequently, in Chapter Three, I introduce media systems as a means of connecting politics with the media sphere and survey their evolution in the West from the four theories of press (Siebert et al., 1956) up to comparative media systems (Halling & Mancini, 2004). Subsequently, I discuss the non-Western typologies of media systems and focus on those that have covered the media in Arab countries.

Then I move to Chapter Four, where I cover the interaction between citizen media and the mainstream media before 2011. This brief chapter prepares the reader for understanding the research samples, the circumstances in which citizen journalism emerged and how it connected with mainstream media. Keeping the same phenomenological research approach in this chapter, I introduce the beginning of citizen journalism and its interaction with mass media through the perspective of citizen journalists, in particular those who practiced citizen journalism while having a job in the mainstream media. The chapter combines the primary data I collected from personal communications with a number of journalist bloggers, alongside academic literature and NGO reports.

Over the first four chapters of the thesis, I raise the question about using Western scholarship in a non-Western context, discuss the different positions in this regard and then present mine accordingly. First, I point to the ambiguity of what ‘Western’ scholars mean. Then I clarify that what we may call ‘Western literature’ is not representative of the entire Western world but only countries with developed academic and research institutions. The dominance of the English language has led to the supremacy of Anglo-American literature,

and many academics have observed a certain ethnocentricity of media scholarship because of the spread of American academic publishing. Similarly, in the Arab region, research undertaken in some countries has gained more exposure than others; for instance, Egyptian media scholarly works have been used as secondary sources for many researchers, while Sudanese research has not been employed in this regard. The supremacy of the academic output of some Arab countries over others is influenced by several political-economic factors, such as conditions of the publishing industry, the establishment of academic institutions and the involvement of many countries in wars.

In Chapter Five, I explain thoroughly the methodology of this dissertation as well as the ethical concerns and considerations I had while conducting it. I detail the research plan, its execution, lessons learnt and the challenges I faced. Also, in this chapter I justify my choice of the qualitative research methods and phenomenological approach, use a range of literature to clarify their weaknesses and strengths and cite examples of the fieldwork to prove the efficacy of the selected methods.

Thereafter, in Chapter Six, I move to citizen media-mainstream media interaction through two cases, namely the social media department at *AlMasry AlYoun* and the OnTube programme, as examples of the employment of citizen journalists in the mass media. Meanwhile, in Chapter Seven, I examine Rassd and Mosireen to explore citizen journalism institutionalisation. In each of these chapters I start with a description of the samples alongside some background information on their foundation, ownership and editorial leanings, and then I describe each phenomenon as lived by the citizen journalists, before concluding on their implications surrounding the interaction of citizen media and mainstream media. In Chapter Eight, I draw a bigger picture of the results regarding the hiring of citizen journalists in the print and broadcast media, and the physical existence of citizen journalism initiatives. I clarify the role of technology, mass media, media organisers and the relationship between the state and citizens in fashioning interactions between citizen media and the mainstream media. Finally, in the concluding chapter, I summarise the main findings of my research to bring out my central argument, I discuss the implications and contribution of this thesis to the research of citizen media, social media and journalism and then set out some key ways in which the research could be developed further within the field.

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK: THEORISING THE INTERACTION BETWEEN CITIZEN MEDIA AND MAINSTREAM MEDIA

In the introduction, I set out the core of my thesis whereby, in this society where the state controls the overall ecology of the communication media, governmental structures and activities become the focal point of interaction between the mainstream media and citizen media. Such an interaction has four main drivers: technology, mass media, media organisers and the relationship between citizens. In later chapters, which outline my findings, I explore a sample of four diverse citizen journalism institutions, in order to create a wide picture of how they were established and what phenomena influence their organisations. In the next chapters I build upon the short section in the introduction contextualising the research, which described the media landscape after the 2011 uprising.

This chapter sets out the two-part theoretical framework for my research. First is a discussion on the paradigm for studying the interaction between citizen media and the mainstream media, and second I frame the very question of citizen media- mainstream media interaction.

As will be apparent, I have not drawn on a single perspective but used a number of theories from the humanities and social science to delve deeper into both forms of media as social, cultural and technological phenomena, and I have also identified the drivers of the interaction between them. I contend that studying the interaction between two or more media types should be holistic in scope and multi-disciplinary in approach. I will show that by consulting a wide range of academic work, especially from the fields of sociology and political science, I am able to give depth to my study and raise important questions about these important communication forms beyond my case studies.

One important facet of this research is that among the four elements that I identify as drivers of citizen media-mainstream media interaction, no element is suggested to have more influence than the other. Effectively, reducing citizen media to a singular element based on the purpose (activism) or the channels (technology) fails to account adequately for the way they relate. This is because the technology of citizen media consists of scale-free networks, i.e. a complex network consisting of a tremendous number of interconnected nodes (Barabási & Bonabeau, 2003); therefore, reductionism would not be the ideal way to study citizen media. Besides, in the Egyptian case and following Faris

(2008), we see citizen journalism as an active network in which many agents work together in a complex manner. Most scholarly work about citizen journalism treats this new media simply as a technology or as a forum of activism, rather than an institutionalised media form in its own right. We find citizen media denoted by a range of terms, including ‘social media’, ‘social networking sites’, ‘digital activism’ and ‘cyber activism’, and in many instances it is symbolised by its commercial incarnation, most notably in Egypt, as ‘Facebook’.

In the second part of this chapter I frame the core question of citizen media-mainstream media interaction by illustrating its conceptual components and reflecting on the variety of terminologies used in my research and their synonyms. This includes a discussion of some core concepts that I deploy throughout the thesis: citizen media, mainstream media, social networking sites (SNSs), Web 2.0 and media institutionalisation.

There is almost no concise theory that can be adopted readily to explore the relationship between citizen and mainstream media, but there is a range of theory available to us on each factor influencing this interaction. For instance, for technology, there is the medium theory on the power of a medium in the creation of media content. On the relationship between society and media, we have the social normative theory, the social constructivist theory, media systems and the mass society theory.

The processes involved in the interactions between citizen media and the mainstream media, and a number of generated sub-topics, also have theoretical frames, most of which can be found in the field of sociology. In the present thesis, I use a range of theoretical frames as the foundations and proof of my arguments. For instance, building on Bandura’s theory (1977) about social learning, I draw a connecting line between the innovation of citizen journalism practices and the consumption of mass media.

This research does not fit fully into a specific branch of media studies; instead, it crosses over with internet studies in tackling online structures in the form of virtual newsrooms established by citizens, which they later turned into physical institutions. However, the research does not investigate these online structures deeply, and it only approaches them as the basis of a citizen media institution. In that sense, I may say that the thesis complements internet studies, as it follows the extension of online communities in real life.

Also, in the first instance, the thesis may be considered a study of media convergence, described as:

“... the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the co-operation between multiple media industries, and the migratory

behavior of media audiences who would go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they wanted.”

(Jenkins, 2006, p. 2)

The concept of media convergence has undergone investigation since the late seventies, and its use has therefore developed from being mainly connected with digitalisation in media technology to include elements of integration and combination (Appelgreen, 2004). In my study of the interaction element, I step back and explore whether, in the first instance, a new medium is used for communicating content to other platforms, and if so, why? As mentioned in the introduction, I deliberately chose ‘interaction’ instead of ‘convergence’ because I do not assume citizen media and the mainstream media are converging, but rather suppose a mix of convergence and divergence; thus, the thesis sets out to determine what governs this scenario. Convergence exists in many disciplines at different levels and forms, whereas the media convergence studies assume convergence is happening and start answering questions about how and why it happens. For instance, in the literature of computer networks, there are convergence, divergence and interoperability. As Miller (2000) explains, convergence is the bringing together of two things, hence if two media channels overlap in a particular respect (content, structure, workers etc.), they converge. Divergence is the non-occurrence of convergence. Whereas, interoperability is the cooperation between systems without them crossing over each other

This limitation of the meaning and domain of media convergence motivated me to use a broad term such as ‘interaction’ to describe the research topic. However, I use the term ‘convergence’ in my data analysis, as there are already aspects of digital and textual convergence between the two media types, as well as divergence.

Moreover, this research relates to journalism studies, especially the part which introduces independent citizen media institutions (Chapters Six and Seven), since it provides details of the work undertaken in these non-traditional newsrooms. However, this is not the central focus of this thesis, in which the emphasis lies more on the rationale behind the similarity or dissimilarity of the work systems of citizen media outlets in relation to the mainstream media.

Behind my definitions and mapping of the various theoretical frames available to study the relationship between Egyptian citizen and mainstream media is a much more profound question about the applicability of what we might call ‘old Western theories’. There are two problematic questions we need to ask. First, can we apply the classic

theories made half a century ago to current media? Second, do ‘Western media theories’ allow us to make sense of a non-Western society like Egypt?

The use of earlier theories for exploring new media was common a decade ago, but its adequacy has been challenged as “putting new wine in old bottles” (Landow, 2003, p. 35). However, this tendency has continued. I argue that we can indeed apply the classical theories developed from the 1960s onwards to current media, because the current medium is not a completely new departure from previous forms of communication, but we must be conscious of the differences between the new and the old. In Chapter Two, I provide an extended discussion of this point and introduce the variations between social media and old technologies, the latter of which were the subjects of the medium theory. In Chapters Two and Three, I discuss the significant age of the medium theory, evaluate its compatibility with today’s social media platforms and consider the appropriateness of media systems whose constructions were built upon the research of Western societies in the context of a non-Western country.

As for the question regarding the adequacy of applying ‘Western media theories’ in a non-Western society, as I demonstrate in this thesis there is much to be revealed by using the theories constructed by Western scholars in Western societies, as long as the researcher has a deep understanding of the socio-cultural context of their research object as well as a clear understanding of the theories and the circumstances behind their making. Hence, I cite a range of ‘Western’ and non-Western scholarly pieces in this research.

A reflection on the question leads us to the fact that the notion of ‘Western’ academia is ambiguous. What exactly do we mean by the term ‘Western’ theories? When we make these distinctions between Western and non-Western literature, are we talking about the researcher? The language of the research? The research field? Or the academic institution which published the research? In my case, if an Arab researcher is studying an Arab society in a Western academic institution, should we call this production ‘Western’? And before that, can the scholarly work of all the Western researchers be treated as a one whole? And if we agreed on the inappropriateness of ‘Western’ theories in non-Western contexts, what indicates that a given academic work is Western?

For now, I move to the conceptual and operational definitions of the terms used in this research, before moving on to clarify the central question of the study and introduce interpretations of the concepts of citizen media and mainstream media through social networking sites, as they are the technology used in the sample. Thereafter, I clarify

institutionalisation, which is the central tenet of the studied cases. The objective of this section is to determine to what exactly I am searching for an answer.

Defining Mainstream and Citizen Media

Before proceeding, it is important to plot a clear course through the plethora of terminology that is used to discuss what I term ‘mainstream’ and ‘citizen’ media. There is not a clear definition available to the scholar in this regard, but in this research I use the terms ‘mainstream media’ and ‘mass media’ to denote outlets where content is produced in line with a set of professional techniques and ethics adopted in the mass media, alongside the use of traditional broadcasting channels. Also, I occasionally use ‘old media’ and ‘traditional media’ to refer to print, radio or television.

In doing so, I both build upon and problematise some of the widely used senses of the term ‘mainstream media’. Most mainstream media concerns are often presented as portals that carry mass communication through a medium (a channel) that reaches a large number of people. Mass media are usually categorised in five ways: print (newspapers, magazines, books, pamphlets), recordings (magnetic tapes, CDs, DVDs), cinema, radio and television. In the 1990s, the internet was seen to have entered this arena as the sixth format. However, this classic definition has become less applicable to the development of new high-tech communication channels, as one medium can serve the functions of all mass media through the use of a smart media device to watch television and movies, read books. Recognising this point, Wimmer and Dominick (2013) added ‘smart mass media’ as a new category, which includes smart phones, smart televisions and tablets. Currently, mobiles often count as the seventh mass media format (Ahonen, 2008).

Therefore, I call outlets which rely on old media ‘mass media’, where the technology is involved in making the content. Likewise, ‘citizen media’ is defined, in this research, as the process of using social networking sites (SNSs) as media formats to publish or generate content. I decided to use ‘citizen media’ from amongst the many terms describing something close to the use of new technologies for journalism, because it accurately expresses what is being studied herein.

‘Citizen media’ (and sometimes ‘citizens’ media’) was coined originally in 2001 by Clemencia Rodriguez in her book *Fissures in the Mediascape*, in which she studied a number of community radio stations in Latin America. Rodriguez used the term ‘citizen’ because citizenship is politically inclusive, an umbrella term that covers everybody, especially indigenous, marginalised communities and explicitly makes the link between

participation in public life and becoming a citizen. In fact, she was influenced by the thoughts of the feminist scholar Chantal Mouffe (1992), who suggested that citizenship is not a thing given by formal institutions, not something we have by birth, either; rather, being interactive in everyday life makes one a citizen of the social space in which he or she resides. Looking at the terms that were given to the media in South America by scholars from this particular part of the world, we find that some of them reflect levels of rejecting the state, too. I have in mind activities which include counter-information as well as alternative, parallel and resistant positions.

Rodriguez (2001) defined citizens' media via three characteristics:

“First a collectivity is enacting its citizenship by actively intervening and transforming the established mediascape; second, that these media are contesting social codes, legitimized identities and institutionalised social relations; and third, that these communication practices are empowering the community involved, to the point where these transformations and changes are possible.”

(Rodriguez, 2001. p. 20)

I prefer to use ‘citizen media’ in this research instead of ‘citizens’ media’ because the latter, which was proposed by Rodriguez (2001), implicitly indicates a media collective organised by citizens. The collectivism of the community media Rodriguez studied in her book was organic, since these communities existed before organising their media into structures. Conversely, in this thesis, collectivism is an aspect of evolution, not a natural characteristic of the media. Moreover, the community of citizen journalists in the four samples were not a community beforehand, even if some of them knew each other previously – they are individual citizen journalists.

‘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, Caroline Hamilton (2013), tracing the ontology of amateurism, concludes that defining the amateur as a counterpoint to professionalism can be misleading. According to Hamilton (2013), using 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” (p. 179). She goes on to explain that making distinctions between the two groups on the basis of time and money is inaccurate, since “professionals often volunteer their services and amateurs sometimes get paid for their efforts” (p.180).

‘Participatory journalism’, which is another widely used synonym for citizen media (Mark Deuze, 2007, Singer et al., 2011), means that amateurs and professionals operate within the same news production networks (McQuail, 2010, p. 271). However, as I show later, in most of the organisations I study, citizen journalists and mainstream media journalists did not collaborate in making the content, although they shared the same workspace and equipment.

There are an increasing number of terms that may be confused with citizen journalism. This can usually be explained by variations in the approaches to the media type being studied. For instance, it is ‘public media’ and ‘civic journalism’ for the Chicago School of thought, where the relationship between the media and society is pivotal. From such a perspective, the collaboration between journalists and amateurs could be the most interesting feature in citizen journalism, and the public participation in social change. Jay Rosen (1999), a scholar of this school of thought, attributes the origins of the terms to the German philosopher Jurgen Habermas on the public sphere, from John Dewey’s great book *The Public and Its Problems*, and from the writings of James Carey (p. 35). Meanwhile, critical theorists, who are concerned with the impact of content on social structures, often call (what I call) citizen media ‘alternative’ and ‘critical media’. An example is provided by Christian Fuchs and Marisol Sandoval (2010), who argue that “critical content should be considered minimum requirements for defining alternative media” (p. 146).

I do not argue that these terms are completely different. On the contrary, I find they overlap and sometimes describe the same media activity. As I show in this thesis, citizen media is often alternative media, if we look at how it is created, and it could be marginalised or clandestine media if we look at who is creating it. A simple typology of defining alternative media is produced if we divide it into two categories of subjective and objective approaches. Subjective approaches stress active participation in the production and circulation of media content, whereby people organise and control the media themselves; hence the alternative media are considered as participatory as ‘citizens’ media’ (Rodriguez, 2001, Atton, 2002, Carpentier, 2011). Objective approaches are observed to be more interested in content and information, and they give voice to critical viewpoints that tend to be marginalised in the mainstream media – especially the views of progressive social movements and activists – and have a vision of an alternative, free and autonomous society (Sandoval & Fuchs, 2015).

Another reason for the variety of the terms given to what I coin ‘citizen media’ is the fact that most scholars disregard the simple question relating to 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, which 'counter-discourse' describes the function of the media.

It is worth noting that in Egypt the term 'citizen media' was often translated by the early citizen journalists as "صحافة شعبية" (Media by the People المواطن). This may be related to the fact that the word 'citizenship' "المواطنة" is not as common in the mass media as the term 'the people' "الشعب". Plus, citizens' media denotes an action of one person, the citizen; meanwhile, Media by the People الإعلام الشعبي is about collective action, which may have sounded more appealing to the Egyptian activists as it indicates a sense of solidarity.

The phenomenon of news content created by non-journalists has motivated some scholars to amend their definitions what constitutes 'the journalist'. For instance, Denis MacQuail's earlier definition of journalism was "paid writing for public media with reference to actual and ongoing events of public relevance" (2000, p. 430). A decade later, though, he changed his stance to "the person who creates information reports of recent and current events of interest to the public" (McQuail, 2010, p. 561). My own operational definition of 'citizen journalist' in this thesis refers to the person who uses social media, a content maker, publisher or promoter, whose profession could be journalism or otherwise.

After the popularisation of the term 'citizen media' in the last decade, certain voices were diminishing the word 'citizen'. For instance, Jeff Jarvis (2006), a dedicated advocate of citizen media, corrected himself and declared on his website that he would replace the term 'citizen journalism' with 'networked journalism', justifying that:

"Many of us were never satisfied with the terms, and for good reason. They imply that the actor defines the act, and that's not true in a time when anyone can make journalism. This also divides journalism into distinct camps, which only prolongs a problem of professional journalism.. In addition, many professional journalists have objected that these terms imply that they are not acting as citizens themselves."

Although Jarvis gives a good reason to stop using 'citizen journalism', I still use it in this research. His alternative term, 'networked journalism', is defined as a collaboration between journalists and amateurs "to get the real story, linking to each other across brands and old boundaries to share facts, questions, answers, ideas, perspectives" (Jarvis, 2006). In this thesis, though, I study media organised only by non-journalists (whom I call 'citizens'), making Jarvis's 'networked journalism' an invalid term in this regard.

Social Media and Social Networking Sites (SNSs)

There are the concept of 'social media' and the objects of the same term. The first involves journalists engaging with audiences and allowing them to take on roles in the production of content. Such engagement could be effected through comments attached to news stories, personal blogs, photos or video footage captured from personal mobile cameras, or local news written by residents of a community, information websites, fully fledged participatory news sites and personal broadcasting sites. The material elements of 'social media' are social networking sites (SNSs), which are the technology platforms used to create, generate and publish the content of citizen media.

Seeking an academic definition for SNSs, Ellison & Boyd write:

“[...] a social network site is a networked communication platform in which participants 1) have uniquely identifiable profiles that consist of user-supplied content, content provided by other users, and/or system-provided data; 2) can publicly articulate connections that can be viewed and traversed by others; and 3) can consume, produce, and/or interact with streams of user-generated content provided by their connections on the site. Some of the features that initially distinguished them have faded in significance”

(Ellison & Boyd, 2013. P.158)

Ellison and Boyd's (2007) comprehensive article on the definition, history and academic elements of social networking sites proposes five stages of development, starting in 1997 with the launch of SixDegrees.com, which is recognised as the first social networking site, and then citing 2005 as the start of the globalisation of social networking site. Yet, social networking sites made a late start in the Arab region, with low internet penetration as a main factor along with the predominance of English as the language of technology.

In 2006, the average penetration rate in the Middle East and North Africa was 7.8 percent only (Warf & Vincent, 2007). It is common to use 'social media' as a synonym for SNSs, which I do with this research. But why are these technologies particularly social? In 'Social Media: A Critical Introduction', Fuchs (2015) notes that SNSs are social in nature, which means they allow users to connect with society and have multi-layered meanings relating to sociability.

For instance, according to Fuchs, Facebook involves “at least three types of sociality: Cognition, communication and community” (p. 6). He also uses social theory and social philosophy to tell us what is social in social media, proposing cognition, communication, collaboration and community as forms of media sociality.

Fuchs (2015) argues that by reading the Émile Durkheim sociology, we find that all media can be considered social, since they are created by human beings, and the technological artefacts we use reflect the aspect of the society in which we live (p.5). Consequently, just using a medium is a social act, exemplified by Fuchs as a man sitting alone, typing a document on his computer without being connected to the internet. Some social theorists would consider his use of the medium as social, because the ideas he writes about are about society in one way or another: “Other people say that not all media are social, but only those that support communication between humans” (p. 6). Therefore, it is not social to just write a document, unless you then share it with someone or a group of people, and it is not social to type your ideas about society, albeit chatting about it with a friend is social.

But others find communications are not enough for the sociality of media, and “a feeling of belonging together or friendship” (p.6) is required. Therefore, media formats are social if communities are formed around them, an opinion grounded on the Weberian action theory. The fourth form of media sociality presented by Fuchs suggests that social media channels enable human collaboration and co-operation (such as co-operative editing of Wikipedia and joint writing on Google Documents).

SNSs are also referred to as ‘interactive media’, ‘user-generated content’ (UGC) and ‘real-time’ media, illustrated by the two major differences between these sites and the traditional media:

“First, the users generate the content. You write the blog. You make and upload the video. You recommend the restaurant. Second, it’s interactive. People don’t just read your blog posting, your tweet or your review, they comment on it. That interaction is, in fact, the essence of the form. And it can happen instantly – as the techies say, in real time, not waiting for a letter to the editor to be published in the paper.”

(Waters & Lesters, 2010, p. 2)

In all these readings of media sociality, SNSs are not ‘social’ in their own right; sociability is related to human behaviour. Even the features of these sites, which facilitate and

enhance media sociability, do not make the media sociable without human intervention. A Twitter account, for example, does not interact with users of this social network independently, but it does help the user perform social interaction. It is worthy of note that among Egyptian users of social network sites, 'social media' is kept as an English word, although there is an Arabic translation for it الإعلام الاجتماعي. Preserving English terms is often associated with technology, which may indicate that users regard social network sites as technological products rather than communication channels.

When discussing SNSs, it is common to refer to the social media environment and the technology of citizen media as Web 2.0 (O'Reilly, 2004). Like newspapers, which were produced after the invention of the printing machine, social media was created after the initiation of Web 2.0, which was proposed as the evolution of the intelligence of the Web. For instance, in the old Web (Web 1.0) one had to build a website if one wanted to have a personal page on the internet, and this 'building' required knowledge of programming, coding and design. But after Web 2.0, we can just create a blog, in order to participate online.

Coined in 2004 by Tim O'Reilly, the term 'Web 2.0' was popularised after he published his article What is Web 2.0? and in 2005 was translated into eight languages, including Arabic. He explains:

"Web 2.0 is the network as a platform, spanning all connected devices, Web 2.0 applications are those that make the most of the intrinsic advantages of that platform: delivering software as a continually-updated service that gets better the more people use it, consuming and remixing data from multiple sources."

(O'Reilly, 2005)

O'Reilly's article was followed by many definitions suggested by specialists and researchers. A clearer explanation of Web 2.0 is being "an umbrella term for Web-based software and services such as blogs, wikis, social networking, and media sharing sites. This range of Web sites is complex, but is tied together by one key feature: the users of these sites and services are expected to produce the content included in them" (Gehl, 2010). Nowadays, Web 2.0 is certainly not the same as the picture presented by O'Reilly, as many features have been added to it. This raises the question: are we now using Web 3.0? Five years after his presentation of the term, O'Reilly argued that:

"Ever since we first introduced the term 'Web 2.0', people have been asking, 'What's next?' Assuming that Web 2.0 was meant to

be a kind of software version number (rather than a statement about the second coming of the Web after the dotcom bust), we're constantly asked about 'Web 3.0.' Is it the semantic Web? The sentient Web? Is it the social Web? The mobile Web? Is it some form of virtual reality? It is all of those, and more."

(O'Reilly & Battelle, 2009, p. 9)

A suggested answer to "What's next?" is Web 3.0. In 2006, an article in the New York Times by the technology reporter John Markoff, noting the interest in Web 3.0, stimulated academics and professionals to reflect on the possibility of a third generation of the Web. Among them, Ora Lassila and James Hendler (2007) were particularly motivated by the term Markoff gave to Web 3.0, namely the "Semantic Web". Within three pages (p.90-93) and in a fairly understandable language to the uninitiated, the two authors explained Web 3.0, the Semantic Web, and the complexities of this third-generation platform.

Media Institutionalisation

In this research, I study Rassd and Mosireen, two citizen journalism institutions which were established independently by a number of citizen journalists and are not owned or administered by a third party. Another two citizen journalism institutions operate on the margins of mainstream media, namely the social media department at the AlMasry AlYoum newspaper and the OnTube television programme.

There have been many definitions of the institutions that form the modern mass media, most of which come from a political economy approach (see, for example, Golding & Murdock, 2000). However, these definitions are not immediately applicable to the cases I study herein, because they were formulated in social and economic contexts completely different from the Egyptian situation. In particular, the relationship between ownership and state power, and between mainstream and citizen forms, is not nuanced enough to deal with the Egyptian case study.

I find that the closest conceptual definition of ‘institution’ to the operational definition I employ is the one presented by the Algerian economy scholar Nasser Addoun:

“An organisational structure [which] enjoys financial independence in a certain legal and social framework. It utilises the elements of production in order to make a product, exchange services and/or goods with other parties.”

(Addoun, 1999, p. 16)

The operational definition of a citizen media institution in the present thesis is an organisation using social networking sites to achieve certain objectives defined by the organisers, by creating, generating, digesting, publishing or disseminating information. This organisation has its editorial and ethical framework set by its organisers. The institutionalisation of citizen journalism is a process of building a social structure within a social system. But first, what do ‘structure’ and ‘system’ mean to Giddens? The British sociologist explained systems as “patterns of relations in groupings of all kinds, from small, intimate groups, to social networks, to large organisations,” while structure is a set of “rules” and “resources” (Giddens, 1984).

In fact, independent citizen journalism institutions engender interesting questions about the physical location of the institution. For example, can a citizen journalism institution be run completely online, or does it have to have physical premises? The value of answering this question is that we can decide, according to its answer, whether or not

any organised group or list on a social networking site could be considered an institution. A definitive answer comes from the book *No Sense of Place*, in which Meyrowitz (1985) suggested that electronically mediated communications transcend physical boundaries virtually instantaneously. Here ‘electronically’ indicates binary devices, an example of which is the telephone call– an electrically facilitated mode of communication whereby people who are talking to each other are ‘close to each other’ in a certain way, despite the lack of geographical proximity (p. 38). He also suggests that electronic media have changed the “situational geography” of social life. In some way, he spares the physical location from the media environment and makes his pun in the research title an argument that culture in our society is “relatively placeless” (p. 308).

The notion of the place highlights the idea of the materiality of communication – are social networking sites, the media of citizen journalism, virtual or material? If they are material, what is their sense of place? Harold Innis (1948) is probably the most prominent scholar concerned with the place and time dimensions of the medium. He argues that each medium tends to have a bias towards either space or time. Time-biased media (also called time-binding) carry content for long periods, thereby preserving content over time. The national archives of a nation are time-biased media, for example. On the other hand, the space-biased medium spreads content across its location and reaches out to a mass audience through the likes of television and radio. Meanwhile, space-biased media connect with a wide audience, while time-biased media solutions are not accessed by everybody. Innis’ typology, though, relies on the weight of the medium – if it is heavy its bias is time, and if it is light it becomes space-bias. He provided the example of stone tablets and papyrus in Pharaonic Egypt, but his argument barely applies to SNSs, which can be both heavy and light at the same time, or heavy in some societies and light in others.

In the following chapter, I cover the influence of technology on the media message, social culture and media ecology. I start my study with a review of the literature about the role of technology in fashioning the media. I use a range of scholarly works to examine how academics see the influence of technology in the making of content; in particular, I focus on the medium theory of Marshal McLuhan as a seminal contribution regarding the role of digital technologies in mass media.

LITERATURE REVIEW

I. THEORISING THE ROLE OF THE MEDIUM IN A MEDIA ORGANISATION

In Chapter One, I discussed the conceptual and operational definitions of the mainstream media, citizen media, social networking sites (SNSs) and media institutions. I also defined the research question and aims, and I underlined the lack of a concise theory in studying the interaction between citizen media and the mainstream media. I concluded by raising two issues in the contemporary literature about citizen media. The first is the use of ‘old’ theories, which are the conceptual and theoretical frameworks either proposed before the invention of the ‘new’ medium (the internet) or which appeared after Web 2.0 but are based on research about an old medium. The second issue is the applicability of ‘Western’ theories in the context of an Arab country, such as Egypt, and I established the value of testing and adapting these ‘old’ and ‘Western’ theories within my case study.

In this chapter, I specifically survey a range of literature about the relationships between the medium or technology and the media message they create, the content they carry and their users. As explained in Chapter One, the operational meanings of ‘medium’, ‘new media’ and ‘social media’ in this research are SNSs. The objective of this chapter is determining the best way to explore the role of technology in the interaction between citizen media and the mainstream media, and to highlight the impact of technological development, represented in the invention of SNSs, on the media environment, particularly on users, content and messages.

The development of the internet and the changes that followed in the broadcast model raise questions about the need for new paradigms for studying this new technological era (see, for instance, Rogers & Chaffee, 1983, Rice & Williams, 1984). Scolari (2009) draws a detailed map of the conversations held about digital communication as well as the applied theoretical frames from the 1980s. He identifies four stages of the evolution of internet research. In the first stage (1960-1984), digital networks began to expand, with interest in them more of the military type than social. In this period the ‘founding fathers’ speculated about computing, communication and networks. However, it

is in the second phase (1984-1993), Scolari's moment of origin, that scholars focused on exploring new features on the internet, such as hypertext and interfaces. The third stage, cyber culture studies, was illustrated in the previous section. Scolari (2009) observes that at this time:

“[...] many researchers have tried to integrate empirical data and theoretical reflections about the new media. Web theories (Burnett and Marshall, 2003), technocultural thought on electronic media (Thornton Caldwell, 2000), analysis of remediation processes (Bolter and Grusin, 2000) and critical introductions to new media (Lister et al., 2003) are just a few examples of the very heterogeneous scientific production.”

(p. 944-945)

The countless number of social networking sites (SNSs) led to recalling old conceptual frameworks to understand the quality of the technology/media, and to modernise them accordingly, for instance the media richness theory, which appeared in 1984 to evaluate the effectiveness of the media used in organisations, by looking at their capacity to carry less ambiguous information: “Richness is defined as the potential information-carrying capacity of data” (Daft & Lengel, 1984, p. 196).

The medium theory (or technological determinism) has remained one of the most used doctrines in communication, even since the introduction of the World Wide Web. Associated with Marshal McLuhann, mainly through his books *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962) and *Understanding Media* (1964), it is probably the most popular paradigm for treating the role of the medium in communication. The theory has its roots centuries before gaining prominence in the 1960ss. Meyrowitz (2010) counts Socrates as the first medium theorist, recalling his views on the consequences of writing, as a form of technology, in oral communication. ‘Determinism’ is a concept which grew within the framework of Marxism, but it has been used by non-Marxists such as McLuhan to denote the attribution of a single factor, namely the power to make changes. In technological determinism, technology is the sole or prime antecedent causing changes in society (Chandler, 2013). In the following section, I highlight McLuhan's key concepts and offer a critique, as a means of exploring the relationship between the medium or technology and the media message.

The Medium and the Message

In returning to medium theory, and surveying a range of modern theories, I aim to address specifically a core question of cultural communication: how should we study the role of a medium in the interaction between citizen media and mainstream media? Before studying technology, we should stop and make a fundamental distinction between studying the medium (as a technology), the process of using the medium (as journalism), the environment of this usage (the media ecology), users and the culture growing around the medium (as explored in internet studies) and the effects of the medium (and its messages). I start by clarifying McLuhan's use of the terms 'technology' and 'medium' interchangeably (1962,1964). McLuhan considers technologies, physical or otherwise, as media, because they mediate messages. For instance, for McLuhan, the light bulb is a medium, because it holds content (light) and creates an environment by its mere presence (1964).

Drawing on a historical set of debates and approaches to theorising technological determinism and media ecology, I demonstrate that we are unlikely to understand the complexity of the relationship between mainstream media forms rooted in the press and broadcasting and new media forms based on social media platforms, by focusing only on issues of technology as the sole driver. In approaching the issue in my own primary work I draw on a broadly McLuhanist position that the medium is the driver of media organisation research. I take this stance because it is important to be conscious of the impact of SNSs on driving interactions and, ultimately, it helps compare my findings to proposals within the theory. However, as I show, consideration of the role of the medium should be investigated in parallel with understanding the characteristics of its users. Thus, the query 'what is the medium doing to the interaction between citizen media and mainstream media?' should be posed at the same time as the questions 'who are the users of the medium?', 'what media are used in both mainstream media and citizen media?' and 'do the users of these media belong to the same group?' As I demonstrate in more detail below, such an approach draws more heavily on the ideas of a McLuhan-inflected idea of media ecology than on a narrow focus on technological determinism.

The challenges facing a contemporary media researcher drawing on McLuhan to study non-Western forms of media start with the need to deal with a common misunderstanding among McLuhan's readers confusing 'message' with 'content'. In so doing, many readers presume McLuhan argues that a mass media channel, such as

television, is what shapes the content of its programmes, and they start to argue against this point. However, they actually misread McLuhan's thesis. Federman (2004) illustrates the difference between 'message' and 'content' with a good example. In television, the messages communicated by a newscast are not the news stories themselves but a change in the public attitude towards crime or the creation of a climate of fear (p. 2). Thus, the meaning of 'medium is the message' is that technology is more than a container or an object employed to mediate; rather, it "shapes and controls the scale and forms of human association and action" (McLuhann, 1964, p. 9). The perplexity surrounding this relationship between medium and message, as suggested by the medium theory, is not new. In one of his public lectures, McLuhan said, "[...] the medium is the message' is not a simple remark, and I've always hesitated to explain it. It really means a hidden environment of services created by an innovation, and the hidden environment of services is the thing that changes people" (McLuhan, 2010, p. 224). This misconception could be avoided by nailing down the definitions of 'medium' and 'message'. The message, in McLuhan's view, is defined as a "change of scale or pace or pattern" (McLuhann, 1964, p. 8).

For McLuhan, technology may create the very meanings they mediate. For instance, the railway network is a technology and a medium, in that it has "accelerated and enlarged the scale of previous human functions, creating totally new kinds of cities and new kinds of work and leisure" (McLuhan, 1964, p. 8). Furthermore, the medium influences social meanings and structures. In McLuhann's words, "any extension, whether of skin, hand, or foot, affects the whole psychic and social complex" (1964, p. 4). In that sense, small inventions could make huge changes. For instance, "such inventions as the horse collar quickly led to the development of the modern world" (McLuhann & Watson, 1970, p. 121), because this technology let the horse pull from the chest rather than the neck. This in turn increased his work capacity by almost 30 per cent.

Approaches to understanding communication that give such a central role to technology are often in danger of tipping over into technological determinism, attributing one the power to effect total change. In technological determinism, "technolog[ies] in general are the sole or prime antecedent causes of changes in society, and technology is seen as the fundamental condition underlying the pattern of social organization" (Chandler, 2000). Thus, "technological determinism is 'monistic' or mono-causal (rather than 'multicausal')": it offers a single cause or 'independent variable'. It represents a simple 'billiard ball model' of change" (Chandler, 2013).

There are scholars who see McLuhan as being ‘digital before the digital age’, and they not only defend his arguments, but they also admire his foresight (such as Paul Levinson 2000, 2003; Nick Stevenson 2002, 2010; Mark Federman 2003, 2004). Furthermore, in both the press and academic journals, McLuhan has been given titles recognising his work, such as being referred to as the ‘oracle of his age’ in *Newsweek* magazine in 1967, being considered a ‘patron-saint’ in the debut editions of *Wired* magazine in 1993 and a ‘media messenger’ in 2010. Also, he was called “a prophet of both the media and computer age” in the 2001 volume on key works in *Media and Cultural Studies*, edited by Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas Kellner (p.113).

Adler (2008), when discussing the role of technology, has suggested a range of relationships with the idea of determinism. For example, “Hard technological determinism” sees technology as the main or the only significant driver, “soft technological determinism” argues that technology is the most important force and “anti-technological determinism” presents views asserting that technology is neutral. This indicates that later scholars found that the medium was not the sole factor determining the media message. Many research approaches have emerged as counterpoints to the technological determinism doctrine. A prime example is social constructivism, which does not assign new technologies solely as the causes of changes in media practices but proposes a series of complicated interactions between social, organisational and economic factors. Originally a sociological theory on the construction of social facts, it has been used by some media scholars as a research approach to study the relationship between the medium and social organisation (see, for instance, Paterson, 2008, Domingo, 2006, Alberto & Avilés, 2008). However, they remain fewer in number than the amount of researchers who endorse the medium theory.

A juxtaposition of digital determinism and social constructivism can be found in the actor network theory, which makes no distinction between the social, natural and technological. Hence, the invention of an object (a new medium, for example) is linked, in some way, to the society in which the scientist lives and the invention appears. The ‘network’ in the theory is a material-semiotic network: “networks are processual, built activities, performed by the actants out of which they are composed. Each node and link is semiotically derived, making networks local, variable, and contingent” (Ritzer, 2004, p.1). Actants in this instance could be humans or non-humans. The theory suggests that “we are never faced with objects or social relations; we are faced with chains which are associations of humans... and non-humans... No one has ever seen a social relation by

itself ... nor a technical relation” (Latour, 1991, p. 110). For instance, goods in a supermarket, their organisation, packing and price tags, are actants, because they influence customers’ choices when shopping.

The actor network theory was developed in the work of the philosopher, anthropologist and sociologist of sciences Bruno Latour, as well as Michel Callon and the sociologist John Law, in the mid-1980s in the field of science. It started to be applied to media studies in the nineties. It is sometimes called the ‘enrolment theory’ or ‘the sociology of translation’, while some researchers consider it a conceptual framework relating to the relationships between technology, society and nature, or an approach to social theory. It is argued that the actor network cannot offer a total theory on media, because it does not address sufficiently the questions of time, power and interpretation (Couldry, 2008). Nevertheless, at the same time, the theory provides us with “the most precise language” with which to formulate interactions between media institutions and society (ibid.).

The medium theory also connects the recent past to the current, thereby suggesting that the technologies we create today are a new version of what we were using yesterday: “We look at the present through a rear-view mirror” and “we tend always to attach ourselves to the objects, to the flavor of the most recent past” (McLuhan & Fiore, 1967, p. 74). Yet, the variety of new media nowadays means that the selection of a specific medium is influenced by its message.

The connections between different media and people lead us to ‘media ecology’, a research area built upon other aspects of McLuhan’s *Understanding Media* (1964). Here, McLuhan emphasises that “no medium has its meaning or existence alone, but only in constant interplay with other media” (p. 39). His ideas supported the American academic Neil Postman, who specialised in the teaching of languages. In 1961, Postman published his book *Television and the Teaching of English* on how the invention of television had impacted education. He found in McLuhan’s arguments support for his linkage between the medium and culture. In the following year (1970), Postman founded a doctoral programme on media ecology at Steinhardt School of Education (New York University) – a major step forward in institutionalising this new research field. Media ecology was institutionalised further after the formation of the Media Ecology Association in 1998 at New York University by five of Postman’s former students. In 2002, this association issued the first volume of its academic journal *Explorations in Media Ecology*.

Media ecology is a research area focusing on the power of media in shaping content and changing social culture. Carey (1989) calls this research branch ‘American cultural studies’, and Debray (1996) names it ‘Mediology’ (1996).

The 19th century zoologist Ernst Haeckel is attributed with the introduction of the word ‘ecology’, which he used to refer to the interactions between elements in our natural environment. Postman used this as more than a metaphor, though, suggesting the existence of an actual media environment consisting of language, numbers, images, holograms and a number of other symbols, techniques and machinery. It is Postman’s prolific work that popularised the term ‘media ecology’, which he first introduced in a talk to the National Council of Teachers of English in 1968 as “the study of media as environments” and explained further in his next book *The Reformed English Curriculum* (1970).

“Media ecology is the study of human environments. It is concerned to understand how technologies and techniques of communication control the form, quantity, speed, distribution, and direction of information, and how, in turn, such information configurations or biases affect people’s perceptions, values, and attitudes”

(Postman, 1970, p. 161)

Today, we can discern two main schools of thought in media ecology: the Toronto school, which has McLuhan as its figurehead, and the New York school, whose icon is Postman. The two schools are connected, though they vary in some approaches. Postman and many of his students pay attention to the evaluation of the good or bad influence of the medium, while McLuhan urges for moral neutrality towards the media.

Media ecology studies are exploratory, and Postman and other media ecologists are conscious of the ongoing interactions between the medium, ecology and humans. They think of the environments as “complex, dynamic and interrelated systems that include communicators and their messages as well as technologies and techniques used to communicate” (Sternberg, 2012, p. 20). However, media ecologists do not examine or investigate these interactions; rather, they are observed to have an exploratory methodological approach, or what is summed up in McLuhan’s saying “I do not explain, I explore” (1967). This is why the title of McLuhan’s first journal was *Explorations*, while the current journal of the academic guild is *Explorations in Media Ecology*. Media ecology is multidisciplinary, because not only was its concept inspired by sciences such as biology

and zoology, but also studying media as environments often requires the researcher to draw on other disciplines, such as economics, history, psychology, philosophy and political science.

Technology is also suggested to fashion social culture; in fact, technological attributes have at the very least created a culture of citizen journalism. For instance, the sociability of SNSs has caused citizen journalism to be collaborative, in that the accessibility of these sites via mobile phones has encouraged users to produce more content. Media have also digitised existing cultures and created ‘technocultures’. In the early 1990s ‘cybercultures’ emerged as a concept for studying virtual communities and forming online identities. It started with observations of the digital society and descriptions of digital communications. More systematic observations and reflections of the Web environment led to the tradition of academic cyber cultures. Then, in the second half of the nineties, we had critical cyber cultures which became critical and deeper (Scolari, 2009).

There are two traditions in media ecology studies – one addresses technology as “a substance within which a culture grows” (Postman, 2000, p. 10), and the other approaches technology as the home of information systems, thus focusing on the characteristics of the medium. Joshua Meyrowitz (1985) calls the first tradition the ‘medium theory’, and the other ‘situationism’. The medium theory, as a research tradition and the dominant intellectual tradition in research ecology, could be summed up as the medium creating the environment, whereas, in the situationist tradition, the environment creates the media. Therefore, researchers of this tradition focus on studying social situations and their characteristics, as well as the consequences of technology on culture and people’s behaviour. Meyrowitz (1985) attempted to bring the two traditions closer together, in a way that would promote the strengths of both elements. In his book *No Sense of Place*, he reflects on Marshal McLuhan’s research approach and treats him as a representative of the medium theory. He takes Goffman as the representative of situationism. Meyrowitz appreciates the efficiency of the medium theory tradition in studying media and social change, yet its weakness is its failure to address social interaction, which is the polar opposite to situationism; however, Meyrowitz disagreed with situationists’ assumptions of a link between a social situation and a physical location

Reflecting on this notion, and drawing upon my own exploration of mainstream and new media inter-relationships, it becomes clear that the relationship between the users of SNSs and technology is extremely far from the relationship between the users of old

media and technologies. I am not arguing that such variations between the medium and today's social media should hold us back from using literature which pre-dates the rise of social media, but we do need to remain conscious of this possible issue when consulting scholarship on old types of media. It is in the relationship between the media form, its technology and the activities of users that the deepest understanding can be found. In the next section I turn to this issue.

The Medium and Users

Traditional media forms are founded on a user and audience model in which the journalist is the user of the medium and people are the audience. Hence, previous theories on the medium often refer to humans as ‘users’, ‘audiences’ or ‘people’, where the user is a content producer and audiences are consumers and conceptually stand for ‘society’. However, with social media, not all of the ‘people’ are ‘users’, and ‘users’ do not constitute society in the same way at all. There are members of society who are digitally illiterate, and they therefore may or may not be influenced by the medium. Furthermore, those who actually use the new technologies are no longer mere ‘audiences’, as they also produce content, contribute or reproduce text and visual materials. This empowerment has an impact on the medium, as it is being used in terms of users who may employ it for purposes other than for what it was originally invented. For instance, Facebook was originally made as a site for networking with peers and friends, but nowadays entrepreneurs often use it in microbusinesses. This change in the relationship between the medium and people has affected the role of the journalist as the only content producer of the medium.

In this section, I review the shift in the position of media audiences, after the internet, from consumers to content contributors, and the impact of this on the role of journalists in controlling media content, or what is known as ‘gatekeeping’. I draw on the work of Axel Bruns, a contemporary scholar focusing on transformations in the nature of media and their implications for communication.

Bruns (2007) proposes ‘produsage’ as “a new hybrid form of simultaneous production and usage”, in which the medium user guides the production of content. Effectively, produsage is a form of the interaction between citizen media and mainstream media. Bruns finds that the concept of collaboration between the producer and the consumer existed before the invention of Web 2.0, and actually the term ‘produsage’ was suggested as an update to the concept of ‘prosumers’, coined by Alvin Toffler (1980), who used it to denote industry attempts to involve users in the development of goods. As such, interaction between producers and consumers dates it back to 1970, when ‘quasi-professional consumers’ were involved in the production process, by being asked to customise and personalise the products they wished to purchase. This is “similar to the limited options for content customization and personalization which are now available as a matter of course from many basic ‘Web 2.0’ Websites” (Bruns, 2013, p. 69).

Bruns (2007) describes produsage through four key characteristics, basically a shift to the generation of content by the community instead of by individuals and production teams. Another characteristic is the change in the roles of participants, users, professionals and amateurs. Also, in produsage, content is no longer a 'product' but an unfinished artefact, and it is subjected to evolutionary and iterative development. In addition, produsage is based on permissive regimes of engagement, which means that interference in the content is authorised accordingly.

Looking at prosumers on the World Wide Web, we find that the big corporations running online services (such as search engines and shopping websites) welcome prosumers, not only to customise their services and suggest improvements, but also to use them to promote their services and products. For instance:

“Amazon uses a mix of mechanisms to get in front of their buyers of books and other products that the users are likely to purchase. At the simplest level, the recommendation ‘customers who bought items you recently viewed also bought these items’ is a mechanical means of extracting judgments of relevance and accreditation from the actions of many individuals, who produce the datum of relevance as a by-product of making their own purchasing decisions. Amazon also allows users to create topical lists and track other users as their ‘friends and favorites’..”

(Benkler, 2006, pp. 75-76)

This increased intervention of users in the work of the medium is seen as “exploitation” (Terranova, 2000), or a “harness” (Benkler, 2006). However, a good few years after these studies, Bruns (2013) found that the tackle of the owner corporations of websites to their consumers had diminished in line with the fast evolution of social media, because the prosumption model is no longer applicable in today’s “user-led content environment”. For him, prosumers are outdated, as they are of the industrial age, while in the information age consumers are not treated by online businesses as individuals but as communities and are authorised by them to “publicly coordinate and evaluate communal activities amongst themselves” (2013, p.3). Hence, Bruns proposes produsage as a modernised form of prosumption. He details the differences between the old concept and its updated version in his paper *From Prosumption to Produsage*, using Wikipedia as an example of the shift in website visitors from users or consumers to producers.

Therefore, the users of a medium are becoming part of its functions. Even before users became producers, they used existing social media the way they wanted, not the way these technologies were designed to perform. This means that SNSs were repurposed, since they were originally created to “articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (Boyd, 2007). However, they were used by activists in Egypt and almost everywhere else they could be accessed. So, instead of sharing what these sites were primarily designed to host, some users of these SNSs post activist material. This process is continuous, because medium owners develop and maintain the services according to the needs and preferences of their users, in order to retain their user base (Zuckerman, 2009).

SNSs, as a new form of media, have an impact on the accessibility of content. Previously, the journalist was the person who selected content and made the decision to publish a news story or not, and how it should appear in public, – known as the aforementioned ‘gatekeeping’. Technology has changed the location of the gate, with the internet and later on Web 2.0 making each user of an SNS a gatekeeper who controls the flow of information coming from mass and social media. Furthermore, new media forms have changed the role of gatekeepers and made them point to the content they recommend to audiences instead of preventing content from passing through the medium (Bruns, 2003).

The term ‘gatekeeping’ was coined in 1943 by the German social psychologist Kurt Lewin, who studied the food consumption of the residents of Iowa, United States, during the Second World War. He found that housewives selected foods from the market, decided on the way they would be cooked and presented them in certain settings. This series of choices was an act of gatekeeping, in that the gate was the dining table and the housewife kept it free from unwanted or useless food items. Although Lewin’s research was on community dynamics, it has been applied in communication studies, where the ‘gate’ is the channel or the medium, and the gatekeepers are journalists and editors. A new area of media research was spawned after gatekeeping was used in David White’s study of the selection of news from news wires by a local newspaper in Chicago (1950). This unique research at its time clarified how news stories are chosen by an editor, what goes for publishing and what is judged as less important.

A great deal of research about gatekeeping in the media followed, and so the concept was developed further. Gieber (1956) considered the personal factors that influenced news choices, while McNelly (1959) argued that reporters and readers are gatekeepers, too, as they choose events to cover and influence the process of news selections. Bass (1969) differentiated between two types of gatekeeper, namely reporters and line editors as “news gatherers”, and editors-in-chiefs as “news processors”, arguing that the focus should be on the gatherers of news as the primary gatekeepers.

In the 1970s, the theory was revised once more. Dimmick (1973) coined the term “uncertainty theory”, claiming that the gatekeeper is uncertain about the preferences of readers, but his choice of content is based upon the reference group within the newsroom, i.e. interest groups, colleagues in the newsroom, time and monetary considerations.

Similarly, one may expect that in the 1990s the internet had an impact on researchers’ revisions of the gatekeeping theory, but at that time the World Wide Web was not widely utilised in the media field. Actually, the theory was deepened in the nineties by the work of Pamela Shoemaker and colleagues, because besides providing the history behind the term, they clarified the levels of gatekeeping and argued that the concept is not limited to mass media communication but is applied at the individual and communication levels, too (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009).

Later on, the utilisation of the internet in the media industry, and the development of Web 2.0 made mass media audiences “far less reliant on what passes through the gates of the mainstream news organisations, [as they can] bypass these altogether and turn directly to first-hand information providers” (Bruns, 2003, p. 33). Thus, the medium as ‘a gate’ could no longer be kept, and the job of Mr. Gates¹ diminished because “readers now can get all the junk that used to wind up on the metal spike” (Singer, 1997, p. 80). The Bill Clinton scandal in 2000 showed how information finds a way to get through to audiences, even if it is not via the mass media ‘gate’. In other words, journalism lost its function as a net for catching selected stories by journalists and the news that editors-in chiefs would not prefer to publish through their media outlets, which raised the argument that “if there are no gates, there can be no gatekeepers” (Williams & Carpini, 2000, p. 62).

Axel Bruns (2003) proposed ‘gatewatching’ as an up-to-date concept of gatekeeping in communication. Basically, he did not see that the gates had disappeared,

¹ White referred to the editor in his seminal study *The Gate Keeper: A Case Study in the Selection of News* as 'Mr.Gates'.

but alternatively they had multiplied, whereby new technologies had relocated the gate to be with the information providers and the end users. This means that all content makers and internet users have their own gates, and they are therefore the gatekeepers. In addition, the new medium changed the function of the gate, which “no longer allows news to come to us, but enables us to access the news contained within” (Bruns,2003.p.38). The individuals on these gates “fundamentally publicise news (by pointing to sources) rather than publish it (by compiling an apparently complete report from the available sources)” (ibid.), i.e. they are watching the gate that is already open for all content rather than guarding by preventing the publicity of some content.

A valuable contribution of Bruns is contextualising gatewatching in the interaction between citizen media and mainstream media. His view was that the two media types interacted because traditional media was entering “a time of crisis”. According to Bruns, citizen media, alongside satirical television, shows was causing a decrease in the readership of print media and the viewership of traditional news broadcasts; therefore, former “traditional guardian authorities of knowledge” (Bruns, 2007) invited the gatewatchers to allow more content to pass through the gate, i.e. what is represented in “the emergence of new hybrid industry/citizen journalism projects”, such as BBC News Online invitations to users to submit their own stories (Bruns, 2009, p. 115).

The Medium and Content

The making and circulation of media content is essential in this research, because, as defined in Chapter One, citizen journalism is the action of using social media to create/generate and disseminate content. Thus, examining this process from an abstract point of view should prepare us to identify any changes in this message (citizen journalism) before moving to study the subject in the context of Egypt.

Originally, the media agenda was monopolised by the mass media, but today we have viral content and popular trending subjects outside this agenda. Hence, we either have more media agendas or one merged agenda, to which new content makers contribute. To illustrate this point, we take the case of broadcast media paying attention to a Twitter hash tag, only by saying on television that this certain topic is trending online, in which case there are two media agendas – one concerning social media, where this topic is popular, and one for mass media. In this example, the social media agenda influences the other; however, if the broadcast media engaged with the trending hash tag, and produced news reports about its subject, then there would be one media agenda.

The agenda-setting theory was proposed by Max McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972, after spending time in Chape Hill, Northern California, following the local news coverage of the 1968 presidential election campaign and comparing their agenda to the answers given by residents regarding the most important issues in public life. They concluded that the media tell the public what to think, which means that there are two levels of news salience: one is raising topics and giving them prominence, at which the mass media is efficient, according to the two researchers, while the other level is the processing of the topic, which may vary in public life in relation to what the media outlet broadcasts. For instance, the media may repeatedly have a certain candidate on the spot, and praise him. This will make him a public topic; however, it does not grant that the audience will have a positive opinion about him.

Actually, McCombs and Shaw highlighted the influence of a new medium on the media agenda even before the invention of SNSs, noting that the internet had

caused a shift in the use of the agenda-setting. This theory, which is probably the most researched theory about the media agenda, went from being a theoretical perspective to the organisation of the public agenda, to being a roadmap for how the media agenda is created. In 1993, they wrote:

“While the opening phases of agenda-setting research concentrated on the question “Who sets the public agenda-and under what conditions?”, the most recent phase of work has shifted its attention to the question “Who sets the media agenda?”

(McCombs & Shaw, 1993, p. 60)

A theoretical answer to this question is internet users. Kim and Lee (2006) tracked the process of agenda-setting and outlined the process in three non-consecutive steps. First, they chose internet-mediated agenda-rippling, which means citizens publish online what they are concerned with, bring up subjects from current or past events and tackle critical and sensitive issues. Second was agenda diffusion on the internet, which means that online media outlets report on issues appearing in cyberspace (for instance campaigns, popular blog posts). Thus, the public agenda reaches more public circles than before. And thirdly they identified internet-mediated reversed agenda-setting, where the agenda is spread by traditional media and reaches the public via offline and online channels.

Nonetheless, have new media formats created a media agenda additional to mass media, or have they enabled citizen journalists to reset the mass media agenda? Are there two media agendas or a merged one? Unfortunately, there is no decisive answer on this point. Practically, though, one medium may carry different agendas (Ragas & Roberts, 2009), which makes people determine their beliefs first and then find groups that have similar agendas. This process is called ‘agenda melding’, whereby an agenda exists and people may change their beliefs to fit in with it, in order to avoid isolation (Coleman, et al., 2009).

A range of research has been conducted to compare the agendas of mass media and social media, questioning whether each media genre has its own set of

interests or their most prominent topics overlap. Some academics and professionals argue that mass media shapes the agenda of citizen media (see, for instance, Volders, 2013), whilst others find that traditional media build their own agendas and are selective in their choices of social media agenda (see, for instance, Thorndyke, 2008). One avenue of thought between these two options is that “though traditional media’s agenda setting power is no longer the sole influence, its influence still remains a driving ‘A-list’ force in the creation of blog agendas” (Meraz, 2009, p. 701).

A common tradition in studies about social media and agenda-setting is using quantitative methods, as they are effective in finding matches between the agendas of mass media and social media; however, they are not indicative of how agendas are adopted in either media genre. In other words, quantitative research helps us to establish whether or not a certain subject covered on mass media agenda spreads on social media, or vice versa, but it does not allow us to know how this topic was framed, or why the agenda of a certain media format is transferred to the other. Additionally, most of the existing quantitative studies focus on popular SNSs and content makers (such as well-known bloggers in the earlier research), which ultimately limits their results (see for example: Faris, 2008; Hamdy, 2009).

The preposition that SNSs users influence the media agenda, or are actually setting another one, brings to the fore a question about how they learned to do something that mass media tend to do. Although there is no theory on this question, I find the social learning theory (also called observational learning theory) as the most helpful in determining how media users learn to do things that were formerly monopolised by journalists. In 1977, in his seminal article *Self-efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change*, the Canadian psychologist Albert Bandura explains the impact on learning of what one watches. He proposed that the behaviour is one’s response to the conduct they observe, in that we perceive actions, their consequences and the reception of society to this action, and then, subsequently, we imitate them. In 1986, Bandura published his book *Social Cognition*, in which he emphasised that imitation is a cognitive process, but he later updated the name of his theory to ‘social learning’ or ‘social cognitive theory’. Bandura (1986) detailed four processes in observational learning: attention to certain behaviour, the retention of observed

actions, the reproduction of what was observed and, lastly, the motivation to repeat the actions or not.

In summary, we need to take an approach to media use analysis whereby we conceive of the medium as shaping the culture of the content or the message and stimulating a set of interactions between users, technology and society. In addition, we need to be attentive to the development of communication media in the way that it changes the role of audiences and journalists and enables more people to use the medium to make or promote content as well as consume the content made by others. This makes the process of using the medium more complex in comparison to the processes that predominated beforehand. The role of the medium in the interaction between citizen media and mainstream media should be studied in relation to users, who they are and their motives behind using the medium. The 'old' intellectual frameworks which were developed before Web 2.0, such as including a critical take on the idea of technological determinism, should be used as a starting point to explore new media genres, and not taken in their current form. In the following chapter, I continue to develop a synthesis of old and modern scholarly work, specifically to survey the relationship between the state and mass media organisations.

II. THEORISING THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN THE MEDIA ORGANISATION

In Chapter Two, I argued that it is essential, when studying the mutual influences between citizen media and the mainstream media, to go beyond notions of the technology of communication or social activism to consider the influence of the medium on the practices of mediation. I also set out the case for revisiting existing theories developed for traditional media to deepen our understanding of the current media, by investigating how the difference between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ was made.

In this chapter, I move to another aspect of understanding Egyptian media in the recent years of political turbulence, by exploring the relationship between the media and the state. First, the chapter focuses on the idea of media systems as a theoretical framework within which to explore the association between the state and the media. Here, I survey the media systems that were suggested in the academic literature since the fifties, illustrating how they were constructed, and then present the main criticisms aimed at them. Subsequently, I introduce normative theories about media systems as well as those promulgated through comparative transnational studies. In this first part, I broadly cover the media systems of the Western world, and I discuss the idea of ethnocentricity in the study of the media world, including after the spread of comparative studies. Subsequently, I get closer to the case of Egypt and review the literature about the relationship between the media and the state in Africa and the Arab region. Here, I revisit the topic of using ‘Western’ academia in the study of non-Western societies. In the third and last part of this chapter, I clarify the connections between mass media and political regimes in modern Egypt and how they have been described by academics. Moreover, I use the case of the *AlMasry AlYoun* newspaper (AMAY) as an example of the relationship between privately-owned media outlets in Egypt and the state.

I build up an argument that the influence of the state is a central factor in studying the interaction between citizen media and mainstream media. Hence, I regard media systems as a framework for the relationship between mass media and the state. Understanding what media systems are and how they are created should deepen our study of the process of interaction. Moreover, a step further in studying these interactions involves going beyond the investigation of influential factors and connecting the dots between these elements, which I achieve at the end of the chapter, by highlighting the connections between the state and mass media in modern Egypt at the end of this chapter, a theme that runs through the ensuing parts of the thesis.

Considering media systems in the context of this research is valuable, because the rapid shifts in political power in Egypt within the time frame of this thesis, where very different political regimes replaced each other in dramatic turns in leadership, provide an ideal historical context in which to explore these matters. To set the widest possible context, I review numerous media systems briefly, instead of the in-depth coverage of just a few. My goal in reviewing previous research from around the globe about media systems is to understand how the classifications used to grapple with ideas of medium, mediation and institutionalisation of communication have been approached, and to highlight the role of state agency in each instance.

Also, I tackle the problematic issue I raised in the theoretical framework about using so-called Western scholarly work in studies of non-Western societies. Before discussing the validity of applying Western literature outside its location context, we should recognise Anglo-American supremacy within Western media research. Effectively, Western societies are represented equally in what we call the 'Western media literature'. Similarly, the term 'Arab media literature' does not denote the academic representation of a whole block of the world – only some Arab-speaking societies. Put differently, the Arabic language media research is dominated by some countries, as is the case in the West. Mainly, literature from Egypt, Algeria and Morocco tends to get more regional and global recognition in comparison to the rest countries in the region.

There are two reasons for this state of affairs. One is the preference of academics to study either their own countries, the societies with which they are affiliated or where their institutions have partnerships. It is what makes less developed European countries, for instance, studied less than other parts of the West. Another reason for the Anglo-American domination of Western media literature is language. In practice, English, French and German are the most common languages in academia, probably thanks to the development of their research and strong educational systems. Meanwhile, the literature in local languages receives considerably less exposure than those written in English, French or German.

Considering the notion of the applicability of Western theories and typologies outside their original context becomes important when we discuss media systems, as earlier attempts to understand the relationship between the media and the state were dominated by a U.S.-based attempt to conceive of media systems as the relationship between the state, political objectives and the activities of the media rooted in the 1950s Cold War between the U.S.A and U.S.S.R. However, these origins should not blind us to the value of thinking about the different ways in which state and political power can relate to the role of the media. I contrast these earlier attempts at producing typologies of media systems with comparative approaches which emerged from 2000 onwards. I present this as a move from normative to comparative and from ideological to empirically-based methods.

By ‘media system’ I mean a category of a set of interconnections between mass communication organisations and other institutions, which are often political. There are two disciplines in which media systems are created and studied: communication research and political science, specifically the sub-field of political communication, which is defined as:

“An interactive process concerning the transmission of information among politicians, the news media and the public. The process operates down-wards from governing institutions towards citizens... and also upwards from public opinion towards authorities.”

Media scholars construct media systems either normatively or empirically, and often they are the outcome of comparative communication research, which involves comparisons between a minimum of two macro-level cases (systems, cultures, markets or their sub-elements) with respect to at least one object of investigation relevant to the field of communication (Esser & Hanitzsch, 2012). Typologies and classifications constitute a step in the comparative analysis of the media, by seeking the reduction of complexity in media landscapes and establishing the similarities and differences between the media on a cross-national level (Esser, 2013). In other words, a media system does not describe the status of the media in certain countries; rather, it tells us why these countries are grouped together.

The difference between the approaches of these two research areas is that political scientists are constantly looking at two variables: politicians, namely the government, political parties and interest groups, and the media, while media researchers focus, understandably, on the media as well as other associated elements, state intervention included. We could say that the political communicative approach is interested in how the media and politics relate, and the impact of this on the political level. Furthermore, the communication approach uses media systems to explain the nature of the relationship between the media and the state, along with all its political and economic ingredients. In this chapter, I cite literature from the two disciplines, but I draw more extensively from the communication perspective, because its broader perspective enables us to see the influences of various institutions on the relationship between the state and the media.

Conceiving Media Systems

Generally, from the beginning of the 1990s, the construction of media systems became part of the research agenda of other academics in countries around the world (Mellados & Lagos, 2013). However, earlier attempts at classifying relations between the media and the state are most often attributed to Raymond Williams, whose typology of media systems appeared in his book *Communication* (1962). He proposes four systems: authoritarian, paternal, commercial and democratic. The difference between authoritarian and parental is that the latter enjoys a conscience. But the real spark of journalism culture research is Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm's 1956 *Four Theories of Press*, the first developed theorisation of the modern mass media and the political and social context, which grew out of the question: why do the media of mass communications appear in widely different forms and serve different purposes in different countries? (Nordenstreng, 1997, p. 98). For Seaton & Peterson, the typology of their media systems is grounded in the argument that "the press always takes on the form and coloration of the social and political structures within which it operates" (Seaton & Theodore Peterson, 1956, p. 1).

Siebert et al. posit an authoritarian system, in which the state uses the press to inform people of what politicians want them to know, in order to obtain their support for their policies. Hence, the press is 'a servant of the state'. The second, a libertarian system, suggests that the press is the watchdog of society and enjoys freedom away from the government, with its role being to find and present the truth. The third system is social responsibility, which goes beyond the libertarian theory, in that it places more emphasis on the press responsibility to society than on press freedom; it considers social responsibility the price press owes to society for its freedom. Lastly, the fourth system is the Soviet, or communist, model, where the state is represented in the ruling communist party. It is similar to the authoritarian theory, as in both cases the state uses the press to inform the people. However, in the communist system information is concerned not only with political decisions, but also, and more importantly, with communism. Therefore, the press is used as a tool to teach people communist theory. Moreover, in the communist system, the state has two equivalents: the

communist party and communism. So, if criticising the state is not allowed in the authoritarian system, this, alongside criticising the leaders of the communist party or the doctrine of communism, is not allowed in the communist system.

McQuail (2010, 166) points to the major critique of the book as being rooted in a U.S. programme of exporting an ideology of free liberalism and its model of press freedom in the midst of the Cold War. Decades later, a group of American researchers conducted a concrete attempt to verify that claim, in *Last Rights: Revisiting Four Theories of the Press* (Nerone, 1995), and they made a link between the affiliation of the authors of *Four Theories of the Press* with the U.S. government, to draw on the book's politicalisation. Particularly, Nerone et al. pointed out that parts of the book could be found in the work of Schramm, one of the authors, in a contract between Illinois Institution of Communication Research, the book's publisher, and the U.S. Information Agency (p.13). However, the book was celebrated at the time of its release, and for decades it became a learning source at journalism schools, reprinted in over 80,000 copies and "translated into more languages than perhaps any other textbook in the field of journalism and mass communication" (Nordenstreng, 1997. p.97). McQuail (2010) contends that these theories are about society more than the media, as they focus on societal and political transformations and propose that the media are quickly adaptive to them. This critique is directed at the authors' argument that the press "reflects the system of social control whereby the relations of individuals and institutions are adjusted" (Siebert et al. 1956. p.2).

McQuail often puts 'theories' between quotation marks, to indicate his reservations about the theoretical value of media systems, while Nerone (1995) regards the book's central proposition as "a worldview" that is "historically" specific and not abstractable or generalisable. So the worldview of the modern West is just that: It is not a theory that can be applied to, say, ancient Athens" (Nerone, 1995. p.172).

Something of the appeal of identifying and classifying media systems can be seen in the academic literature that followed. For instance, Merrill and Lowenstein developed a critical work on the *Four Theories of Press* through several books in 1979 and 1990. They created a typology for four kinds of press, and added a fifth one later on. Their suggested classification is: authoritarian

with negative government control, social-centralist with positive government control, libertarian without any government control, libertarian with minimal government control and social-authoritarian. Similarly, in his media systems typology, Picard (1985) kept the categories in *Four Theories of Press* and added the democratic socialist theory, which suggests that the state may intervene in media economics to ensure the survival of a free press – an argument that was proved in Scandinavia. Nordenstreng (1997) also used the proposed normative theories (available at that time) to reproduce them into a typology of five paradigms: liberal individualist, social responsibility, critical paradigm, administrative, and cultural negotiation paradigm (p.108-109). Hatchten (1981) produced the typology of authoritarian, Western, revolutionary and developmental systems. He kept editing and reprinting his book for over three decades, with new editions being co-authored by Hatchten in 1987 and 1992, and Scotton in 2006 and 2015. After the fall of the Soviet Union, he suggested going back to the four models of Siebert et al. (1956).

The book had a great influence on researchers; for decades, the studies of media systems continued to be a revision to the *Four Theories of Press*. This could be seen in modern typologies of the relationship between the state and the media in regional contexts. For instance, MacQuil's (1983) *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction* is perceived as "the first European-based revision of the *Four Theories of Press*" (Nordenstreng, 1997. p .103). In fact, MacQuail offered valuable insights into the four theories, and overall he was critical of Siebert et al. However, in his revision he kept the four models and added two more, namely development media and democratic participant media.

Meanwhile, a rich body of literature on media systems *seems* to have developed in several European countries. The earliest typology of national media systems in Europe came from Finland in the late 1960s, and it was quite different from the four theories of Siebert et al. The Finnish systems were as follows. Confessional: the selection of news from the outside world is based on it fitting with a pre-established belief system. Commercial: information is selected according to the possibility of it being broadcast to make profit. And informational system: The Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE) devised this

typology to elaborate on an “informational broadcasting policy” in the late sixties (Newcomb, 2004).

The fall of communism stimulated more research into the relationship between the state and the media, particularly in the communist bloc, where scholars compared old and new conditions and raised the question: why the media landscape change? – a similar question to what Siebert and colleagues addressed in the sixties. Toepfl (2013) lists a number of researchers who compared the media landscapes of the post-Soviet world in order to theorise the processes of media change (p. 240). It deserves to be noted that it is uncommon to find one of these authors cited in a piece of literature written in the English language, except for Karol Jakubowicz, who received recognition from many scholars, probably because of his former position as the Chairman of the Intergovernmental Council of UNESCO, what could be explained with the fact that Eastern-European academics usually write in local languages.

From Normative to Comparative

We can distinguish between two types of media system. The first is normative system typologies, in the sense that they are not grounded in empirical research but describe what should or might exist. They are, in Christian's (2009, p. 67) words, "the conceptual foundation, the explanatory rationale of a particular institutional organization of communication in a democracy." As I have shown, the normative media systems tradition started in the early 1960s and faded in the 2000s, especially after the publication of Hallin & Mancini's (2004) *Comparing Media Systems*, which we can see as the first empirical analysis of press models.

This approach to comparative analysis, based on examining several societies and highlighting their similarities and differences, actually also has its origins in research on political communication developed from the late 1950s in the U.S. under the influence of Daniel Lerner's modernisation research (Edelstein, 1982 cited in Hardy, 2010). In political communication studies, Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) pioneered comparative analysis and advanced the idea of analysing the patterns of connection between journalism cultures, media policy and media markets in a given society (Norris, 2009, Esser, 2013). Blumler & Gurevitch (1975) considered that the sub-field of comparative political communication is "in its infancy," which makes sense, as early attempts took the shape of edited compilations with "nation-by-chapter reporting" and then evolved into a two-countries comparison, for instance the binational survey of British and German journalists (Köcher, 1986). The comparative analysis kept growing and reached its "late adolescence" in the mid-nineties, as assessed by Blumler and Gurevitch (1995), especially after the publishing of numerous cross-national studies of the structure, contents and effects of mass media within European Union member states (Norris, 2009).

In this context, Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini's 2004 book was a milestone in the study of the relation between the media and the state. The authors wanted to go beyond *Four Theories of Press* and its normative theories and "give it a decent burial and move on to the development of the more sophisticated models based on real comparative analysis" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004. p.10). The authors, though, continued to see this research tradition "in its infancy", contending that the field of communication has made limited progress in addressing questions about the variation of media across different countries

(p.1). Hallin and Mancini used a comparison “to identify the major variations that have developed in the western democracies in the structure and political role of the news media,” by studying the media of 16 European countries together with that of the U.S. and Canada. The empirical research is what makes the book remarkable, as it paved the way for more non-normative theories of media systems to follow.

The authors dedicated a large part of the introduction to defending comparative analysis as a research method, as it “makes it possible to notice things we did not notice and therefore had not conceptualized” (Hallin & Mancini, 2004. p.3). Furthermore, they cited earlier researchers of comparative media studies, to emphasise the quality of comparison in reaching findings a national study would very possibly not unearth. For instance, they cited the argument of Blumler and Gurevitch (1975) about media systems, as they “may be taken for granted and difficult to detect when the focus is on only one national case” (p.76), to ensure that comparative studies enable research to see what they perceive as ‘natural’. They provided the example of U.S. news culture, whereby they had detected some of its aspects only after comparing it to Italian TV news in the early 1980s. They also endorsed Bendix (Bendix, 1963) in his vision of comparative studies “provid[ing] an important check on the generalizations implicit” (p.535).

The two researchers concluded by setting out three modes on the relation between media systems and political systems. First was the liberal model, which indicates the dominance of commercial media; ‘liberal’ here denotes the economic policies of liberalism rather than a political party position or political ideology. This model can be found in the North Atlantic countries of United Kingdom, United States, Canada and Ireland. Second was the democratic corporatist model, in which the media tends to reflect social and political division, with the press enjoying high circulation figures and strong professionalism. Hallin and Mancini observed this model predominantly in Northern Europe. Third was the polarised pluralist system, which is marked by a mix of weaker commercial media and the more active interplay of party politics and the state. It is common to most Mediterranean countries, according to the authors.

These media systems are constructed upon four dimensions: state intervention in the media, the degree of journalistic professionalism, the media market, particularly in relation to press circulation, and, finally, political parallelism, which is the media presentation of different political parties. Hallin and Mancini (2004) also identified five political system variables: the role of the state in regulating the media, the political system

of the state, the influence of interest groups in the mass media, political polarisation or diversity and clientelism, which is the control of certain agents over social resources, who exchange them with 'clients' for support. One criticism of these dimensions is that political parallelism and journalistic professionalism are dimensions in the sense that they vary on a continuum between two poles, such as less or more political parallelism, which is seen as a "narrower sense" of the term 'dimension', while the media market and the role of the state are not seen from this viewpoint (Brüggemann, et al., 2014, p. 1093).

Significantly, the three models suggested in Hallin and Mancini's book (2004) are more celebrated than the analytic framework that generated them, although this framework is applicable to different case studies and thus is suggested to be applicable to non-Western media (Hallin & Mancini, 2012, p. 287). Norris (2009) points to the lack of an empirical validation of Hallin and Mancini's framework based on standardised indicators, albeit the authors addressed this issue in the 2012 edition of their book, by emphasising that their framework is exploratory and its validity should be tested by further empirical research. Brüggemann et al. attempted to provide such operationalisation of the framework in a standardised way that would validate Hallin and Mancini's dimensions and models, drawing on aggregated data (2014, p.1039). Moreover, they reconsidered it, by reshuffling and distributing the European countries studied by Hallin and Mancini (2004), and made them into four clusters according to their geographic locations: Central, Northern, Southern and Western.

A repeated criticism of this book is the inaccuracy of its classification of countries. For instance, Britain, the United States, Canada and Ireland are all under the liberal model, although their media institutions do not have much in common. In fact, it would probably be more accurate to say that the British broadcasting system is similar to the democratic corporatist model. Additionally, Northern European countries, such as France and Germany, do not fit under the polarized pluralist nor the democratic corporatist models. Moreover, it was found that Hallin and Mancini's media systems do not "cope with rapid, dramatic systemic change or with divergent models of democracy very well", such as in South Africa (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2010, p. 78). In Africa, in general, using the three media systems suggested by Hallin and Mancini is a challenging undertaking, because in this part of the world political systems change rapidly due to armed conflicts and the liberalisation of colonialism. Hence, (Esser & Hanitzsch, 2013) add to the weaknesses of the book via the temporality of the classification.

Despite their limitations, media systems prove a capable of being a theoretical foundation on which to study the connections between the state and mass media. For instance, (Voltmer, 2008) used her critique of Hallin and Mancini's book to publish 'Comparing Media Systems in New Democracies'. Her paper was an attempt to explore the similarities between younger and older democracies, and to build a comparative framework for understanding the media systems of these countries. The book covers a range of countries in the third wave of democracy, which have undergone or are undergoing political transformations towards democratisation since the 1970s. Another example is the engagement with the three media systems of Hallin and Mancini and placing them on a national scale outside Europe, such as Mellado and Lagos's (2013) refinement of comparative studies on media systems and the impact on journalistic performance in Chile.

Ethnocentric Media Systems?

As comparative analysis was growing as a tradition to create media systems, the literature of countries with the most developed media literature, including the United States, Britain, France and Germany, was taken to other parts of the world and generalised as if universal, albeit it was written about only one country. Hallin and Mancini were not satisfied with the 'ethnocentrism' of communication studies, as they were aware of the limitations of their research and stressed their objections to the application – without modification – of their analysis on other systems (Hallin and Mancini, 2004. p. 2). In fact, Hallin and Mancini described the domination of the literature of the Western countries as 'ethnocentrism'. Before that, the critical discourse of imperialism in the 1960s added 'Americanisation' to the vocabulary of European scholars to describe the flow of research from America, including media systems studies, influencing the terrain with its culture (Hardy, 2010).

Here a question emerges: is it valid to generalise Anglo-American literature on media systems to other parts of the world?

Generalising the findings of Anglo-American literature is often argued against, as cultural and historical differences between nations means that the "findings from one nation should no more be described as of universal relevance than should findings from multiple nations or cultures be insufficiently contextualised" (Livingston, 2012, p. 419). A counterargument is that the universality of media systems has become natural, as at the end

of the last century communication media “[had] more hybrid and global orientation” (Stevenson, 1999, p. 3), because of media proliferation, the transnationalisation of media, media convergence and digitalisation (ibid.). This notion was extensively investigated by Hardy (2010), who dedicated a whole chapter (Chapter Two) of his book *Western Media Systems* to examining how different histories and political, economic, social, cultural and religious as well as geographic factors help to explain the different characteristics of media systems. I will discuss this point in the next section, particularly within the context of the Arab region.

The spread of the literature of the West was not restricted merely to communication studies – the United States intellectually dominated the classification of media systems in political communications research, too. The consequences of this situation could be seen in “the common lingua media, which does emerge from the American literature often adds to the general conceptual fog, as colleagues diligently hunt for poorly-defined fuzzy phenomena such as ‘personalization’, ‘professionalization’, ‘game-frames’, or ‘media logics’ (Norris, 2009. p. 323).

In the 1980s, there was a strong presence of the concept of ‘a new universal media system نظام إعلامي عالمي جديد’ in the Arab literature (for instance: AbdelRaham, 1984, ElMasmoudy, 1985). However, it did not pertain to global studies but a discussion on the necessity to restructure the media landscape in the North and the South in terms of the domination of the West over media content through a few news agencies, and thus their control of the media agenda. This new universal media system was thought to have been shaped by UNESCO.

It is a fact that almost all global comparative studies are done in the West by Anglo-American scholars. For instance, Golding and Elliot (1979) offer a typology of the role of broadcast media in the state, based on a long international study of broadcast news. This typology comprises broadcast media as a neutral observer, as a party-related political role, a public relation wing of the government and a watchdog or ‘fourth estate’.

Also, Martin and Chaudhary (1983) conducted a global analysis of media systems consisting of Western, communist and third world models. Another universal typology was introduced by Altschull (1984), who classified world media systems into market or Western nations, Marxist nations and developing nations.

Transnational comparative research is concentrated in the Western world, too, because, sometimes, “researchers choose to compare countries inhabited by colleagues who are also friends or who live in cities they are keen to visit or who they happened to meet at a conference” (Livingston, 2012, p. 422). The political change in several Arab countries in late 2010 and thereafter motivated the authors of ‘old’ and ‘Western’ literature to update their work with chapters about the ‘Middle East’. For instance, the book ‘The World News Prism’ (whose first edition appeared in 1981 by Hachten), in its latest edition in 2012, had a chapter on the media in Africa and the Middle East, written by scholars from the region and focusing on Egypt and Tunisia. The same can be said for Hallin and Mancini (2012), whose book ‘Comparing Media Systems beyond the Western World’ included a chapter on the implications of Pan-Arabian media for comparative research.

Certainly, there was a range of media systems created beyond the West, and these were tailored to fit the cultural and historical specificities of their contexts. For instance, Bourgault (1995) links media systems closely to African socio-culture and structure, by defining three elements as their roots: the managerial class, the domination of systems of political patronage and the pre-colonial legacy of the oral tradition.

Another example is the typology of Campbell (2003), which focuses on the political and economic dimensions of post-colonial Africa. He created a category for newspapers used to voice the struggle for independence in Africa, and later on their roles came to mobilise the population for socio-economic development, or what he called the ‘vanguard press’. Subservient press is another system, renamed ‘development journalism’. There are two main understandings of this type – one is “the use of all journalistic skill to report development processes in an interesting fashion” (Aggarwala, 1979, p. 181), and the other is media facilitation of socio-economic development by promoting news that contributes to reduction of hunger and illiteracy (Hachten, 1981,1996). Third, the ‘change agent press’ occurs when the media is a catalyst for change – this model is close to the vanguard press, albeit the media do not play the role of mobilisers. Lastly, Campbell presents the ‘clandestine press’ as an underground form of journalism that resists authority through the criticism of military dictatorships.

‘Arab’ Media Systems

As in other regions of the world, scholars have attempted to frame the media in Arab-speaking countries with media systems. We can see three kinds of literature in this regard, and I list them here before illustrating each one with a number of examples. First is the normative and empirical research done by Arab academics to classify the media in their region. These studies flourished in the 1980s but have decreased considerably over time. Second is critical research on the applicability of media systems (in the Anglo-American literature) in the Arab world through a comparative or critical approach. Third is the literature of foreign researchers, as there was notable interest among Western academics in exploring public opinion in Arabic and, more generally, Islamic countries after the 11 September 2001 attacks in the United States (Kent & Palmer, 2005).

For the first type of Arab media system's literature, we find the study of regional media systems often relies on variable press and media laws, Arab press transformations after political independence from colonism or the relationship between the political system and the media system. The study of Farouk AbouZeid (1986) stands out as an example of the classification of Arab media according to the legislative framework of the press. Like Siebert et al. (1956), AbouZeid used the term 'press systems' نظم صحفية without providing a direct definition thereof. Alternatively, he deconstructed the meaning of this term into five dimensions: the media philosophy or the theoretical frame, media policies, which are the application of the media philosophy, the legal frame as a translation of the media policies and legislations that govern the performance of media institutions, the infrastructure of mass communication, and media practice.

By contrast, AbouZeid (1986) identified three press systems: authoritarian, liberal and communist. Subsequently, he classified the press of the Arab region under these categories, according to their legislations, which he achieved by conducting a content analysis of 16 press laws in 16 Arab countries, in order to label each Arab country with a press system. AbouZeid (1986) believed that media systems are extracted from political and socio-economic conditions. He proposed three arguments for Arab press systems. First, Arab press systems are a reflection of political, economic and social systems. Second, the authoritarian system is common among Arab press systems. Third, press systems overlap; hence, there is no Arab press system that is purely authoritarian or liberal, but each press system shares other attributes, even if just a little, with the other systems (AbouZeid, 1986. p.157).

Moreover, some literature that limits our understanding of media systems for the Arab region has treated this part of the world as a component of the global south, the Third World or nations independent of colonialism. For example, Awatef AbdelRahman (1984) identifies the sub-categories of the Third World press. First is the press of patriotism and democracy seekers, in which national leaders worked during the struggle of their countries against colonialism. One such example is *Harijan*, which was published in the 1930s by Mahatma Gandhi, and *Independence*, the editor-in-chief of which was the Congolese independence leader Patrice Lumumba. Second is the press of socialism, which represents the working class and its political parties, while third is the local capitalist press, established in a climate of conglomerated media monopolisation, including publications such as *State Man* and *Indian Express* in India, and *ElHayat* and *Daily Star* in Lebanon. The fourth sub-category is the foreign press (pp. 15-19).

Another tradition within which to frame Arab media systems involved conceptualising the relationship between the media system and the political system. Hamada (2012) proposes four models in this regard. The first is hostility between the two, initiated by journalists who reject being under the control of politicians; hence, they play the role of the watchdog in what ends to be a hate relationship. Next is the social exchange between the two groups, whereby politicians and journalists benefit from each other, followed by dependence and adaptation, in which politicians and journalists have different interests but rely on each other for the fulfilment of these benefits. Last is the three-dimensional relationship between journalists, politicians and audiences, whereby both the audience and politicians rely on journalists for their empowerment.

Generally, nowadays, there is a tangible lack of transnational research within the Arab world, and thus no more empirical studies on media systems in the region. Probably the last example presented in this area is a typology of the Arab broadcast media by Muhammad Ayish (2002), who suggested three categories: traditional government-controlled, reformist government-controlled and liberal-commercial.

The second type Arab media systems literature includes studies about the validity of generalising the 'Western' media system to the region. Generally, three decades ago, there was severe criticism of the application of Western schools of thought to Arab countries, including studies undertaken by non-Arab researchers studying the region. I could link this point to the broader context of the relationship between the Arab and Western worlds; therefore, from the late 1980s until the late 1990s, the rejection of Arab

scholars of Western theories could be “an extension of a substantial body of literature from both the dependency theory and the cultural imperialism traditions” (Iskander, 2007, p. 17). This was revived by Western involvement in the Gulf war and the increasing hegemony of the U.S. In the last decade, the criticism of the Western literature has become more constructive, as the discussion has shifted from the generic question of ‘should we use this Western literature or should we put them away altogether?’ to a more objective approach. However, there is no recent typology for Arab media systems suggested by scholars of the region.

The third type of literature on Arab media systems involves the contributions of researchers from outside the region to the classification. We can name two sources as the most discussed among Arab scholars in the area of media systems, namely the three models proposed by Hallin and Mancini (2004), which I explained in the previous section, and William Rugh’s typology. Rugh is an American political scientist who has been observing the media in the Arab region since the 1970s and created a typology of three media systems in the region, based on the influence of the political environment and mass media. First, Rugh published his study on Arab mass media in 1979, and it was updated in 1987, 2004 and 2007.

Rugh’s typology consists of the ‘mobilisation’ type as a media system in which there are no competing political parties or elections. The regime makes sure that the press does not criticise the national leaders or the basic policies of the government. In addition, Rugh suggested the loyalty model in countries where no political parties are formed, and whose political regimes neither force the media to mobilise the public nor encourage the media to criticise the government. Private ownership of the media is allowed in this system; however, it is regulated through strict laws which often ban the criticism of the head of the state, the army, the main religion, the principles of society and friendly governments. In this media system, enforcement of the media is carried out by agencies of the state. Lastly, the typology includes the ‘diverse’ media system, in which newspapers criticise governments and are owned by private individuals or political parties. In this media system some restrictions on freedom of expression exist in the law, albeit they are relatively minimal or not strictly enforced.

Although these studies were made in relation to cases from the Arab region, many academics regarded them as ‘Western’, and there was a controversy surrounding their validity – many voices either recommended not applying the media typologies outside the

original cultural context in which they were made, such as Khamis (2009) on Hallin and Mancini's media systems, or rejected this type altogether, for instance AbdelRahman (1996), who regarded the Western press and broadcasting as a threat to the Arab media. She (1981) considered Rugh's typology an example of imposing Western theories on the Arab World.

Notably, over the last decade, the critique of the research of Western researchers on the Arab media has become more constructive, which means the discussion about them has shifted from 'should we use this Western thought?' to 'why should we use them or why should we not?' For instance, Rugh's typology was scrutinised by Mellor (2005), who listed many criticisms (p. 49-59) but from an intellectual viewpoint rather than regarding it as just 'Western'. Mellor contends that the typology "does not draw a clear line between mobilisation press on the one hand and the loyalist press on the other" (2005, p.58), and that Rugh "seemed to disregard the role of journalists and journalistic culture, which might well differ from one country to another" (ibid.). Also, she doubts media ownership as a basis of classification.

But, on the other hand, how do 'Western' academics see the use of Anglo-American literature in the study of Arab media, and here I mean only those academics who are not Arab nationals and, at the same time, have expertise in investigating Arab media/political communication?

As for Hallin and Mancini, they acknowledged this limitation of their classification to media systems in 2004, observing that "in the countries with less developed traditions of media research", there is "a tendency to borrow the literature of other countries – usually the Anglo-American or the French literature – and to treat that borrowed literature as though it could be applied unproblematically anywhere" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004. p.2). Therefore, they tried to go beyond this notion in the second edition of their book in 2012, which was entitled *Comparing Media Systems: Beyond the Western World*. The two authors included more countries from around the world in the updated edition. However, such expansions of the scale of research were still not enough to construct a typology for media systems around the globe.

Meanwhile, William Rugh finds himself misunderstood. He notes that Mellor misread many of his points on Arab media systems, and accordingly dedicated a whole chapter in her book 'The Making of Arab News' (2005) to denouncing his typology. But he preferred not to refute this criticism publicly and shared some clarifications with Mellor

in a personal communication. Additionally, in his 2007 update to his Arab media system typologies, Rugh reevaluated his basic approach.

Kai Hafez, a prominent German expert on Arab media, is a ‘Western’ scholar who discusses at great length the topic of adopting ‘Western’ literature in the research about the Arab media. He suggests that we stop asking classic questions like can media systems be universal? Or do these theories match our cultural distinctiveness? Instead, we should advance these Western models by adapting them. Hafez (2008, 2010, 2014) finds that:

“The main problem of Arab media studies today is not the application of Western theories and models, but their superficial interpretation, which is often accompanied by very vague allegations concerning the cultural distinctiveness of the Arab and Muslim world. For cultural anthropologists, such attitudes might be acceptable.”

(Hafez, 2014, p. 284)

Hafez (2010) discusses the criticism of some Arab scholars in relation to the three media systems proposed by Hallin and Mancini (in 2004), particularly the point of religion, which was argued to be forgotten in the book of these two researchers, though they did include it in their explanation of the differences in press orientation in Western countries. He clarifies:

“Hallin and Mancini also made clear that religion played a decisive role in European media history because it was the competition between Catholics and Protestants more than anything else that triggered the spread of the printed word, of papers and pamphlets.”

(Hafez, 2015)

Effectively, Hafez (2008, 2015) suggests the three media systems proposed by Hallin and Mancini as a first step for theorising Arab media studies. He gives an example whereby the “Arab media in transitory countries like Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, Algeria, Yemen and Morocco share many features with the Mediterranean or polarized pluralist model of Hallin and Mancini” (Hafez, 2008. p.9).

The Egyptian Media System

So far, I have presented media systems as a framework of the operation of mass media, including their connections with the state. I have moved from Western media systems to the Arab and African research on the media of these regions, and discussed the validity of using Western transnational research to explore the mediascape of societies with different cultural and political circumstances, such as the Arab world. In this section, I move closer to the field of my research by situating Egypt within the literature on media systems. I use the *AlMasry AlYoun* newspaper (AMAY) as an illustrative example of this connection. AMAY's social media department is one of the cases I use in this research, and additionally the newspaper was the first privately-owned publication in Egypt.

Since the first Egyptian republic in 1952, the state has had full control of the 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 mobilisation model in Rugh's typology for Arab media systems (1987). It is best described as a 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. In the era seeing the presidency of Gamal Abdel Nasser, President of Egypt from 1954 to 1970, the regime wanted journalists to become the advocates of socialism. Thus, Nasser nationalised the press², including all privately-owned organisations, and suspended the journalists' association.

Nasser's successor, Anwar ElSadat, President of Egypt from 1970 to 1981, adopted a more open attitude towards the press and removed some of Nasser's more restrictive policies, thus allowing opposition parties to establish newspapers of their own (Geiger & Masri, 2012). Afterwards, the 29-year presidency of Mohammad Hosni Mubarak, President of Egypt from 1981 to 2011, witnessed aspects that enriched the Egyptian media ecology, such as the emergence of media privatisation, the introduction of private satellite television channels, the spread of privately-owned opposition newspapers (both in print and online) and growing internet accessibility (Khamis, 2011).

Hafez (2008) suggests that Egypt, in this era, matched the polarised pluralist model of Hallin and Mancini's typology. However, following a close look at the media scene

² 'Nationalisation' is the process of making private industry or private assets public.

under ElSadat and Mubarak, the Egyptian media system sat 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, p. 6)

While Nasser's authoritarian attitude to the media was explicit, ElSadat and Mubarak indirectly ensured state control over the media. The two presidents established governmental bodies to overlook and watch the media landscape, in a way that kept the organisation and operation of mass media outlets under state command, even when owned by individuals. In fact, the long-term effects of ElSadat and Mubarak's decisions regarding the media lasted over the timeframe of this research.

Essentially, all the bodies they established to regulate the mass media continued to exist in 2011, 2012 and 2013. For instance, in 1970, ElSadat established the Egyptian Radio and Television Union (ERTU) to “fulfil the mission statement of the audio-visual media and broadcasting services... in compliance with overall public policy and widely acknowledged professional standards and criteria” (1979 ERTU Law.18, Article 2). The ERTU head is appointed by the government, and the union is funded from the public purse. Since its foundation, ERTU has been “frequently used as an arm of the government to guide and mobilise the public” (Boyd, 1999). Later on, more entities were founded to direct and supervise the media. Mubarak created the Ministry of Information in 1982 to oversee the state-owned media. In addition, in 1996, Mubarak formed the Supreme Press Council, a board of 15 members appointed by the president.

Scholars and media observers explain the actions that seemed to liberate the media from the state's control as a manoeuvre of the political regime to preserve its stability. For instance, allowing privately-owned media in Mubarak's time was linked to the pressures placed by George Bush's U.S. administration on the Egyptian regime to undertake democratic reform (Cooper, 2008). It has also been said that the licensing of AMAY was part of an internal political competition, as the former Head of Intelligence, Omar Suleiman, supported licensing *AlMasry AlYoun*, as he wished to run for president and

therefore would benefit from voices not controlled by the incumbent government. This would help broaden the arena for those who wished to oppose Hosni Mubarak and the potential inheritance of power by his son, Gamal (Kelly et al., 2012).

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 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 if in the countries that impose restrictions on the use of the World Wide Web, and so the regimes opted to alleviate their control, or had no choice in the matter.

From the other side, the media coverage of stories related to the political regime is profitable, because at the time of general dissatisfaction, audiences search for outlets that, on their behalf, do the job of justifying and expressing the feelings of anger and dissatisfaction against the regime. For instance, in 2005, AMAY ran news about the parliamentary election fraud in November 2005, which accompanied the emergence of outspoken opposition against the former President Hosni Mubarak. This made 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, 'negative' political news works in the favour of the political regime, too, as it gives implicit support to the regime, because it enables it to ensure liberalism and negates any accusations of authoritarianism.

In an unstable political sphere like Egypt (during the time of conducting this research), media owners prioritise the preservation of their businesses, which could be threatened if the media messages broadcasted by their establishment disturbed the authorities. The media outlet 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).

Being ‘independent’ or ‘neutral’ is often executed by being both pro and against a regime. For instance, in addition to reporting the official news, *AlMasry AlYoum* (AMAY) covers numerous protests against the government and the president, too. In addition, its administration has hired writers from different political affiliations. This practice of having mixed political voices and covering protests as well as official press conferences was framed by also being branded a ‘liberal’ newspaper.

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. In 2011, *AlMasry AlYoum* (AMAY) ceased publication of *Egypt Independent*, an English-speaking weekly, because of an opinion article that was critical to the ruling regime at that time. *Egypt Independent* was a new English-speaking supplement to AMAY, and the second issue was to carry an opinion piece by Robert Springborg, a political scientist and expert on Egyptian civil-military relations, who was critical of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces that had ruled Egypt (February 2011 - June 2012) following the departure of president Hosni Mubarak.

Springborg and the *Egypt Independent* staff collaborated to alter the offending sections in the opinion piece in the first edition; however, the second issue of the supplement was nevertheless prevented from being published. The *Egypt Independent* team responded to this act of censorship by publishing the banned issue on social media.

To wrap up, this chapter has addressed the question how should we consider state agency in the interaction between citizen media and mainstream media? It has also suggested media systems as the foundation for exploring this role. I started by explaining what these systems are, by providing examples, and then I discussed their applicability, as Western-made theories, to the Arab region. Subsequently, I reviewed the literature on Arab media systems and located Egypt within this paradigm.

In sum, media systems are suggested for studying the relationship between the state and media. There are many typologies provided by political scientists and media researchers, mostly in Europe and the United States. In other parts of the world, there are more available. There are two traditions in creating media systems, namely the normative and the empirical. Comparative research has become a common approach to studying transnational media systems, especially after the publication of ‘Comparing Media Systems’, by Hallin and Mancini, in 2004. Moreover, I surveyed the typologies of media systems in the Arab region and distinguished between three types of studies: empirical research done by Arab academics to classify the media in their region, research discussing

copying media systems in the Anglo-American literature in the Arab world and the literature of these foreign researchers employed to compare media systems in the region. I concluded the chapter by focusing more on and explaining the relationship between the Egyptian media and different political regimes as described in the academic literature. In the next chapter, I move to Egyptian citizen media and explain its inception and development up to 2011.

III. THE EGYPTIAN CITIZEN MEDIA BEFORE 2011

Over the last two chapters I have covered the sets of connections between the medium, content, message and the state. In Chapter Two, I surveyed the medium theory, highlighted its key arguments and surveyed the implications of new media on the classic concepts of agenda-setting and gatekeeping. Subsequently, in Chapter Three, I introduced media systems as a theoretical framework for the relationship between the state and media organisations. I presented numerous templates for these systems through a prolonged review of typologies made for the Western and Arab regions, and I concluded highlighting media systems in Egypt.

In this chapter, I provide background information on the topic of research by visiting the interactions between citizen media and mainstream media prior to the start of the research time frame. The significance of having these explained is that, in my empirical research (especially in Chapters Five and Six), there are many quotations from citizen journalists about the role of their media institutions in political mobilisation. Thus, it is essential to learn about the context of using media and being in opposition to a political regime.

I clarify how citizen journalism emerged in Egypt and its relation to the political sphere, medium and mainstream media. From its commencement, Egyptian citizen media was a form of rebellion against the state and all its constituents, including the political regime, social institutions, media conventions and taboos. Citizen journalism is represented, in this chapter, by blogging, which is the oldest form of Egyptian citizen media (Radsch, 2008, Faris, 2011, ElNawawy & Khamis, 2012). I use journo-bloggers (or individuals who blog and have a career in mass media at the same time) as a case to illustrate at what point the mainstream media and citizen media met.

Although there is a growing body of literature about the Egyptian blogosphere, very few researchers have tackled the topic of the relationship between citizen journalists and traditional journalists. For this reason I have built the account in this chapter by combining the existing literature with empirical research based upon personal communication with six Egyptian journo-bloggers who operated sometime between 2005 and 2010, all of whom had popular blogs and belonged to the second generation of blogger. The participants are journalists who worked for foreign media (for example,

Hossam ElHamalawy), privately-owned media (AbdelRahman Moustafa, AbdelMoneim Mahmoud, Baraa Ashraf and Amr Ezzat) and state-owned media (exemplified by Ahmed Naji). The interviews took place in Cairo during 2013. Occasionally, I may also refer to blog entries posted by a few participants as secondary resources. Finally, I draw selectively on a body of qualitative researches done by both local and international researchers which involved personal communication with the local bloggers or analysis of the content of the blogosphere.

We can posit the interaction between citizen media and mainstream media in Egypt before 2011 as passing through three short pace stages: passive interaction (until 2006), pragmatic interaction (2006-2008) and competition (2008-2011). Turns in the relationship between citizen media and mainstream media were influenced by the spread of blogging, which is linked to internet penetration rates and was the driver of self-expression under the authoritarian regime of Hosni Mubarak. In addition, the coverage of flagship regional and international media helped to both legitimise and amplify the blogging phenomenon. Finally, the involvement of journalists in citizen journalism represents the vital place of human agency in these changes.

Pre-2011 Egyptian Citizens and the Medium

The internet started to penetrate into the Arab region in the 1990s, but it was not a smooth process, as the region suffers from illiteracy, computer illiteracy, lack of funds for information technology (IT) research and development, lack of solid telecommunication infrastructures and a lack of IT human and economic resources (Abdulla, 2007). Since then, Egypt has had the fastest growing and largest number of internet users in the Arab world. The population penetration of the internet in 2007 was 6.90%, while, according to the Programme of Governance in the Arab region, the average for the Middle East was 7.38% (Hofheinz, 2007, p. 62). According to statistics aggregated from International Telecommunication Union, World Bank and United Nations Population Division figures, at the emergence of blogging in 2003, the internet penetration was 4%, but in 2004 it leapt to 11.9% and the rate continued to grow and reached 25.6% in 2011. The number of Egyptian blogs in this period is hard to discern, because the criteria for being Egyptian are not clear. So, what exactly do we mean by 'an Egyptian blog'? Are they blogs accessed from Egypt? Or are they blogs whose owners identify their location in the registration forms of their Web blogs as Egypt? Or are they blogs in which the words 'Egypt' and 'Egyptian' are commonly used? In 2008, the Egyptian Information and Decision Support

Center (IDSC)³ estimated the number of Egyptian blogs in 2008 at 160,000, 18.9% of which were political, 15.5% personal, 14.4% literary and artistic and the remaining 30.7% diverse in content (ElMasry, 2008).

From the outset, the state wanted to sponsor the new service (the internet), because this would put it in control and bring financial benefits. Various authorities were founded to organise internet services. In 1999, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology was founded, mainly to develop communication infrastructure, yet its subordinate, Telecom Egypt, monopolised the fixed-line telephone sector, which meant monopolising ADSL services. And with the spread of broadband internet, Telecom Egypt established TE Data in 2001, to function as its data communications and internet arm.

Nevertheless, the government supported internet penetration, with a significant effort in this regard being the *PC for Each Home* project. In 2002, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology Egyptian Computer and the Software Department at the Federation of Egyptian Chambers of Commerce signed an agreement to spread personal computers to every home. The initiative included offering discounts on computers and ADSL subscriptions for three years (Open Net, 2009).

Given that blogs are free to use, offer the possibility of anonymity and provide the option of editing or deleting posts, or entire blogs, if necessary, the blogosphere attracted the users of Web forums, who found it a convenient way to share their writing freely – without the moderation of Web administrators. Many first-generation bloggers were active on the online forums that predated blogs (Radsch, 2008). AbdelRahman Moustafa, journalist and blogger, added another advantage of blogs, one that made them a better platform for publishing than Web forums:

“On Web forums, posts and topics are displayed according to their popularity, which makes some valuable content less viewed in spite of its quality. Meanwhile, in a blog, I can write whatever I want and have it published.”

(Interview with Moustafa, 2013)

The ‘Medium is the Message’ probe surfaces when we observe the relationship between the content and the host of a blog. Atef (2016) suggests a typology of the Egyptian

³ IDSC is a research centre attached to the Egyptian cabinet.

blogosphere before 2011, according to the platforms on which they were hosted. Her argument is that the technological complexity and popularity of each blogging platform governs its users and the content they conveyed. Atef (2016) distinguishes between four groups of blogs, according to their online hosting platforms. The first group is Blogspot blogs, characterised by simplicity and user-friendly interfaces. Mostly, they belonged to internet users with moderate technology literacy, as the Blogspot platforms, at that time, addressed this issue, using the sentence ‘Create Your Blog in Three Steps’ as the main headline on its homepage. Many Blogspot blogs included the personal opinions and stories of their owners. The second group presented by Atef (2016) is WordPress Blogs, which were more developed than Blogspot, offering more technical options requiring better computing skills in comparison to Blogspot. Many WordPress blogs were set up for specific topics, because this blogging platform had the optional privilege of a customised domain name⁴. Hence, for individuals, groups or organisations who wanted to have advocacy Web pages, without bearing the costs of making and maintaining a website, WordPress was an ideal solution.

Third, Drupal blogs were considerably fewer in number than Blogspot and WordPress. These blogs were open-source, a term not common before the spread of smart mobile phones with their open-source applications. Drupal bloggers were either technology geeks or second-generation bloggers, who were guided through the blogosphere by the earliest bloggers. The content of this group of blogs was diverse and included personal and public blogs.⁽⁴⁾ Blogging sites owned by Arab businesses supported the Arabic language and helped users get over the language barrier, as at the time most blogging platforms had not added the Arabic language to their interface. Thus, the user had to have a relatively fair level of English language skills to use them. Meanwhile, platforms like Maktoob and Jeeran were refuges for those who wanted to blog in Arabic. Generally, though, these blog sites were not popular in the Egyptian blogosphere.

The message of political rebellion sent through the new medium evoked the opposition of people who were faithful to the regime, and it led to them calling for the banning of the medium. A forceful example was the legal case that was filed in 2007 by the former judge AbdelFattah Mourad against a number of bloggers. He demanded the blocking of 51 websites for allegedly harming the reputation of Egypt and insulting the president. The court announced plans to investigate the contents of these websites, but it

⁴ For example, instead of ‘media.wordpress.com’, the user can suppress ‘WordPress’ and get ‘media.com’, ‘media.net’, etc.

eventually rejected Mourad's request, justifying its decision because not one of the 51 Web pages had criticised religion or threatened public order.

Although in this previous example the blogs and websites were not blocked, the absence of a legal framework for the internet was a threat to citizen journalists. There are no laws on the freedom of expression online, and the charges related to online content were treated as publishable crimes. This presented two major issues regarding the internet and law in Egypt. First, members of the judiciary were almost certainly not internet users, thereby making it difficult for them to understand the case clearly. The second issue is that penal code was used in legal cases related to user-generated content, when the code itself had no provision or precedent for online material.

However, this did not hold bloggers back from making the best use of the new medium. Radasch (2008) observes the collaborative nature of Egyptian citizen journalists in explaining technologies to each other, especially the first-generation bloggers. For her:

“The core bloggers played this role in Egypt as they adopted new technologies created in the West to local political and technological conditions. Early bloggers... encouraged members of their social networks to create blogs and often provided technical assistance. They were also among the first to use Twitter and Flickr, but in a way not originally conceived of by the creators of such applications.”

She notes the training guidelines and instruction books made by citizen journalists for peer learning. ElHamalawy, journalist and blogger, told me that he and his fellow bloggers were keen to spread the knowledge about using technology, especially for rights advocacy: “We were writing in Arabic to explain how to use the social networking sites. That came in the form of blog entries and training guides, which were made available for all” (interview with ElHamalawy, 2013). For instance, ElHamalawy edited a word document entitled دليل المدون الناشط للتصوير وخدمة فكر (*A Guide for the Blogger and Activists for Photography and Using Flickr*), which was a Word document shared on many file-sharing websites, such as Google Documents and Scribd, made ready for reading and downloading.

Pre-2011 Citizen Media and the State

Since its emergence, Egyptian citizen journalism has been connected to political activism. In fact, blogs were not known to Egyptian internet users until they started to carry political content in 2005. The Egyptian blogosphere was initiated in 2003 by around 20 people, several of whom worked in translation or technology jobs and were active on the online forums that predated blogs, such as the Web forum (Radsch, 2008). Their blogs started to carry political content in 2005, coinciding with the promise of grassroots movements against the then president Hosni Mubarak.

The politicisation of the early practices of Egyptian citizen journalism, represented in blogging, happened in line with the foundation of Kefaya *الحركة المصرية من أجل التغيير - كفاية* (*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.

In fact, citizen journalism was utilised in the 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).

Clearly, the movement for political change evoked citizen journalism, with the outspoken discourse of Kefaya against the former president opening the door for more political criticisms and, furthermore, the reassessment of all the elements of the status quo. The blogs were also treated as a space for covering the protests organised by Kefaya, which were censored or completely ignored by mainstream media.

The parallelism of the political insurgency and citizen journalism can be explained through the lens of the Egyptian media system, which I covered in Chapter Two. Since the state secured media ownership in the 1950s, the Egyptian media system was characterised by the loyalty of local media to the presidential office and its regime. Therefore, the specific dissatisfaction of citizen journalists with the performance of local media was part of their overall dissatisfaction with the state and its supporters, including media organisations' owners and big-name writers and anchors.

Literature on the Egyptian blogosphere has tended to classify blogs into a typology of three generations, based on the topics the blogs were tackling as well as the number of blogs. In each group, there was a level of rebellion which accelerated over time and as a result of internet penetration and the increase in social media activity. This typology, first set out by Radasch (2008), consists of an ‘experimentation phase’, in which, some internet users explored blogs, used them and encouraged their peers to join them. Then, came the ‘activist phase’, named in this way because that is when political activists were encouraged to blog about their action. In addition, political groups like the Muslim Brotherhood entered the Egyptian blogosphere, too, and other bloggers started to get involved in political activism. The third phase is the ‘diversification and fragmentation’ phase, which started after 2006. In this regard, the bloggers’ community expanded into multiple communities such as activists, Leftists, Muslim Brotherhood, cultural and poetic bloggers, Copts, Bahai, homosexuals, Salafis, social commentators and personal bloggers (Radasch, 2008). These groups were also known collectively as ‘agenda-setters’ (Faris, 2011), referring to their role in incorporating new topics or under-reported topics on the agenda of mass media, such as police brutality and sexual harassment (p. 58-96).

Lynch (2007) suggests a non-chronological typology for popular bloggers: activists, who have direct involvement in politics, bridge-bloggers, who tried to connect Western audiences with the events in Egypt, and public sphere bloggers, who were unorganised activists. In his book *The Journey of Blogs from Post to Tweet* رحلة المدونات من البوست إلى التويت, Ahmed Naji (2010), Egyptian journo-blogger and writer, created a typology of four generations. He counted blogs which were created before 2005 and renamed these four generations: ‘Little Ice Age’, ‘Ice Age’, ‘Mesozoic Era’, ‘Ice Age Flood’ and the ‘Facebook Age’. The pun in the selection of titles in Naji’s typology was intentional. According to Naji (2015) in a Facebook correspondence with me, he told me that he found that the ‘Western’ researchers theorise very simple and spontaneous events and use them to make deep academic papers. So, he created a typology and chose very ‘scientific’ names for the classifications.

Pre-2011 Interaction between Citizen Media and Mainstream Media

In the Anglo-American literature about the relationship between journalists and bloggers, mostly done in the U.S. context, there is general agreement among scholars that each group benefits from the other. Wallsten (2007) contends that the relationship between mainstream media and blogs, especially political blogs, is symbiotic. Singer (2006), too, argues that the relationship between journalists and news bloggers needs to be symbiotic and complementary (p.26). She explains that bloggers want the new subjects which journalists publish, assuming that many bloggers cannot gather original information themselves. Besides, bloggers want publicity and journalists. And journalists need journalists, too, albeit in a subtler way: “After all, journalists have managed without this particular swarm of gadflies for hundreds of years. But viewing these bloggers as pests misses the real values they provide” (p.27).

In the case of Egypt, a group of American researchers used ‘symbiotic’ to describe a new stance in the relationship between mainstream media and citizen journalists, which started during the uprising against the Egyptian regime in 2011. Lotan et al. (2011) argue that under the cover of the protests, mainstream media outlets picked up on the updates sent to social network sites, using citizens as sources for the news they were not able to access, and hosting them as commentators. This seems to be a major turnaround, as local academics saw blogging, before the uprising, as a form of “challenging mainstream media” (Hamdy, 2009).

However, these two types of interaction between journalists and Egyptian citizen journalists existed beforehand. At some stage, the relationship between the two groups was characterised as competitive, while in another it was based on exchanging benefits. Therefore, the connections between citizen journalists and journalists at the time between 2005 and 2011 could be divided into three phases according to the dominant form of connection: passive interaction (until 2006), pragmatic interaction (2006-2008) and competition (2008-2011). The variables of change in such relationships can be seen as: the evolution of citizen journalism and the stance it took, the global attention paid to the Egyptian citizen media, mostly through coverage by foreign mainstream media, and, finally, the involvement of journalists in citizen journalism.

The first stance of blogging had what I call a ‘passive interaction’ with mass media, by which I mean there were no established relationships, especially as at that time many journalists were not internet literacy and had no idea about blogs. All the participants in

this chapter, who were both journalists and citizen journalists before 2011, agree that the relationship between the Egyptian mass media and citizen journalism started with local traditional journalists ignoring bloggers, and citizen journalists deliberately avoiding contact with the mass media. They opened up to each other gradually in 2008, and we can see tangible collaborations in 2010. This ‘passive interaction’ slowed journalists’ understanding of citizen media and emphasised their perception of it as a replacement for traditional media, a common belief around the globe at that time (this point is made by a number of analysts, including Lowrey & Mackay, 2008, Lowrey, 2006, Rosen, 2005, ElSayed, 2013, ElSonbaty, 2008).

The first-generation bloggers continued to be reserved in their collaboration with mainstream media (interview with Moustafa, 2013). In practice, the citizens did not interact with Egyptian journalists as workers in the mass media but as part of something related to the status quo, which they hoped to change:

“Eventually, the journalist is restricted to what the editor-in-chief decides, and the editor-in-chief is committed to the political regime agenda. It is an established relationship between the media owners, journalists and the regime. We were not capable of asking journalists to change it, but we certainly were capable of writing what we wanted instead of asking journalists to write it on our behalf.”

(interview with Mahmoud, 2013)

In the second stage, interaction started to happen as many citizen journalists became more flexible to the idea of collaborating with local journalists, alerting them to grassroots events, providing them with material or connecting them with sources. This shift happened with the entrance of more political activists into the Egyptian blogosphere, as they wanted to promote news about their activism. These bloggers were aware of the limitations of their audiences in comparison to mass media (interview with ElHamalwy, 2013). Meanwhile, “the idea of blogging being a replacement for traditional media was believed by a few yet influential bloggers, such as Alaa Abdel Fattah and Malek Mustafa, who agreed that the way to achieve this was to increase [the number of] bloggers” (interview with Ezzat, 2013).

From this viewpoint, the international and regional media spotlight on Egyptian bloggers encouraged local journalists to approach these bloggers, as they wanted to meet these young people who had been invited to appear on AlJazeera as commentators and featured in the Western press as political dissidents (interview with Naji, 2013). Furthermore, by 2005, some young bloggers enjoyed a following that exceeded the circulation figures of major daily Egyptian newspapers, which encouraged them to carry on and try to widen their circles of influence (Hamdy, 2009, Abdullah, 2014). In addition, the fast growth of the number of bloggers became undeniable, as the number of blogs on Blogspot, which were registered in Egypt, rose by 18 per cent in 2005, by 27 per cent in 2006 and by 37 per cent in 2007 (AlMasry, 2008).

In the third stage, journalists and citizen journalists seemed to be in competition with each other. In 2009, for example, the Egyptian Syndicate of Journalists (ESJ) started to convene training workshops on the use of social media. At the same time, citizen journalists were reportedly succeeding in reporting the news journalists were not being informed about. A prominent example of this is the coverage of Facebook groups and blogs on the Mahalla Uprising in 2008 (also known as the 6th April strike). In April 2008, there was a call for a national strike in support of a walkout in the city of Mahalla (Nile Delta). The strike was planned as a protest against low wages, and it was supported by a group on Facebook. This prompted the Ministry of Interior to issue a statement warning citizens against striking and affirming that April 6th was a normal working day. Almost no mass media coverage was provided for the event, because the city was locked down and press crews were not allowed to enter. Meanwhile, live updates were provided by citizens within the city. A blog covering the uprising was created and updated with reports about arrests, pictures of protesters tearing down pictures of president Hosni Mubarak from billboards and audio recordings of the protesters' chants, sent to them by the city inhabitants and a few local bloggers. This meant that anyone could make content and share it. Ever since, bloggers have repeatedly used the terms إعلام بديل (translates: alternative media) and صحافة شعبية (translates: media by the people).

Unlike local media, which initially ignored bloggers, the flagship regional media outlet Aljazeera produced a two-part documentary in 2006 on the blogging phenomena in the Arab world, entitled المدونون.. الصحفيون الجدد (*Bloggers... The New Journalists*). This film introduced blogging positively to people who were not internet users, those who did use it but without visiting blogs or those who visited personal sites without knowing what they were. The title given to the documentary recognised blogging as a new type of journalism,

and in the same year, Aljazeera started to grant scholarships to citizens to be trained in its premises in Doha.

However, this Aljazeera documentary raised concerns for some bloggers, particularly those who were journalists by profession. For example, Ahmed Naji, who writes the *وسّع خيالك* (*Stretch Your Imagination*) blog, published a post on how Aljazeera was benefiting from producing such documentary, expressing his worry about “mainstream media pieces swallowing its alternatives as well” (Naje, 2006). He believed that this was harming the blogging phenomenon, because it made blogging a way of gaining media attention, or at least a way of joining the community of bloggers, who seemed too important and too interesting to be the subject of a documentary by Aljazeera (interview with Naji, 2013).

International media interest in the Egyptian blogosphere grew after some Egyptian bloggers won international awards for blogging, journalism and human rights advocacy. For example, in 2005, the blog *Alaa & Manal Bit Bucket* *دلو بتات علاء ومنال* won the *Best of the Blogs Award* from the Deutsche Welle, and in 2008 the blogger Nora Younis won the *Human Rights First* award. In fact, the international mainstream media legitimised blogging in a number of ways, and reporting about bloggers in the international press and on television stimulated some local newspapers to connect with cyberspace, in order to quote high-profile bloggers, to find content or to attract readers by disseminating content produced online. *The Financial Times*, the *Washington Post*, *The Observer* and the CNN and ABC networks, among others, exalted Arab bloggers, especially those who consistently published political content (Hamdy, 2009). At the same time, this media coverage created “an element of competition and jealousy” between members of the traditional Egyptian media and the blogosphere (Faris, 2011. p.65), because journalists regarded the coverage of bloggers in leading media outlets as (apparently undeserved) recognition of their short time in news reporting.

On the other side of the coin, the openness of bloggers to international mainstream media was often tactical and targeted audiences around the world who would support their political activism: “The West was a key supporter of Mubarak, and bloggers believed that bad publicity about his regime would weaken it” (interview with ElHamalawy, 2013). Moreover, raising their media profile was a way to gain relative protection from police harassment, because arresting a blogger who was featured in the international media would embarrass a Mubarak regime which claimed to be democratic and liberal.

The Role of Journo-Bloggers

The meeting point of citizen media and mainstream media in Egypt before 2011 was individuals who were both journalists and bloggers at the same time. There is no available estimation of the number in this group, yet there are around 10 people who were professional journalists and who also ran popular blogs. The influence of this group had a long-term effect, as almost ten years after the breakout of the blogging phenomenon some journo-bloggers were in leading positions in their career and could facilitate the entrance of more citizen journalists to mass media outlets. I discuss this in more detail in Chapter Eight, when I treat the role of media organisers in directing the interactions between citizen media and mainstream media. In this section, though, I describe the big picture of the blogs of Egyptian journalists before 2011. Then, I draw upon data collected from the participant journo-bloggers, to explain specifically the incentives for the participating journalists to join the blogosphere. Lastly, I present their views on how their belonging to the two groups of journalists and citizen journalists influenced the interactions between citizen media and mainstream media.

Basically, we can distinguish four groups of journo-bloggers in the Egyptian blogosphere between 2005 and 2011 in terms of the content they provided. The first batch consists of those who blogged about the local community of journalists. *The Journalists for Change* صحفيون من أجل التغيير movement could have been the start of this group, which used Web 1.0⁵ for internal communication. This movement was concerned with spreading news content and commentary about corruption in local media establishments. With the growth of blogging, journalists found in the blogosphere the room to share their news. In 2007, a blog called *AlWasat AlSa'hafi* الوسط الصحفي (The Journalism Sphere) was created by the journalist Saber Mashour, who published the latest updates on journalists in the Egyptian mainstream media and exposed the underhand dealings of local newspapers. *AlWasat AlSa'hafi* lasted for one year, until Mashour blogged that he had to stop updating it, as it contradicted his personal interests. The blog no longer exists.

A similar blog appeared in 2008, added by Ashraf Shehata, the editor of the blogs page in the local newspaper *AlNahar*. The blog was titled *AlWasat AlSahafi AlArabi* الوسط الصحفي العربي (*The Arab Journalism Sphere*), and it had in its header the slogan 'A blog to reveal the corruption in the Arab press'. In 2009, Magdy ElGallad, editor-in chief of the *AlMasry AlYoum* newspaper, sued the blogger who created *AlWasat AlSahafi AlArabi*, for insulting and libelling him (Shehata, 2009). However, the blog continued to be updated

⁵ Such as Yahoo groups, mailing lists and email threads.

until 2010, when it was transformed into a website called *The Arab Journalists Network* (arabjournalists.org) شبكة الصحفيين العرب.

The second group of journo-bloggers are those who used the blogosphere as a space for content which is not allowed for publishing in the mainstream media. The updates to these blogs were not censored materials but writings that did not match the editorial policies of the employers of journalists. Thus, instead of proposing content to editors and get it banned from publishing in mainstream media, the journalists published it directly on their blogs.

An example of this type is the high-profile blogger and journalist Hossam ElHamalawy, who was the *Los Angeles Times* correspondent in Egypt from 2004 until 2007. However, he told me in a personal interview in 2013, “although *Los Angeles Times* was a well circulated newspaper, it was eventually aimed at readers on the U.S. West Coast; hence, there was a limited and defined interest in the coverage of Egypt”. ElHamalawy wanted to share details on the protests, but this was not possible within the pages of the *Los Angeles Times*, so he created his personal blog *3arabawy.org*.

The third group of journo-bloggers are journalists who use blogging as a tool for self-expression. It could be the smallest type of journo-bloggers in number, one of the few examples of which is Yemeen-Shemal يمين شمال (*Right-Left*), written by two young journalists, Ahmed Harbia and Sayyed Turki. The blog was given that title because Turki is leftist while Harbia leans to the right. They blogged about current events and utilised their ideological differences to provide different perspectives on events.

Lastly, the fourth group of the Egyptian journalists' blogs before 2011 involved Web pages, created for archiving professional work, “because, back then, not all the newspapers had websites, and even those that did, the archiving feature was not activated; thus, the one's work would not be visible online” as AbdelRahman Moustafa told me in a personal communication in 2013. He created a new blog for himself in 2010, entitled *Ayyam Al-Sehafa* أيام الصحافة (*Days of Journalism*), specifically for archiving his work from 2010 onward. Similarly, Baraa Ashraf, a broadcast and online journalist at that time, was re-publishing his work on online media on his personal blog (interview with Ashraf, 2013). It is worth noting that the blogs succeeded in performing the job of being an online storage space for archived work. In the case of *Ashraf*, the online website where he was working in 2005 has now disappeared online, yet his articles are still available for readers through his personal blog.

This classification of journalists' blogs reveals some of their motivations for entering the blogosphere. Nonetheless, there are more reasons for the participants to keep

their blogs active and up-to-date. Fahmy (2014) suggests that journalists have used the blogosphere as a safe zone for publishing, as it is a place where they are less likely to face the State Security apparatus, an arm of the Ministry of Interior. She writes:

“In an authoritarian regime – like Egypt during the Mubarak era – professional journalists can be deprived of their right to work in any news platform when state security officers blacklist them, so blogging became an important news platform for attaining their audiences as their blogs were not monitored or controlled by state security”

(Fahmy, 2014. p. 173)

However, the stats on internet freedom in Egypt during the upsurge of the blogging phenomenon (2005-2010) show that many politically fuelled blogs were targeted by the authorities, and numerous harassments were perpetrated against prominent bloggers. This is what placed Egypt on the *Reporters Without Borders* list of ‘internet enemies’ from 2006 until 2010, and earned it the title of one of the *10 Worst Countries to Be a Blogger*, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, in 2009.

It is true that the journo-bloggers had a desire to express themselves and communicate news, as Fahmy (2014) notes. Amr Ezzat was one of those who wanted to write on a variety of topics, but his job as a journalist would not allow him to do so. Therefore, he was actively blogging. He told me:

“I mix politics, literature and personal impressions at the same blog post, and I also analyse political incidents and tell stories about my everyday life. They [were not intended] to appear in a newspaper, but [they were] very convenient for a blog.”

(interview with Ezzat, 2013)

Additionally, the journo-bloggers wanted their self-expression to be free from the professional restrictions of the mass media, by expressing their personal opinions and tackling subjects that were not on the media agendas of the media platforms for which they worked. Ahmed Naji was a journalist at *Akhbar ElAdab* أخبار الأدب (*The Literature News*), a leading state-run literary and cultural weekly. He wanted to write in a certain style that he believed would not be allowed in a newspaper. Thus, he created a personal blog for this very purpose (interview with Naji, 2013).

On occasion, the wish of the journo-bloggers to liberate themselves from the professional standards of mass media through citizen media pushed them to take on separate identities in their career and the blogosphere. As such, Naji was known among bloggers by the name 'Eblees', and he deliberately hid his real name from visitors to his blog, as he believed that his posts may harm him professionally. He explained to me:

“The point is that I criticise people sometimes, and my sources could be among them. And it happened that I did write ironically about some figure in my blog, and then I needed to get in touch with him for a reportage. Imagine if he had known that I am Eblees.”

(interview with Naji, 2013)

The same applies to Abdel Rahman Moustafa, who used the pseudonym Abdou Pasha in his personal blog to avoid being identified by the public figures he was attacking. Nevertheless, with the growth of social media, it became hard to keep the identity of prominent bloggers secret. Hence, more people knew the real names of Elblees and Abdo Pasha. Later on, blogs became a source of concern for journalists who wanted to keep separate identities for blogging and work, because most of the blogging platforms were now owned or powered by search engines. For example, Google acquired Blogger in 2003 and WordPress in 2008, and Yahoo! bought Tumblr in 2013. This means that searching the name of the journalist online would bring up the results of his personal blogs, something which happened with Moustafa when, in 2012, he was identified as someone who opposed the Muslim Brotherhood following a blog post he wrote which denounced former president, Mohammed Morsi (interview with Moustafa, 2013).

Subjective storytelling was another motivation for journalists to create blogs, such as AbdelMoneim Mahmoud, who wanted to share his experiences of imprisonment after he was put in jail twice during 2006 and 2007 because of his political activism. He told me in an interview, in 2013, “my experience was humanistic, all about the stories of people I met in prison. This type of writing was unlikely to be published in a newspaper, unless I was a public figure”. In general, in the Egyptian and Arab press, social and human-interest stories were absent at that time, because Arab journalists did not see these stories as a ‘route of fame’. They would instead seek to interview famous politicians or cover hardcore stories (Mellor, 2005).

Notably, the key outcome of the interaction between citizen media and mainstream media was changing the agenda-setting of mainstream media by offering information and

reporting news stories not reported elsewhere. These exclusive stories were related to government abuse. Blogs by journo-bloggers managed to reach the point of reshaping the agenda of media establishments, thanks to the fact that most of them achieved the values of news credibility, accuracy and exclusivity. Nagwa Abdel Salam Fahmy (2010) studied the Egyptian bloggers' tools for credibility through an analysis of the popular blog AlWa'y AlMasri الوعي المصري during 2009. She concluded that the usage of photos, footage and links to other news sites supported their news output.

Discussing Fahmy's argument with the participant journo-bloggers, some of them did not see an impact on journalists' blogs on mass media credibility. Mosutafa saw mass media and the blogosphere as "two different worlds", each of them with its audience. Ezzat argued that the credibility of a media outlet or a blog is a personal judgment of individuals, as "for some people, citizen journalists are more credible than mainstream media, while for others, the institution is more credible than the individual".

Effectively, the journo-bloggers used their blogs to bring new topics to light, such as political taboos (Abdel Moneim Mahmoud and Amr Ezzat broke the taboo of criticising the president) and facts that were not exposed by the mainstream media. For instance, Hossam ElHamalawy published content on Egypt's bad human rights record and highlighted the case of systematic torture. Although such topics were also discussed by other bloggers, they lacked the professional background of journalism, and so ElHamalawy intentionally utilised his factual journalistic style to make a persuasive presentation of these news against the regime (interview with ElHamalawy, 2013).

The blogs of the professional journalists provided mainstream media journalists with a new model of media person, one who enjoys a package of skills that includes observing, photography, reporting and following up on their work to keep it up to date (interview with Moustafa, 2013). In addition, this new type of journalist could handle police harassment they received because of their opinions (interview with Mahmoud, 2013). Besides, the popularity of journalists' blogs was alarming to mainstream media journalists and convinced them that their own work conventions needed some innovation. Amr Ezzat and Baraa Asharaf explained to me that the journalists' blogs managed to treat subjects from untraditional angles, thereby making attractive headlines and joining the classical journalistic writing style with creative writing, without losing objectivity. Furthermore, the journo-bloggers were quicker in reporting and putting ideas together in comparison to traditional journalists.

It is worthy of mention that I interviewed Ezzat and Ashraf separately in 2013, and yet they both shared the same view. Their opinion about the need of mainstream media to

innovate may have come from the fact that they were either too far away from or too close to the traditional press journalists; therefore, they were able to evaluate their work. For Ashraf, who has never worked in print media, his start was in online media, where he mostly wrote satirical articles before shifting to broadcast media as a documentary maker and then eventually establishing his own production company. For this reason, he assessed mainstream media from the position of an audience member. By contrast, Ezzat was an engineer before shifting to journalism in 2009. He used to work for the local newspaper *AlBadeel* as a copyeditor, and thus he saw closely what he called “the defects in the journalists’ work”.

To some extent, the point raised by Ashraf and Ezzat was also asserted by Abeer Sa’adi, Board Member of the Egyptian Journalists Syndicate (EJS). In essence, Sa’adi believed that ‘innovation’ was not the realm of individual journalists directed by the rules of media institutions. However, the style of the blogs and their popularity motivated mass media journalists to upgrade their skills. She told me in a personal communication in 2013 that:

“Many journalists were passionate about checking the digital world for news and seeing the discussions and echoes of their published work. Therefore, in 2009, the EJS started to convene workshops on blogging, using online tools for better reporting and mobile photography and video reporting.”

To sum up, the journo-bloggers were the connection between citizen media, represented by blogging, and mainstream media. And, until 2011, their existence as this connection led to changes in the mass media agenda and stimulated traditional journalists to enhance their online media literacy. The popularity of a number of blogs evoked the jealousy of certain journalists who did not know much about citizen media and assumed that bloggers were new competitors. Nonetheless, after the regional and international mainstream media covered the blogging phenomenon, the Egyptian blogosphere was explained and even legitimised for many journalists, who in turn treated these high-profile bloggers as commentators.

Overall in this chapter, I provided essential information on the relationship between citizen media and mainstream media in Egypt before 2011, and I clarified the position of the state on each of these media types. I used primary and secondary resources to frame my research on the reciprocal impact of citizen media and mainstream media on each other

in 2011, 2012 and 2013, which I will cover at length in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight. Next, I move to the research methodology and explain in the following chapter what methods I used, justify my choice, detail how I applied them and discuss the ethical considerations I had when completing this thesis.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Over the last three chapters I have reviewed a range of scholarly works on the role of technology and the state in media organisations. I discussed the notion abstractly in Chapters One and Two, and then I talked more specifically about Egypt at the end of Chapter Two and in Chapter Three. I undertook the literature review by contextualising media conditions in Egypt after the political change in 2011, and I discussed the theorisation of studying the interaction between citizen media and mainstream media to conclude that there is no definitive paradigm for exploring the mutual impacts between media genres, though using a mix of theories should help the researcher explore the influences of each media type on the other.

In this chapter, I explain the overall plan of the research and how it was achieved. I start by describing my approach to inquiry, via primary and secondary resources, and then I detail the applied research methods and contextualise my choice based on circumstances in the field. Subsequently, I clarify the process of data analysis and finish the chapter with the ethics I considered when completing this research.

As I denoted in the introduction, my research aims at exploring the drivers of interactions between citizen media and mainstream media, which I achieve by studying two phenomena: the institutionalisation of citizen media and the employment of citizen journalists in mainstream media. The research addresses the question: what shapes the interactions between citizen media and mainstream media? The answer comes from studying four samples of the Egyptian media in 2011, 2012 and 2013, where I explore how these two phenomena occur and establish the implications of the two phenomena on mainstream media and citizen media.

The thesis relies on the perceptions of citizen journalists on the interaction between their media and mainstream media. Therefore, my primary research methods were all qualitative. In the in-depth interviews and observations in 2013, I interviewed 22 people, which included journo-bloggers, journalists and citizen journalists and one board member of the Egyptian Journalists' Syndicate. The interviews were conducted in a number of ways. Most of them were done face-to-face and some were online, while some participants were interviewed at their workplaces and others in public coffee shops. The data were collected from majority of the interviewees individually and collectively in one focus

group. I set out interviewing guidelines before the start of the data collection phase, by considering the good deal of advice given in the research methods literature⁶.

Moreover, I used observation as a method for researching citizen media institutions. I had a six-week internship at Mosireen Media Collective in 2013, which gave me an opportunity to become a participant observant. I was unable to gain a similar internship at Rassd during the data collection phase, because the Rassd staff preferred to keep themselves together as a close group through fear of misrepresentation. Basically, Rassd was reputed on social networking sites (SNSs) as a media arm of the Muslim Brotherhood, which ruled the country during 2013 through its former member President Mohammad Morsi. Hence, I observed Rassd on my frequent visits to its office over the course of four months. I was able to see the set out of the place, the making of decisions and everything relevant to institutionalisation.

In both Rassd and Mosireem, I clarified that I was an observer of their work, not the people, reminding them by taking field notes overtly in Mosireen and discussing my observations of Rassd with their leaders. Only with a very few participants did I experience the observer effect, whereby their behaviour was influenced by my presence; in fact, this manifested in the form of exaggerating things when they explained them to me, to appear as if they were organised and systematic. However, triangulation enabled me to spot these overstatements and verify the data.

Anonymity was an option for all participants, and I informed them that they had the choice to conceal their names. I was considerate of the safety of the interviewees as well as mine, and I determined not to let their participation in my research cause any harm to them. In our personal communications, I did not carry anything that would reveal my identity as a researcher, because being affiliated with a foreign institution might raise some issues with the public, especially in light of the increasing xenophobia in Egyptian society in 2013. As for the digital communication channels, I used Skype and the Facebook messenger tool to collect data regarding OnTube and Rassd. The participants felt secure using these communication channels and believed that sharing information through them would not endanger them in any way. Moreover, I was keen not to write public blogs or tweets relating to these personal communications.

⁶ See my Interviewing Guide in Appendix5.

1. Research Plan

a. Research Approach

This thesis takes a mixed approach of phenomenology, observational sociology and political economy. It may not belong to classical phenomenology, but in the interviews, I record the accounts of citizen journalists to describe the meaning of being a staff member of mainstream media and establishing independent citizen media outlets. I utilised my past involvement in mainstream media and citizen media to understand the different levels of meaning in citizen media institutions as social settings. I observed and interpreted words and behaviours according to what I knew as norms in mass media and citizen media, and double checked these interpretations with the participants.

Such an approach is classed as transcendental phenomenology, whereby the researcher sets aside their personal experience⁷ of the phenomena and focuses on the descriptions provided by participants about their own experiences. I decided to separate my personal experience as former journalist and citizen journalist from the study of the interaction between mainstream media and citizen media. Instead of using my background to interpret the phenomenon, I drew on the concept of epoché (as called by Husserl) or bracketing (as called by Moustakas), which means taking fresh perspectives on subjects and objects, as if “everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34).

I believe that using my personal experience, represented in my understanding of the norms, served my research, because it gave more depth to the observations. It would have affected my transcendental phenomenological approach if I had used my knowledge before interacting with the research participants, or if it dominated the data they provided. Traditionally, a phenomenological research approach describes rather than explains (Husserl, 1970), i.e. it is “focused on descriptions of what people experience and how it is that they experience what they experience” (Patton, 1990, p. 71). Husserl in the first half of the 20th century, and his contemporaries John Creswell and Clark Moustakas argue for widening the role of the researcher as an interpreter of data instead of a describer. But Creswell (2012) sees that phenomenology should not be regarded merely as descriptive research but as “an interpretive process in which the researcher makes an interpretation of

⁷ Until 2010, I was a participant in both forms of media: I worked in the Egyptian mainstream media and I was also a citizen blogger.

the meaning of the lived experiences” (p.59) instead of being just “a philosophy without presuppositions” (p.58), whose perspective is the investigator’s suspension of all their judgments before studying the phenomena. Creswell’s view proved to be accepted by many researchers, especially recent humanist and feminist researchers who refuse to start by confining their natural attitudes and emphasising the importance of making the researcher visible within the ‘frame’ of the research (Lester, 1999). My research adopts Creswell’s perspective about interpreting the experiences of participants rather than just describing them.

Furthermore, Hurssel (1970) urges phenomenology researchers to set aside their views and experiences before studying a phenomenon, what he calls ‘epoché’. Conversely, Moustakas (1994) also appreciates the personal experience of the researcher and suggests that they should reflect first on the meaning of the experience for themselves, before they start interviewing others, by doing what he calls “establishing the truth of things” (p. 57). He explains epoché as setting aside “... biases and [coming] to a place of readiness to gaze at whatever appears and to remain with that phenomenon until it is understood, until a perceptual closure is realized” (p. 73).

However, Moustakas (1994) urges researchers not to involve their personal experiences in studying phenomena, albeit, at the same time, they should use them to deepen their understanding of the phenomena’ He writes, “I, the experiencing person, remain present. I, as a conscious person, am not set aside”, and “with an open, transcendental consciousness, I carry out the Epoché” (p. 87).

The choice of a phenomenological research approach was supported by the facts that the participants did not have difficulties in being able to express themselves, and I did have the cultural and professional experience that would enable me to interpret their articulation of their ideas. Common problems for participants in phenomenology are embarrassment, communicating in a foreign language, an age gap between them and the researcher and physical damage. However, a challenge that may hinder the application of the phenomenological research approach is the participants’ lack of interest in sharing their experience. In my research design, I did not consider incentives for citizen journalists from whom I wished to collect data. However, I was keen to make their participation interesting, by achieving reciprocal gains, which I detail in the Ethical Consideration section. Plus, interactive communication with the participants proved to be effective in keeping them interested; for instance, my personal communication with them was semi-conversational instead of being a question and answer session. Thus, they became more engaged and welcoming.

A big limitation of phenomenology is that any findings are usually regarded as non-generalisable, because the data are essentially collected from a small number of people. I tried to minimise this issue by having a fair number of participants (22 people, 17 of whom were members and co-founders of citizen media samples). Therefore, I mixed phenomenology with observation to keep the thesis approach *similar* to the phenomenological.

Mixing a phenomenological approach with political-economy is not unusual, because, essentially, critical political-economy does not separate the economy from the political, social and cultural context (Golding & Murdock, 1991). Basically, the political-economy tradition is concerned with material resource, while the critical-political economy focuses on subjective elements. Peter Golding and Graham Murdock began work on their political-economy approach when they were based at the The Leicester Centre for Mass Communication Research, an institution with a significant body of ethnographic and occupational studies. The two scholars were involved in ethnographic research prior developing their political-economy literature.

b. Primary Sources

The primary sources of this research are four citizen media institutions: (1) Rassd, a citizen-sourced online news service which relies on a network of citizen journalists to send news and videos; (2) Mosireen, a media co-operative that provides alternative video coverage to the mainstream media, mainly through a channel on YouTube. It has a range of activities for fundraising and knowledge transfer; (3) the social media department of the AlMasry AlYoun newspaper, which is an Egyptian privately-owned newspaper and (4) OnTube, a television programme produced by the satellite channel ON T.V. (2011-2012). The last sample covers discussions and various types of citizen journalism in the Arab region by hosting citizen journalists on Skype, broadcasting viral videos shot by Arab citizen journalists and digesting topics trending on Twitter in Arab countries.

Sampling was needed, because at the time of completing this research there were increasing numbers of media outlets in both mainstream and citizen media. Thus, a comprehensive study would be very time-consuming and require a team of researchers. In addition, the cases would support “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context” (Yin, 2008). I decided on multiple

cases instead of a single case study, to uncover the full array of perspectives (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 40).

I used convenience and purposive sampling, which means that the selection of the four objects of study was driven by the research objectives. Also, I considered accessibility, especially as the data were collected at a time of political instability in Egypt, which raised the expectation of logistical hurdles. Purposive sampling could be problematic, in terms of being a judgmental sampling strategy and implying the potential bias of the researcher. However, there were a relatively limited number of citizen journalism bodies that would serve as primary data sources, according to the set criteria. Therefore, the purposive sampling strategy had the least potential for bias.

The specific sampling criteria for citizen media institutions were (1) being set up in Egypt; it did not matter if other nationals are working alongside them, (2) being active between 2011 and 2013 and (3) being visible to an audience, which requires a certain level of popularity. For instance, AlMasry AlYom was the most circulated newspaper in Egypt, and Rassd had millions of fans on Facebook and views of its channel on YouTube. (4) Accessibility, because the unstable conditions in Egypt during the time of completing this thesis created some mobility difficulties; hence, travelling outside Cairo would have been time-consuming. For instance, in 2012, many railway services were stopped and highways were very frequently cut-off by protesters. On the other hand, I was born and raised in Cairo, which made me very aware of the city and capable of handling unexpected logistical problems.

At the same time, I developed a framework of variables that would influence the contribution of each case to answer on the research question. These variables were basically as follows. First was the (in)dependency of citizen journalism institution, in that I sought cases associated with the mainstream media and others not involved. The second variable was the variety of media used. I selected cases using a variety of social networking sites, because if I had chosen objects of study that used the same medium, it would limit conclusions on the specificity of this medium. Third was the affiliation of media organisers with professional journalism as a career. The cases were organised according to citizens who were or are professional media makers in mainstream media, and other samples whose organisers had no professional experience in journalism prior to creating their media institutions.

Generally, I preferred to study the more extreme and deviant cases; each of the selected cases had an exclusive privilege or unusual characteristic. Rassd was originally a Facebook group and managed to publish exclusive videos of events before and during the

January 2011 uprising thanks to its vast network of citizen journalists. Mosireen, as a media co-operative, has a one of its kind model of ownership, in that the Egyptian media industry did not experience collective ownership until the foundation of Mosireen in 2012. The social media department at AlMasry AlYoun was the first of its kind on the local media scene, too, and OnTube was the very first television programme in the Egyptian media to present and be sourced by Arab citizen journalism. Also, sample diversity was sought, and Rassd had a completely different approach in dealing with mainstream media workers, owners and policies in comparison to Mosireen.

Another primary source of data was a group of Egyptians who practiced both journalism (as a profession) and citizen journalism. I interviewed them to gather data about the interaction between mainstream media and citizen media before 2011. I selected these journo-bloggers according to the following criteria: (1) being Egyptian, but not necessarily working for the local mainstream media, (2) being a citizen journalist and a professional for more than a year, in order to have enough experience of doing professional and citizen media to reflect on, and (3) being a well-known blogger. I tried to choose participants from both genders and with different political backgrounds. Political diversity was achieved, as I interviewed people from the Muslim Brotherhood, revolutionary socialists, liberal socialists and some who identified themselves as ‘apolitical’. In addition, I interviewed Abeer Sa’di, a board member of the Egyptian Journalists’ Syndicate. The decision to interview her emerged as I was collecting the data.

c. Secondary Resources

During the stages of reaching findings and the write up, I used a range of secondary resources to aid in the understanding, contextualisation and analysis of the collected data. These varied between academic and non-academic literature, in English and Arabic. Mainly, I consulted a list of books and journal articles in the media, sociology, political science and technology disciplines. Besides literature on the research methodology, I checked a number of news stories as well as the Web archives of some newspapers, blogs and media sites.

d. Data Collection

I collected the data for this research in 2013, starting in March and concluding in January 2014. I spent all of this time in Cairo and took almost two months off, one as a break and then three weeks spent in the UK briefing my supervisors on the research progress.

I searched for data that would answer the following questions about the samples:

1. Why they were founded?
2. How they were founded? And how they were institutionalised?
3. How were they administered (work systems, management of everyday work, funding and staffing)?

However, I did not limit my questions to these points, and I questioned the things that I discovered during the data collection process.

Circumstances in the field

Between 2011 and 2013, there was a level of suspicion aimed at foreign groups or institutions at the national level. In 2012, for instance, 43 NGO workers were subjected to a legal trial charged with receiving funds from abroad. The group was made up of different Western nationalities. As noted in the introduction, xenophobia increased during the protests against the former president Hosni Mubarak in 2011, in order to portray the protest as a foreign conspiracy. Particularly during 2011 and 2012, xenophobia had a strong presence in the state-media discourse, so much so that state-owned television aired a social ad urging people not to talk to foreigners and portraying them as spies. Thus, I had concerns as a student in a foreign institution; however, practically, this did not affect my work because I am Egyptian.

The political instability in the field had a direct impact on the schedule of my work as well as communication with the participants. For instance, I was in Egypt in July 2013 when a daily curfew (starting at 7 p.m.) was imposed in Cairo and other cities across the country. Hence, almost half of the year dedicated to the fieldwork was delayed. Nonetheless I used social media to handle the delay, employing the Skype voice chat service and Facebook Messenger to conduct a few interviews.

Generally, the circumstances of Egypt at that time pushed me to make the best use of my time, but there was always the probability that something would happen to hamper

the data collection. In fact, this happened when the co-founders of Rassd, one of the case studies, were arrested after the military coup d'état (July 2013) because of a supposed affiliation with the Muslim Brotherhood. Many staff members left Rassd and it moved to an undercover workplace, to become an undercover media group. In this case, instead of communicating with a co-founder I was in touch with one of the video reporters. Not only was he not as well-informed as the co-founders, but going undercover also made this reporter hesitant to give out information. Thus, the amount of data I collected on this case between July and December 2013 was significantly less than my expectations.

Allocating a lot of time to working in an unstable research field is a necessity, as political instability may have ramifications on the amount of data the research needs. Even if no big incidents occur, a researcher in an unstable society should consider that their mobility is very likely to be affected, and therefore they should build flexibility into their timetable. For instance, during a trip into the field in 2013, I had to reschedule a number of interviews after the participants were unable to get out of their neighbourhoods on time, because the main roads had been diverted or closed by police, due to massive protests.

Procedures of the Fieldwork

The fieldwork in this thesis was done in April 2013 and preceded by a preparation phase that consisted of three steps. The first step involved checking the field and ensuring the final selection of samples. By the end of 2012, I had selected the journo-bloggers, media outlets and initiatives. The list of participants in this thesis is almost the same as the one I made before starting to collect the data, only some names were dropped because they lacked the time or moved abroad. Checking the field before starting data collection helped me structure the sampling criteria and emphasise the convenience approach. Second, I built connections. I paid a visit to *AlMasry AlYoum* to check out the social media department, reconnect with the people whom I knew previously, tell them about my research and gain their initial approval for in-depth interviews. Nevertheless, I used the time I spent in Egypt during this visit to acquire peer feedback from local media workers on my choices of study.

In February 2013, an acquaintance who knew Rassd's co-founders introduced me to Abdullah ElFakharani, the public relations spokesperson, in a Facebook message. I requested a meeting with him to introduce myself and explain my research. The meeting took place at Rassd's premises, which was an opportunity for me to gain a first impression of the place before observing it. I believe that allowing a time gap between building an

impression in the first meeting and the start of observation served the research, as it gave me the opportunity to look for information about the object of study, and to verify my thoughts.

Then, in April 2013, I reconnected with Philipp Rizk, a board member of Mosireen. I expressed to him my interest in taking on an internship with Mosireen, explained my research and clarified what kind of data I would be collecting and the ways reciprocal gain could be achieved. Shortly thereafter, Rizk consulted with members of Mosireen and welcomed me as an intern, especially as they needed someone to help them write in Arabic language and who would be committed to human rights and political activism. Thankfully, I met these requirements. The final step in the preparation for the fieldwork was observing the sample. I started to browse OnTube's YouTube channel and made notes on it to generate questions for the interviews.

2. Research Methods

a. Observation

I used observation as a method of data collection in Mosireen and Rassd, the two independent citizen media institutions I sampled. My objective in observing Rassd and Mosireen was to see how citizen journalists ran their media organisations, which deepened my understanding of the data provided by the interviewees. Thus, I did not observe people's personal behaviour but their work and the way they organised their media. Observing these two samples was helpful in terms of verifying any collected data, in order to develop interview guides (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002) and to check the definitions of any terms the participants used in the interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

In Mosireen, I participated in work in a totally overt manner. The group knew who I was, what I was researching and why I wanted to observe their work. I spent 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. I do not think that spending more time would have made a significant contribution to the amount of data collected, as most of the members did not attend the office on a daily basis, and on some days, two admin staff would be the only people present. On average, I spent 8 hours a week in their office. My main work task was writing descriptions for the videos produced by Mosireen, as well as doing research, a short film treatment and scripting new videos.

These tasks involved me watching Mosireen's production of videos and learning about the circumstances behind them. I was able to make two types of observation: editorial, on how the media product is made in correlation with Mosireen's goals and main principles, and managerial, namely how this media co-operative was run, what changes the members were looking for and how decisions regarding these changes were taken.

Although spending a lot of time with the co-ordinators was very helpful in terms of collecting data, it did occasionally take me away from observation. In other words, a desirable scenario would be going to Mosireen and speaking to Said, Darwish or both, and getting a satisfying amount of data and then leaving the premises. Yet, being really involved with the group and committed to achieving work tasks was a motive to stay in the office. Nevertheless, being an intern at Mosireen helped me to meet many of its members, even if I did not manage to have an equal level of in-depth interviews with all of them.

A common problem for the researcher participant is the conception that individuals' behaviour may change if they know they are being studied – what is known as

the ‘observer effect’, ‘researcher effects’, ‘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 their members to audiences 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 excellence standards do not exist.

Generally, the participants were spontaneous, and only on a very few occasions did I sense a staged performance or exaggeration. The reason for this could have been them feeling empowered; empowerment here denotes the feeling of being appreciated by audiences and therefore being influential. At the time of collecting the data, citizen journalists were highly recognised by the international mainstream media as the architects of political change in 2011. Besides, the increase in social media users, on a local scale, in 2011 and 2012 contributed to their popularity. Either working in mainstream media or independent initiatives, the interviewees were aware of the strengths in their work, and they highlighted them very well instead of exaggerating or describing fictional events.

However, on a very few occasions, certain participants hid failures or overstated achievements. A way to handle the observer effect is by documenting possible researcher effects and ‘red flagging’ them, so that the researcher pays more attention to them after data collection (Patton, 2002). Burgoyne and Hodgson (1984) suggest discussing these researcher effects with the participants, but I did not speak with mine about their reactions, because there was no explicit evidence and I wanted to see what a member of Mosireen would decide to stage, and then link that to her experience of co-establishing an alternative media collective. In fact, some researchers see these effects as beneficial; for instance, Monahan and Fisher (2010) argue that although an informant’s performances could be “staged for or influenced by the observer, [they] often reveal profound truths about social and/or cultural phenomena” (p. 57).

I did manage to be a participant observer at Rassd, because at the time of the data collection its reputation was in decline amongst the political opposition, and many journalists and citizen journalists portrayed it as an affiliated media arm of the Muslim Brotherhood group. This heightened the sensitivity of the staff, making them concerned about how they and their media network would be presented to the outside world. Thus, in Rassd I was more or less an ‘observer as participant’, a person who has a “peripheral membership role” in the institution and is able to “observe and interact closely enough

with members to establish an insider's identity without participating in those activities constituting the core of group membership" (Adler & Adler, 1994, p. 380).

I was not able to observe OnTube because the programme had been suspended for almost a year and a half before the data collection phase started. Furthermore, I did not observe the social media department at *AlMasry AlYoun*, because this media outlet was not citizen-run, which means that the staff were not entitled to intervene in the content, and its main assignment was to circulate pieces on social networking sites without editing them. The formulation of the work system was led by Aya Abdullah, Head of Department, with whom I already had personal communication.

b. Interviews

Interviews have been used by many scholars for media organisation research. Probably the most prolific academic in interviewing media people is Jeremy Tunstall, who has held hundreds of interviews with media people in the UK and the U.S. His books, 'Journalists at Work' (1971) and 'Television Producers' (1993), are evidence on how interviewing can be used effectively to understand news organisations, journalists and their goals.

Collecting data for this research, I interviewed around 25 people, between December 2012 and January 2014, some of whom were interviewed more than once, in order to resume a conversation or to gain clarification on new circumstances that had occurred since the first interview. There are various methodological and epistemological approaches to the question 'how many participants are enough for qualitative research?' Flick (2008) acknowledges outside factors (such as time given to complete a research project, finding and keeping in contact with participants and the institutional demands of ethics committees) and inside determinants (methodological and epistemological considerations that affect the number of participants). Polkinghorne (1989) and Creswell (2012) recommend that researchers interview from five to 25 individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon, while Morse (1994) raises the minimum number to six.

Practically, I did not plan on an exact number of interviewees during the preparation phase, because it may have led to undermining the criteria for participant selection, in order to reach a high number of interviewees. Alternatively, I made two lists of participants whom I needed to meet, and I kept the list open while collecting the data. I made a list of journo-bloggers who met the selection criteria which I set, and a list of interviewees consisting of what I call 'media organisers', namely co-founders and/or

managers of citizen journalism institutions. However, I did not set out to meet all of the co-founders, only those who were close to the work of the selected samples and directed them accordingly.

In the data analysis phase, I found that a few of them did not provide valuable information, because they merely repeated what was explained in interviews with others. A reason for conducting less valuable interviews could be that in the early stages of this research, I was not clear enough about the research question and sometimes lost track of what data I was trying to collect. However, as the research developed, my understanding of the phenomena deepened. Overall, I expected that not all participants would contribute equally to the data, and some of them would have more significant insights than others. Thus, I was open to interviewing a good number of people.

I ended up interviewing (and using the data collected from) 22 people, some of whom were interviewed several times. They are:

1. Ehab ElZelaky, managing editor of *AlMasry AlYoun*⁸.
2. Aya Abdullah, head of the social media department at *AlMasry AlYoun*.
3. AbdelRahman X, a video journalist at Rassd.
4. Adel ElAnsary, editor-in-chief of the newsroom at Rassd.
5. Four anonymous journalists at Rassd (collective interview).
6. Abdullah ElFakharani, co-founder and the public relations officer at Rassd.
7. Mustafa ElNoby, head of video production at Rassd.
8. Mohammad ElOmda, director of Rassd correspondents in the north of Upper Egypt.
9. Lobna Darwish, general co-ordinator and member of Mosireen.
10. Salma Said, general co-ordinator and member of Mosireen.
11. Philipp Rizk, board member of Mosireen.
12. Omar Hamilton, member of Mosireen.
13. Mayada Ghazal, production manager of OnTube programmes at ON T.V.
14. Ramy Radwan, presenter of OnTube programmes at ON T.V.
15. Zeyad Salem, scriptwriter of OnTube programmes at ON T.V.
16. Abeer Sa'di, board member of the Egyptian Syndicate for Journalists⁹.
17. Ahmed Naje, journalist and blogger.
18. Hossam ElHamalawy, journalist and blogger.

⁸ ElZelaky was promoted to the Deputy Editor-in-Chief in 2015.

⁹ Sa'di left her position in 2014.

19. Baraa Ashraf, founder of iFilms Company for Media Production and blogger.
20. Abderrahman Mosutafa, journalist and blogger.
21. Amr Ezzat, journalist and blogger.
22. Abdel Moneim Mahmoud, broadcast journalist and blogger.

Precisely, there were two people whom I had interview through social media. The first was Mayada Ghazal, the producer of OnTube programmes. My personal communication with her was hindered by the curfew, she was short of time and preferred not to conduct the interview on a weekend. Ghazal suggested talking over the phone instead of meeting in person, and I suggested a Skype voice call, as it would be more secure in comparison to mobile phones. Also, Zeyad Salem preferred online communication to meeting in person. When I reached him, he was in London, studying for a Master's degree in communication. I planned to see him there and conduct an interview, and to follow up on online, if needed, but Salem seemed to be very busy and suggested Skype as an alternative.

Prior to the interview with Salem, I assumed that live interaction with the participant would make him open up to the researcher, and so I intended to meet the interviewees in person at least one time before talking online. However, my experiment with Salem and Ghazal showed me that other factors count. I knew Salem before from social media, while it was my very first time talking with Ghazal. Effectively, she was more open to questions than Salem, and my interview with her lasted for a long time and she seemed to be very welcoming. Whereas Salem was less interactive and did not have reservations in answering my questions but was clearly less open than Ghazal. I find this relates to the personal traits of the participants, in that some people are more extroverted than others. Also, there is a possibility that Salem, as a political activist and rights advocate, felt uncomfortable with giving details about this work and background online, though using Skype was his preference.

As I started to collect data and spend time with most of the samples, I 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. Power means having authority to direct the institution. For instance, in Mosireen, the two general co-ordinators were more powerful than many of the co-founders and board members who visited the media collective only a few times per month and had to have things explained to them by the general co-ordinators. The two young ladies who co-ordinated the work for Mosireen were full-time staff and aware of all

its past and future plans. Thus, conducting multiple interviews with each of them was a priority over approaching board members who were less involved in the operation.

I adopted a critical alternative approach in the use of interviews as a research method, which means the interviewees were granted power to argue against the question or object to the terms I might use. Granting power to interviewees started in the 1980s and 1990s, especially in critical research, where scholars ‘research with’ rather than ‘research on’ their interviewees. Before that, the interviewer had all the power. The position of the interviewee could be reflected in the selection of researchers in relation to the words referring to them as ‘subjects’ ‘respondents’ or ‘informants’. In this thesis, I refer to the interviewees as participants. Whatever level of authority is given to the interviewees, the ‘power relation’ is one of the key concepts the researcher should consider when using interviewing as a tool for data collection (Barbour & Schostak, 2005, p. 43).

The participants were deliberately given a voice in this thesis in the stages of designing and writing up. I collected details on working in mainstream media and establishing citizen media outlets from citizen journalists instead of from other sources. For instance, while studying the social media department at *AlMasry AlYoum*, the time I spent interviewing Aya Abdullah, a citizen journalist who led the newspaper, was considerably longer than the time I spent interviewing Ehab ElZelaky, managing editor of the newspaper. Also, I used participant terminology to describe the interviewees (M.Given, 2015). Giving them this role eliminated some of the thesis’s limitations, as the information solicited from an interviewee may be “shaped, to some degree, by the questions they are asked” (Hammersley, 2008, p. 100).

The interviews were semi-structured, and most of them had a conversational style, in which I would engage with the participant by talking about the interactions between citizen media and mainstream media, the institutionalisation of citizen media and the employment of citizen journalists in mainstream media. It was necessary not to make the personal communication completely formal, because a number of participants were not accustomed to being interviewed by a researcher, and this may have affected adversely the amount of data they provided. In addition, I wanted to see the interaction between citizen media and mainstream media through the lens of citizen journalists, and so I wanted them to open up to me. If I had been more formal with them, it would have made it hard for the participants to share information on their personal opinions. Moreover, I knew some of the interviewees beforehand, either from working together before 2010 or being as acquaintances on social media. Therefore, they did not expect formality on my part.

I used a list of questions within these conversations to acquire the precise data I needed, and often I started with a big question (i.e. How do you understand citizen media?). In addition, at the beginning of each interview, the interviewee was asked to express themselves freely, even if they felt they may be drifting away from the question. I did this because I wanted to see what topics they may link to the phenomena. Full details about the interviews are included in the interview guide in the appendices.

Generally, researching media people demands an understanding of the professional culture of journalists and the subculture of citizens. This is not only needed for interpersonal communication, but it also facilitates the design of the whole process of data collection. For instance, learning the work routine of a print media journalist helped me to suggest good times of the day for the interviews with the journo-bloggers and at *AlMasry AlYoum*, when tension and pressure are at their lowest. Also, being conscious of the importance of location for the interview, I interviewed most of the journalists outside their workplaces, because newsrooms are designed to make everybody have eye contact with their colleagues, and this may cause unease for some participants, especially as we were discussing their work in the establishment, and accordingly affect the amount or accuracy of the collected data. However, I did interview those who held senior positions (such as Ehab ElZelaky, managing editor of *AlMasry AlYoum*) in their offices, because they had a private work space.

Generally, personal communication with citizen journalists demands the researcher be patient and persistent in approaching them, as they may make themselves anonymous or not respond to online communication. Approaching citizen journalists may become difficult with the increase of researchers studying them. For instance, by 2008, Egyptian bloggers had become unresponsive to interview requests by researchers, as they were receiving a large number on a regular basis (Faris, 2010).

Therefore, researchers usually use the content analysis of social media to study citizen media, just as a less difficult methodology than communicating with citizen journalists themselves. But relying on content solely does not lead to an accurate understanding of a media organisation. For instance, the two citizen media institutions I studied stated on their websites ‘revolutionary media’, ‘media of the revolution’ and ‘[we] support the revolution’. Although the words were the same, the meanings were not, as each member had his or her own definition of ‘revolution’. The comprehension of these terms explained how financial and editorial practices were shaped in each of these businesses. I was able to see this variation in semantics during personal communication with the citizens. However, if I relied on the content of their online pages, I may have interpreted

‘revolution’, and all the words derived therefrom, as being in agreement with my own understanding or the operational definition of it at the time and location of the study, which would have been inaccurate.

A challenge in researching media organisers is the gap in the literature on the methodology employed to research citizen journalists. There is a huge body of literature on interviews and how they should be conducted and analysed. Some of them address researching certain groups (like the literature about researching researchers, children, traumatised people, etc.) based on age, gender, profession, social or psychological conditions, but they have not yet considered citizen journalists. Thus, I tried various tactics in one interview and observed how they drove the conversation.

After a number of interviews, I was sure that the journalists were naturally good storytellers, and so the best practice was to ask big questions first, then let them tell the story, and then ask more specific questions later. Furthermore, I understood that a career in journalism makes one more curious and prone to asking questions rather than being asked questions, and so I let my interviews be in the form of an interactive chat rather than a question and answer session. I also found that challenging the opinions of citizen journalists made them enthusiastic to explain their work and provide more data. This could be because they are usually critical thinkers, which is proven by their initiative in organising an alternative form of media.

c. Collective Interviews/Focus Group

After collecting a certain amount of data about Rassd, I was surprised to know that these journalists and other colleagues were employed as staff members and not as volunteers. Through interviewing them, I wanted to know the circumstances of their employment, their motives and career ambitions. I conducted a collective interview with four journalists, which took place in the Rassd newsroom during working hours, albeit at a quiet time of the day as suggested by the editor-in-chief. I was introduced to the group by the editor, and I introduced myself and my research before starting the interview, which I moderated myself. The participants were all girls, all fresh graduates or with three years’ experience, and almost all of them had attended the same media school. The participants asked me questions about postgraduate studies on the media, which was a good ice breaker. The focus group activity lasted for around 50 minutes.

My choice of participants was random. I arranged the date and time with the editor and chose the participants from whoever attended the working shift on which we agreed. The random choice of participants was representative of the workers in Rassd, though; for instance, all of them were female, due to the fact that the administration, as an act of protection, preferred to have women working during the daytime and young men on the night shift. The choice of the workplace as a location for the focus group was based on understanding the characteristics of the participants, who would have needed to ask permission from their parents to go outside their work premises and chat with me. Hence, although talking about work outside the workplace is theoretically better, staying in the office was the practical and the right choice in this case, as it saved time and effort for the participants.

The key questions centred on how they had been hired, what they did during their working days, their professional ambitions and whether Rassd seemed to them be a place where they could achieve their ambitions. Listening to the journalists was required in order to learn about their integration as professionals into the environment of citizen journalism. The collective interview was not conducted in the presence of the editor-in-chief, who introduced me and left for his desk in a far corner of the room. In my assessment, being in the workplace and in the same room as the editor did not affect the answers and interactions of the participants, who were critical of the administration at times.

3. Data Documentation

For documentation purposes I used voice recorder, a voice recorder application for Android, which I installed on my mobile phone, a pen and a notebook. At the start of the fieldwork I was keen to keep a record of all the conversations I had, the notes I made and the words I heard. This was achieved to a good extent. Nevertheless, taking written notes sometimes caused stress for the participants, who might have felt that every single word they said was being written down. For a few people, this was distracting. In order to eliminate this issue, I stopped writing and let the participant feel they had my full attention.

At Mosireen, I took field notes publicly many times, which I did on purpose to remind the members of this media collective of my two positions as observer and participant. Also, I was aware that taking written notes all the time would have affected my position as a participant. Thus, I either took notes on my online field notes document while doing a task for my internship, or I kept them in my mind and wrote them down immediately after leaving the premises.

4. Data Analysis

Like most qualitative researchers, data analysis started in the data collection process. The phases of qualitative data analysis suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) are data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing. Creswell (2012) advises the phenomenological researcher analyse specific themes and statements in the collected data, what Patton (1990) describes as a “textural portrayal” of each theme, and then find all possible interpretations. I listened to the recorded interviews and read the field notes. Subsequently, I chronologised each object of study to follow the development of each media outlet/initiative, and highlighted repeated statements and opinions provided by the organisers¹⁰. Afterwards, I started a short data display phase (in April 2013) by visualising the reduced data in the previous phase, by using pens and paper and categorising them as follows:

¹⁰ See Appendices.

a. Samples

The foundation of citizen media institutions, funding, work system and editorial lines.

b. People

Their affiliation with professional journalism (Are they journalists? Do they have a past professional experience in journalism?), their relationship with mainstream media (Do they watch/read it? How do they see their connection with political change? Are they satisfied with the performance of mainstream media?), their motivation for working in the media and career ambitions.

Data under these categories and subcategories offered a starting point from which to draw a picture of how the two phenomena occur (in the experience of the participants) and, eventually, see through them the drivers of interactions between citizen media and mainstream media. In a later stage of the data analysis, I extracted technology, society, media people and the state as the most influential factors in such interactions. I came to a conclusion by placing the analysis in a triangle of these three factors and finding out how they influence each other. Eventually I formed the argument that in an authoritative country like Egypt, where the political regime controls society and the people, the state becomes the focal point of interaction between citizen media and mainstream media. Revisiting the thesis again, I became more precise about the agency of ‘society’ and ‘people’, and so instead I articulated ‘the relationship between the citizen and the state’ and ‘media organisers’.

It was helpful to follow some of the guidelines prepared for analysts by Miller and Crabtree (1999), namely know yourself, your biases and preconceptions, consult others and keep looking for alternative interpretations, know your question, be flexible and exhaust data.

5. Research Validity and Reliability

Validity is the success of the research in finding an answer to its question (internal validity) and then generalising this answer (external validity) (Berg, 2007). Reliability is the possibility of reaching the same findings if the same research were repeated. The validity of data was sought through the triangulation of sources, a technique employed to ensure the comprehension and accuracy of data, by using a range of sources.

Originally, in 1959, the concept of triangulation was suggested by Campbell and Fiske, who applied a multi-trait-multi-method, a mathematical matrix implying the use of several methods to measure psychological traits. In 1966, Webb, Campbell and Schwartz coined the term ‘triangulation’ in their book ‘Unobtrusive Measures’ as a metaphor for using multiple methods for validating the same data and findings of a research. The literature about triangulation started to grow in the late 1980s, after Denzin discussed it in *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods* (1973). He distinguished five types of triangulation, mostly used in social science. The first is data triangulation, where the researcher treats collected data at different times or with different people. The second is investigator triangulation, which relies on multiple researchers collecting and analysing the same dataset. There was also theory triangulation, which means “approaching data with multiple perspectives and hypotheses in mind” (Denzin, 1978, p. 297), and environmental triangulation, i.e. changing the environment in which the study is conducted, as some environmental factors are believed to influence the data, such as location, season or time. Lastly, I used methodological triangulation, also called ‘within-method triangulation’ and ‘between-method triangulation’. It refers to using more than one research method for collecting data from the same sources. The philosophy of methodological triangulation is that “the bias inherent in any particular data source, investigators and particularly method will be cancelled out when used in conjunction with other data sources, investigators, and methods” (Denzin, 1989. p. 14). If the researcher combines quantitative and qualitative methods, this is often called ‘mixed methods’ triangulation.

In this research, I used methodological triangulation by incorporating observation and interviews, as well as data triangulation. I benefited from personal communication with many people at the same institution by comparing the data provided by the participants. Nevertheless, I constantly checked the accuracy of the collected data, sometimes by asking the interviewees themselves for external evidence for their answers, and other times by using other sources. For instance, when one of the co-founders of Rassd

told me about a rise in the credibility of his citizen journalism network, I compared the data he gave to Media Credibility in Egypt (MCE Credibility), a parameter for the credibility of local print newspapers and online media according to 11 criteria set by media academics and professionals.

In triangulation, variations in the data that occur as a result of changing circumstances, sources, methods or researchers is inevitable, but they do not necessarily undermine the validity of the research. Triangulation is used to “study and understand when and why there are differences” (Patton, 2002, p. 331), the advantage being that “each method reveals different aspects of empirical reality; multiple methods of observation must be employed” (p.247). Some researchers, such as Silverman (2001), would raise an ethical question regarding triangulation as a way to double check what the participants said. I find the goal of triangulation is essentially in verifying the understanding of the researcher in relation to the data rather than scepticism about the participants.

6. Ethical considerations

a. The Researcher and Participants' Safety

In general, after the 2011 uprising, Egypt became a relatively unsafe research field, because of political instability, violence and unexpected mobility problems. Besides, as I mentioned in the introduction to the thesis, at the time of collecting data there was increasing xenophobia. Thus, collecting information about Egypt, to submit to a foreign institution, would have been interpreted as spying. Legally, going to Egypt as a researcher or a student in a foreign university or think-tank requires letters of support from a local institution, and if the research embeds polls or surveying, the researcher must obtain the permission of the Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics (CAPM), a governmental body. It is noteworthy that on the CAPM's website there is no mention of a specific or approximate duration for issuing this permission, and so it may take months or even weeks (CAPM, n.d.).

As a native Egyptian, I did not need an entry visa or justification to enter the country. And not using quantitative research methods kept me away from a number of bureaucratic, and probably problematic, procedures. However, my affiliation with a British university would have been misunderstood by some non-participants in the field. I was conscious of the social perception of my activity, because many interviews took place in public places and I did not want to cause problems for myself or the participants. Hence, I intentionally sought not to look like a researcher collecting data, by not using advanced devices (such as an external voice recorder) and not carrying with me any books or documents related to the research (for example, I did not carry around the consent form). In short, I was keen not to use anything that would not overburden my handbag or hold something in my hands, because I thought this would possibly draw attention to me.

I treated the participants' safety as a priority over data collection for the research, and I was very keen to ensure their personal communication with me posed no risk to them. I considered this aim throughout the phases of data collection, analysis and write-up. The four samples functioned overtly and had no confidentiality issue except for Rassd, which had serious problems with the authorities after the coup d'état in July 2013, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, when most of its co-founders were arrested.

After leaving the field, I continued to communicate with AbdelRahman X, a video journalist for Rassd. He, in particular, was more threatened than other people to whom I was talking overseas, because many of his colleagues in Rassd were in jail because of their

media organisation, which is what pushed them to work undercover. In addition, he claimed that the current staff members of Rassd, including himself, were receiving explicit and implicit threats from the authorities. In fact, collecting data about people and media institutions via cyber calls with participants raised my concerns regarding the security of my online communication with some citizen journalists.

Therefore, I planned to consult Mohammed ElGohary and Ramy Raoof, two digital security experts, if the participants requested a highly secure digital communication channel, but this was not needed, as I did not receive any request in this regard. I asked X in person (in December 2013), whether he felt it was safe for him to communicate with me online after my return to the UK. His assessment was:

“It is not dangerous! I am already using the online networking sites in my work and in talking with other people at work.. Hence, if there was any monitoring of my online accounts, it would be ongoing, and what I may be discussing with you is not new to any party which monitors!”

Therefore, we used Facebook Messenger for talks – AbdelRahman X preferred it to Skype, as it allows encrypted messaging. However, I was using this online communication for verification and double checking what was said and what happened in Rassd before the coup d'état and going undercover. I kept what I assessed as sensitive information (such as financial issues) to a later face-to-face interview with X in Cairo. At all times, I was very aware of not putting any pressure on this participant to reveal information that may harm him or the group. Therefore, in every interview with him, I affirmed his right not to respond or to give short and generic answers.

In the write-up, I hid the identity of some participants in Rassd, although when I communicated with them in the field they agreed to be identified. I considered the changing circumstances during and after data collection, and I used my personal assessment of the situation to decide if it would be best to hide their identities. For instance, in the write-up of this thesis, I did not use the names of the four journalists I interviewed in Rassd, all of whom had left after the coup d'état, as I knew from AbdelRahman X. I was not able to reach all the participants in the focus group to ensure their consent to reveal their full names after the change of employer, and so I decided to make them anonymous.

Everyone I interviewed had the option of anonymity or to use pseudonyms, but none of my interviewees requested anonymity, even those whose media work did not have

a legal status, like Mosireen, because the participants believed that they were not anonymous to the security system, and so it made no difference to be named in an academic research. To some extent, data confidentiality affected the process of data collection. As in the case of Rassd, initially, my contact person was Abdullah ElFakharani, a co-founder, who was arrested in August. I had to replace ElFakharani with AbdelRahman X, who was not as informed as ElFakharani.

b. Data protection

Once data provided by a participant are shared publicly online, it is useless trying to delete them. Therefore, I did not blog or tweet about the research. I made clear to the participants how I would use the data they provided, to whom it would be accessible and how I would protect it. I shared data with only my supervisors and a few other people at Birmingham City University (BCU) who offered help in proofreading. The original data files in Arabic were not accessed by anyone except me. Generally, the participants did not care much about how the data they gave me would be stored, or who read them – contextualisation was their main concern.

The collected data were in the format of audio files, handwritten notes and Microsoft Word documents. As I started in the fieldwork phase, I uploaded all the Word documents and audio files to my Google Drive, to make sure they were not damaged or leaked. The notebook for my field notes was kept at my home in Birmingham in a safe place, and I did not carry it around, in case I lost my bag or had any kind of trouble. When I finished the fieldwork and went back to the UK, I made a backup of the data on Google Drive to my laptop and kept it at home, so in my later trips to Egypt, I did not bring it with me. I was careful not to put everything on a portable device (like a memory stick or CD), because it would be easy to lose. Also, as I was using my mobile for audio recording, I made sure not to store the voice tracks on it, and I deleted them after transferring them to the laptop and online storage.

The interpretation of data is an ethical concern to some researchers in humanities, some of whom share work drafts and interviews transcripts with the data sources as a solution. Nevertheless, I did not do that and instead preferred to cut down online communication with the interviewees. Alternatively, I got back to a few of them to ask specific questions or provide statements and then ask them whether they agree with it or

not, without sharing a whole chapter. However, I made sure they knew they could have the full thesis sent to them when it is completed.

c. Neutrality

First, I would like to distinguish between ‘neutrality’ and ‘objectivity’. ‘Neutrality’ involves standing in the middle of two or more different arguments. Being neutral is about highlighting all the positions and arguments. The opposite of neutrality is bias, which involves defending an argument or position over others. Meanwhile, ‘objectivity’ means giving equal explanations to different elements, without supporting or refuting them in any way. In the human sciences, absolute neutrality is unattainable, because all researchers are human beings who are cognitively biased.

However, being objective is achievable. I meant to present the different approaches I received from the interviewees and literature before proceeding to my own argument or expressing agreement with any of them. From the very outset I was clear about my biases as an Egyptian former journalist and citizen journalist. My concerns regarding objectivity grew as one of the objects of study was the product of a television channel for which I had previously worked. Nonetheless, succeeding at defining my preconceptions was an assuring sign that avoiding objectivity was possible.

Being objective was sometimes challenging for me, as a number of the participants were people I knew before this research, and I knew almost all the journo-bloggers beforehand but lost connections when I started my studies in the UK, though I had some acquaintance with them via social media. Thus, it was possible that I might slip into a peer-based chat in which I would give my opinion as equally as the participants, which may influence the data they provided. However, having concerns about not being neutral in an interview was actually a positive thing, because it made me very mindful of maintaining my position as the interviewer and being careful about how much I talked and interacted. Therefore, in order to maintain an objective attitude towards the data, I explained to the participants that I must be neutral and therefore did not support or oppose what they might say. Additionally, I did not rely on my prior knowledge of the participants’ opinions, and I asked them questions that would not lead them or put words in their mouths.

Achieving objectivity was a concern in the data analysis phase, too, as the research was on a subject about which I am passionate. It was also my home country that was being researched, mainstream media was my former career and citizen media was my future

research area as an academic. There was no concrete action I took to avoid this issue, apart from keeping in mind that what I was doing should be objective. I also used discussions with my supervisors to check my level of objectivity.

d. Sensitivity

I sought to learn about the cultural and ideological affiliations of the participants, as well as their career and work experience, in order to contextualise their motivation to be part of the two phenomena I am studying, and to see the impact of their backgrounds on their media organisations. This could have caused a level of sensitivity, as some participants may not have wished to share with me information that they might count as personal. In order to avoid this potential problem, I did not seek any personal information and was precise in asking about careers and civic engagement, and occasionally I would clarify why I was interested in asking such questions. Effectively, my understanding to Egyptian culture, as an Egyptian native, helped me ask such questions about personal life appropriately. In addition, reducing the formality of the interviews helped me collect this type of data.

e. Reciprocal Gain

I was keen to let the participants feel they had received something in return for their contribution to my research, either a material or a moral benefit. At Mosireen, I sought the opportunity to carry out participant observation framed with mutual interest. Hence, I asked the members of this media co-operative to assign me work tasks as an intern, which was beneficial to the two parties. When I finished the field observation I had achieved the following outputs:

- a) A rewrite for a blog post on the Egyptian police torturing children to death.
- b) Descriptive paragraphs in the Arabic language for all published Mosireen videos up to 1st March, 2013.
- c) A treatment for a video report on judicial corruption in Egypt.
- d) Critical notes on the presentation of content on YouTube.
- e) Suggestions for an improvement to the Arabic content of their website.

With *AlMasry AlYoum* and OnTube, my contribution consisted of the morals of recognition and appreciation. They considered my requests for an interview for a PhD thesis an act of appreciation of their work. They interacted with me very well and just wanted to speak about themselves and their work. Meanwhile, with the journalists and journo-bloggers, information was used as currency. I satisfied their curiosity and shared information with them about the academic research, studying in the UK and the literature about citizen media.

f. Consent Forms

The research methods applied in this thesis were all qualitative and entailed interaction with a group (focus group and participant observation) or a conversation with someone (interviews), which is difficult without the other's consent. Plus, it is always better to have proof of such consent, so one can use it in case a participant objects to using the data they provided. Hence, I recorded all the interviews and focus groups, all starting with the phrase 'My first question is...' which proves that the participants were aware they were being interviewed. With Mosireen, there were a number of emails sent between me and the members that prove I was an overt observer of this group.

A signature on a written consent form was solicited from most of the participants¹¹. I used fairly formal language in the consent forms because there was already an established relationship between me and the participants, since I had spent time with them either before or during the time frame of finishing the thesis, and thus there was no need to be formal. Also, for some participants, this would be the first time they had signed a consent form, and so being formal may have put them off or raised some fear. I provided the participants with a form translated into Arabic, in order to make sure they fully understood the content.

Unlike many researchers, I did not carry the consent form with me into the field, because I wanted to have it at the end of the data collection phase, which I knew would last until the end of 2013. As such, I wanted to keep the door open with the participant, in order to get back to them and ask for more data, where necessary. The informed consent forms were sent to participants via email, as I requested their signature after I left the research field. Therefore, the email was the fastest and easiest way to have the form delivered to the participants. The consent forms were sent as an email attachment and the

¹¹ See Appendix 6 for a copy of the consent form in both English and Arabic.

participants were asked to reply online, so their replies came as their names and date of signature, followed by the text of the consent form. The translated form was attached to all emails.

Using a courier service would have been very time-consuming. Moreover, sending a letter from Egypt overseas would cost the participants money, and receiving letters from abroad might cause problems for them. Plus, replying to an email is easier for them than sending a letter overseas, as all the participants use their emails on a daily basis, as their work requires it, and so many of them will login to their email inboxes more than once a day or have their email accounts set up on their smart phones.

Many of the journalists I interviewed in the citizen media network of Rassd left the company after it became an underground group, and as a result they became uncontactable. Also, these participants may not have wished to enter into an online conversation with me about their previous work with Rassd. Moreover, one participant was sent to jail during the time frame of this research, so getting him to sign a form was impossible.

In summary, my study of the interactions between citizen media and mainstream media in Egypt was achieved through two phenomena which formed meeting points for the two media types: the recruitment of citizen journalists in mainstream media, and the institutionalisation of citizen media. As for the limitations of time and capacity, I studied each phenomenon in-depth through two cases. I used four samples, the social media department at *AlMasry AlYoum* and the television programme OnTube as objects of study relating to the employment of citizen journalists in the mass media. Rassd and Mosireen were the other two samples, which represented the organisation of citizen media and its shift from existing in the virtual world to actual reality. My investigation of the interactions between citizen media and mainstream media relied on the use of qualitative research methods, primarily in-depth interviews and observation. I used a phenomenological approach which relies on seeing events through the accounts of citizen journalists, whose data were verified through a number of triangulations.

In the following part of the thesis I move on to my empirical research on the interactions between citizen media and mainstream media. In Chapter Six, I introduce the hiring of citizen journalists in mainstream media through the two samples *AlMasry AlYoum* and OnTube, describe them both through the eyes of citizen journalists working there, explain how they experience working for a newspaper or television station and highlight the implications of the phenomena on mass media and citizen media.

FINDINGS

I. THE EMPLOYMENT OF CITIZEN JOURNALISTS IN THE EGYPTIAN MAINSTREAM MEDIA

In Chapter Four, I argued that a broadly phenomenological approach to researching the employment of citizen journalists in mainstream media, and the institutionalisation of citizen media as it was lived by citizen journalists, provides us with rich insights. In the findings I now lay out in this and the next two chapters, I also demonstrate how a broadly auto-ethnographic exploration of my own personal experience with these phenomena provides an additional level of insight into the data provided by the participants, something Moutakas (1994) calls “transcendental phenomenology.”

In this chapter, I start by presenting the insights of the participants alongside my observations to the research samples. My thesis is about the drivers of the interaction between citizen media and mainstream media. First, we need to understand how the interaction works and then devise a general outlook on the two case studies. This first chapter of my findings focuses on the employment of citizen journalists in some Egyptian media outlets during 2011, 2012 and 2013. I use, by way of example, two samples, namely the social media department (SMD) at *AlMasry AlYoum* (AMAY), a local, privately-owned newspaper, and OnTube, a television programme produced by the Egyptian satellite channel ON T.V. to digest the online video reports of Arab citizen journalists. I argue that the employment of citizen media journalists has led to changes in the management of the two samples and stimulated their journalists to enhance their social media literacy.

The influence of the phenomenon inside mainstream media institutions is represented in respect to certain administrative rules, such as the letting citizen journalists plan their work flow, decide on their working hours and set the technical side of their work. Furthermore, the hiring of citizen journalists by newspapers and television stations pushed these mainstream media outlets to use social networking sites for staff recruitment. Also, these media needed to amend their traditional requirement for editorial members of staff, in order to attract citizen journalists. For instance, a completed B.A. degree and a good command of the classic Arabic language were not among the qualifications of citizen

journalists in AMAY or ON T.V. Besides, the mix, and sometimes collaboration between citizen journalists and journalists in the same newsroom, has encouraged traditional journalists to upgrade their skills in technology and using social media, mostly to track the spread of their work when it is shared online.

The primary source of the data used to explore the recruitment of citizen journalists in mainstream media was in-depth interviews with workers at AMAY and ON T.V. As I have already indicated, the contributions I call on as evidence ranged from spontaneous statements to responses to my specific questions. In the case of *AlMasry AlYoun* I draw on my interactions with Aya Abdullah, head of the social media department, and Ehab ElZelaky, the managing editor. For OnTube, I quote Mayada Ghazal, production manager, Ramy Radwan, presenter, and Zeyad Salem, scriptwriter, along with an interview with Abeer Sa'di, board member of the Egyptian Journalist Syndicate (EJS). I connect these interview sources with the websites of the two samples, specific news stories, NGO reports and scholarly secondary resources.

This chapter is structured to address three subsequent questions: How did the phenomenon occur? How is it experienced by citizen journalists? And what has it led to? I start by introducing the two newsrooms where the citizen journalists were hired, and subsequently I explain how the phenomenon was experienced by the citizen journalists and use the data collected from my personal communication with them to clarify their motivations for working in mainstream media, their perceptions of the tasks they are assigned, the work problems they have, their ambitions and their relationships with their journalist workmates. Lastly, I underline the implications of employing citizen journalists in AMAY and ON T.V on the interactions between citizen media and mainstream media.

1- How Citizen Journalists are employed by Mainstream Media

In this section, I clarify the process of employing citizen journalists in the mass media before proceeding to how they live this experience and then analysing its outcomes. I use the two samples of *AlMasry AlYoum* (AMAY) and ON T.V. Essentially, a number of citizen journalists were hired by these two media outlets to be part of the social media department (SMD) in AMAY and at OnTube.

To understand fully how citizen journalists joined AMAY and ON T.V., I first look at when and why these media outlets were established, their owners and their editorial lines. Subsequently, I describe the establishment of the social media department (SMD) in AMAY and the production of OnTube, the roles/vision for each one and the way in which they operate.

a. The social media department at *AlMasry AlYoum* (SMD)

AlMasry AlYoum المصري اليوم (translates into *The Egyptian Today*) has one of the highest circulations of any newspaper in Egypt. In 2012, it commanded 61 per cent of the Egyptian newspaper readership, according to the Dubai Press Club Report (2013). It was founded in 2004 by Salah Diab, an Egyptian businessman whose grandfather, Tawfik Diab, was one of Egypt's most renowned publishers in the 1930s and 1940s. AMAY is owned by shareholders, whose identities are not public, though Diab has been presented in the media and public events as the major shareholder.

This newspaper was granted a publishing permit in 2002, and it took it two years to publish its first issue. The launch of AMAY coincided with the formation of the Kefaya Movement, a coalition of leftists, Islamists and different opposition figures who tended to protest against the regime of Hosni Mubarak and denounce the potential inheritance of power by his son, Gamal, which could be seen as an attempt at cosmetic reform to the political regime. More importantly, the foundation of AMAY heralded the start of the private press. In the 'About *AlMasry AlYoum*' page on its portal, AMAY is introduced as an "Egyptian independent media corporation." Salah Diab, the founder, explained to *AlSharq AlAwsat* newspaper: "We launched the newspaper as an independent newspaper, not as an opposition one" (Hatita, 2013).

There is evidence that AMAY was the most likely newspaper to quote or cite 'average' citizens in the Mubarak era. This suggests that AMAY was a media outlet

through which citizens enjoyed the advantage of getting closer to what they wanted to read and receiving more updates about domestic news. A content analysis by ElMasry (2012) of three Egyptian newspapers, between July and December 2008, found that AMAY was quoted or paraphrased most frequently by Egyptian citizens. It was also rated the second newspaper in terms of its depiction of average citizens in photographs, with 23 per cent of photographs featuring this cohort. In Cooper's study (2008) the principal sources of domestic stories in AMAY were members of the Egyptian public (52 per cent), with officials counting for considerably less representation (39 per cent). However, the newspaper relied more heavily on government sources for front-page articles. The establishment of the social media department (SMD) in AMAY is linked to the launch of its website (*AlMasry AlYoum.com*), which went online in 2004 as a digital copy of the paper, without any additional content. For ElZelaky, "the AMAY website started as a soft copy of the print edition, so it was a promotional device for the newspaper intended to increase its circulation" (interview with ElZelaky, 2013). From 2007 onwards, readers were allowed to comment on the AMAY website, and shortly afterwards, in 2008, the online copy was turned into a news portal, which marked an initial move towards media sociability, especially since it was followed by the recruitment of the prominent blogger Nora Younis, who led the news portal. Shortly thereafter, more high-profile journo-bloggers were hired, such as Hossam ElHamalawy, Omar ElHady, Amr Ezzat, Ahmed ElDeriny and Ahmed Samir. Some of these journo-bloggers were full-time staff, and others were invited to contribute to the AMAY portal with their opinion articles.

In order to strengthen its presence on social networking sites, AMAY hired staff in 2009 and gave them the title 'web community manager'. Not all of these new workers were bloggers, as some were just users of online social networks: "In fact, the web community managers were the gatekeepers, whose job was selecting content which matched the editorial policy of AMAY, and to generate ideas and topics for new stories or features to be run by the journalists" (interview with ElZelaky, 2013).

In 2009, the production of the website was turned into an independent department with its own staff and content, and so the web community managers became part of the AMAY portal. In 2012, the social media department (SMD) was detached from the AMAY portal. According to Abdullah, the mission of the SMD was to maintain official AMAY accounts on social media networks, particularly Twitter, YouTube, Soundcloud, Google+ and its Facebook page. The paper had a main Facebook page, plus other, separate

pages for each section of AMAY, all of which were updated using the Rich Site Summary (RSS) technique¹² (interview with Abdullah, 2013).

The SMD is located in one corner of the massive newsroom at AMAY. The significance of this location could be that the administration of the newspaper had a real ambition to stimulate the interaction between traditional and citizen journalists. However, in practice, the citizens and journalists within AMAY do not interact often on a professional level. The working citizen journalists in SMD do not make changes to media content, and their job is only to promote it on social networking sites. Aya Abdullah, the head of the SMD, told me that the content produced by AMAY journalists is “material we circulate and spread through social media. We [the staff of the SMD] cannot edit this content, because we are not entitled to do that, and we are not qualified for editing.” She explained that “most of us lack the basic journalistic skills; myself, I do not write proper [classic] Arabic and have made many grammatical mistakes, so I’m not at all in a position to edit the work of professional journalists.”

Hence, the SMD mediates a constructed interaction between AMAY and its audience, because AMAY is not present on social media as a human user that should blend in with a network. For instance, its Twitter account does not reply to followers but simply broadcasts content, almost in the same way as its print edition. In the interviews it was apparent that citizen journalists in SMD regarded AMAY’s accounts on social network sites as “the face of an establishment; thus, it should maintain a similar tone to what it uses in its publications” (Abdullah, 2013).

However, following the augmentation of the numbers of social media users in Egypt after 2011, and the increasing popularity of AMAY on social networking sites, citizen journalists in the SMD were encouraged to design new social media services, which led to further interactions with its audience. For instance, in 2012, the SMD started ‘Twitter Debates’, a Twitter activity in which a public figure is announced by AMAY at a fixed time, and users are then invited to tweet them their questions, marking these questions with a certain hashtag. Aya Abdullah, the head of SMD, then puts these questions to the guest on behalf of the users and live tweets the answers. AMAY used to advertise Twitter Debates in its print edition, which indicates the recognition of social media audiences and a desire to widen this demographic. The state-run newspaper

¹² This means that web pages updated by RSS are automatically fed by the headlines of the updates in AMAY’s portal.

AlAhrām, under the name ‘Ask AlAhrām’, later copied such a service: “To be copied by the oldest newspaper in the country was evidence of AMAY’s pioneering role in adopting social media and interacting with its audience” (interview with Abdullah, 2013).

The fact that AMAY was introduced to social network sites as a promotion channel to advertise its name, rather than as a means of communicating with audiences, made the newspaper’s administration’s greatest interest viewership statistics (interviews with Abdullah, 2013 & with ElZelaky, 2013). In fact, AMAY was introduced to social network sites as a promotion channel to advertise its name, rather than as a means of communicating with audiences. Therefore, the newspaper’s administration had a great interest in the viewership statistics. The SMD staff were concerned with viewership, too, especially the details of viewers; for instance, they would use Facebook Insights, a feature embedded in Facebook to enable administrators of pages to acquire usage analytics, reports on what was being viewed and peak reading times. They looked for statistical and analytical information on the behaviour and consumption habits of their audience on social media, in order to shape their presentation of content. SMD staff members also considered the preferences of social media users and used them to shape their work conventions: “For example, we found that on Facebook people seemed more enthusiastic to interact with posts which included a photo; thus, we now consider adding photos to the content, even if it is not a story,” said Abdullah in a personal communication with me in 2013.

Effectively, the work system of the SMD was formed in accordance with viewership analytics. The department had three work shifts a day, starting at 9 am until 11pm, but in an emergency the later shift may run until 1 am. These working times were decided according to the interaction of audiences on social network sites, with the peak time being from 1 pm to 10 pm, while the lowest interactions were usually from 7 am to 11 am. On every shift the staff share opinion articles and stories, and then news stories continue to be published as they are in the print and Web editions, with an update to social networking sites every 20 minutes (interview with Abdullah, 2013).

Also, citizen journalists in AMAY read the comments and tweets that address or mention their establishment, in order to understand how the content they circulate is being received by the audience. Aya Abdullah confirms that she and her team have learned lessons from reading these comments,

“One of these lessons is that many Facebook users consume the story by reading only the headline, lead and the photo. We could see

that, because we had a story about a woman that was about to throw herself from the balcony when she discovered a thief at home. People's comments on the story on AMAY's Facebook page were about her suicide; they discussed it as if it had happened, while it had not, so obviously they did not read the full story."

Later on, the SMD was assigned to manage the newspaper's citizen media projects, such as *Sharek* شارك (Participate) and Checkdesk. It was described on its website as 'a new window on new media provided by AMAY'. This project went online in 2013 with the motto أنت من تصنع الحدث (You are the news-maker). The newspaper would ask a question or suggest a subject and then invite readers to add their comments, supported with videos and pictures. *Sharek* had been advertised on the AMAY portal and enabled visitors to suggest campaigns and make comments if first registered as a user. Checkdesk, meanwhile, was 'an open-source application designed to enable open and participatory investigative journalism for professional newsrooms in the Arab region.' AMAY started to use it in 2012, to "gather citizen media reports, YouTube videos, tweets, blog posts and to annotate citizen media reports with fact-checking footnotes."

b. OnTube Television Programme

While the start of AMAY coincided with calls for political reform, the launch of ON T.V., on October 2008, happened amidst a state of confrontation between the citizens and the political regime. April 2008 witnessed the Mahalla Uprising, a massive protest in a city in the Nile Delta, where workers at the biggest textile mill in the Middle East sought a wage increase and made other economic demands.

ON T.V. describes itself on its official Facebook page as:

"[...] a liberal channel that focuses on reviving the Egyptian identity and the values of citizenship, freedom, equality, modernization, rationality and expresses all these values through its slogan, 'Stay In The Light'. The channel's objective is to spread liberalism and revive the Egyptian identity that was in Egypt before the 1952 revolution."

Although ON T.V. aims at reviving the Egyptian identity, as mentioned on its websites and in accounts on social media, it uses the English language only to introduce itself on these sites, alongside the classic Arabic on its official website. This also suggests that it is

attempting to address a certain social class, specifically the middle-class, whose members can read English well.

This television station is owned by Naguib Sawiris, the second-richest man in Egypt, with a fortune that Forbes estimates at \$2.7 billion (2014). The Sawiris family have controlling interests in various investment sectors. At the end of 2012, ON T.V. was sold to the Tunisian businessman Tarek Ben Ammar, the owner of the film production and distribution company Quinta and the popular Tunisian Satellite channel Nesma T.V. Ben Ammar said it was “impossible” for him to change the editorial policies of ON T.V., and he made no secret of his plans to create a regional media empire that would challenge the domination of Gulf money in the Arab media landscape (ربط مباشر مع السيد طارق بن عمار) Live- Tarek Ben Ammar, 2012) .

ON T.V. was not a popular channel before 2011, but during the uprising it provided more than 300 hours of live coverage of the squares where the protests were taking place. This made its website number 12 in the list of the most visited websites during the 11 days of the protests, according to ON T.V. (Anon., 2011). When working under the rule of the Superior Council for Armed Forces (February 2011-June 2012), ON T.V. avoided criticism of this military council and practiced certain forms of censorship on its popular talk shows. When the Muslim Brotherhood backed Mohammed Morsi for election as president, ON T.V. covered every protest against him. And after the military coup d'état on 1st July 2013, the influence of the connection between media owners and the state was obvious¹³. It even branded them ‘terrorists’ and used the slogan ‘Egypt Fighting Terrorism’ on its screen during broadcasts, which was the same tactic state-owned television had employed to justify the crackdown on anti-coup rallies that took place.

The first episode of OnTube was aired on September 2011. It focused on Arabic language video content that had gone viral on the internet. The programme name and logo are a twist on the name of the popular social network YouTube, “because it came out in line with a large increase in the usage of social network sites in Egypt; thus, the theme of social media was seen by the administration of ON T.V. as appealing to audiences, plus the content of OnTube relied on YouTube” (interview with Ghazal, 2013). At first, the administration was not clear on which category it should fit into, because it was of a new nature. The initial plan for this programme, which was suggested by the ON T.V. administration, was to broadcast the viral content of YouTube. Categorisation was

¹³ I explained this in the background information provided in the introduction.

important for setting the broadcast plan and budget. Eventually, it was categorised as ‘entertainment content’ (interview with Salem, 2014).

The programme targeted those who had heard about ‘social media’ and ‘activists’ who were mostly connected to the 25th January revolution and influenced public opinion, a subject covered by mainstream media (interviews with Ghazal, 2013, Radwan, 2013 & Salem, 2014). OnTube brought the content generated on social media directly to an audience who were digitally excluded, and this content was displayed on screen as it had appeared on social network sites. Therefore, the audience could see and hear exactly what an activist had said, instead of the interpreted, paraphrased version often offered by mainstream media. At the time, “the target audience expanded to include young people and social media users who may not have the time to navigate the Web” (interview with Radwan, 2013).

OnTube was aired on a channel for live broadcast called ON T.V., live at 6.30 pm daily and for a duration of 20 minutes. The programme used to be run every day except Friday, which is the weekend in Egypt, and went off air during the holy month of Ramadan. The content mainly featured videos which had gone viral on YouTube, and also a digest of the hot topics of discussion on social network sites. The scale of coverage was the Arab world, so all Arab countries would be covered in the programme (interview with Ghazal 2013 & Salem, 2014). Zeyad Salem, the scriptwriter of OnTube, believed the programme “held a news value on the regional scale, since it screened videos from Syria and Bahrain when the protests broke out there in 2011 and 2012, and which were under-covered in the Egyptian local media” (interview with Salem, 2014). Also, it brought Arab citizen media figures to the television screen, which was seen as empowering (interview with Ghazal, 2013), and “screened videos of theatre plays and music; it provided an opportunity for independent artists to reach and connect with new audiences” (interview with Salem, 2014).

The content of each show was left to the crew to compile according to ON T.V.’s rough guidelines. In 2012, as the viewership of the programme increased, it was extended to 50 minutes of daily live broadcast from 7:00 pm, and shortly before its suspension it was granted another extension to 80 minutes. The programme as an 80-minute show consisted of the following segments: viral and exclusive videos from YouTube (30 minutes), video interviews via Skype or Google Hangouts (30 minutes) and a video report

from the social media room/department of an Egyptian newsroom (20 minutes) (interview with Ghazal, 2013).

The OnTube team used to use the production studios of ON T.V. at Media Production City, like all the other shows produced by this television station. Work on each episode used to start after the broadcast of the previous one, with a meeting to evaluate work and plans for the next day. The crew would start work each morning, acting on the plan from the previous day. They would watch videos, pick tweets and blogs, contact guests, prepare interviews, script the episode, edit it and then go on air (interviews with Ghazal, 2013 & Salem, 2014). There were two citizen journalists among the small team among the four-member teamwork, namely Zeyad Salem and Islam ElQady, while Radwan was a professional mid-career presenter and Ghazal an early-career producer. On any given day of the week, one team member would have one day off on a rotating basis.

Unlike AMAY, OnTube's crew used social network sites as communication tools. Zeyad Salem and his colleagues spoke with the programme's fans on Facebook, gained their feedback and received their contributions. OnTube had a Facebook page, on which the recordings of episodes were shared and users were invited to contribute by recommending content. There was not a Twitter account for the programme itself, mainly because "one more team member would have been needed to maintain it" (interview with Ghazal, 2013).

The programme lasted for 18 months, which indicates a good level of satisfaction with its performance and development on the part of the administration. However, it did not bring in satisfactory advertising revenue, and so it was suspended. Overall, openness to citizen media had the minimal potential to cause losses, which put forward the idea that being different could be profitable. Meanwhile, OnTube workers measured the programme's success through its live viewership, the views of its episodes online, interactions with its episodes uploaded to YouTube and peer feedback (interview with Ghazal, 2013, Radwan, 2013& Salem, 2014).

Half of the crew of OnTube continued to work for ON T.V. Radwan presented a morning show, but a year later he left the station. Salem joined the team of the popular talk show *Baladna Bil-Masry* بلدنا بالمصري (Our Home with an Egyptian Flavour), before it was stopped in 2013, and, later on, left the country. Ghazal left ON T.V. to become social media integration producer at AlHurra Television.

2- How Citizen Journalists Lived the Experience of being Employed in the Mainstream Media

I have introduced the two samples and described how the social media department in *AlMasry AlYoum* (SMD) and OnTube were founded, as well as the way they operated. Now I move from the position of an external researcher describing the phenomenon to the account of a citizen journalist who lived it. Therefore, through the quotes of my interviewees, I explain their motives for working in the mainstream media industry, how they regard their jobs, how they interact with their colleague journalists and what make up their professional ambitions. In this section, I focus on data collected from Zeyad Salem, scriptwriter for OnTube, and Aya Abdullah, head of the SMD, because they are citizen journalists who lived the experience.

The two citizen journalists I interviewed were in their twenties; Abdullah was 24 and Salem 27 years old. Neither Abdullah nor Salem had studied journalism. Abdullah graduated from the Faculty of Commerce, which she thought was close to her job in AMAY, “because I studied marketing and administration at the university, and I use them in my work.” Salem graduated from the dentistry school at the University of Alexandria; originally, he wanted to study journalism, but his family pressured him into becoming a dentist.

Abdullah felt privileged to get a job without going through the processes of vacancy searching, applications and waiting ages to settle for a job. She was chosen by AMAY in 2012 when Fathy Abou Hatab, the former head of the Web department, observed her activity on Twitter and the increasing number of followers she had collected. Abdullah accepted the job: “I was a student still, but working in a leading newspaper, gaining experience and getting a salary were benefits that I could not reject, and I decided to combine study and work.” She added:

“I was nervous at the beginning. I made it clear to myself and to Abou Hatab that I was not a journalist and did not have the required skills for such a job, but he assured me that I was not going to be that... I was then curious to see why a newspaper would hire me and what kind of job I was there to do.”

Abdullah’s colleagues in the SMD were hired in a similar way. When a new staff member was needed she would think of young and popular Twitter users, observe their tweets to

check their interests and the frequency of using social media and then select one of them in order to offer them the job.

This is also how Zeyad Salem joined the company. Mayada Ghazal, the producer of OnTube, contacted him on Twitter, then on the phone and offered the job. Although Ghazal clarified the job tasks, he was curious at the start of his job, like Abdullah, because “this was my first time seeing the backstage areas of the broadcast media,” adding “I was very enthusiastic, too. Ghazal suggested that I work with the team for a week and see if I like the job and feel confident about taking it.” Naturally, he decided to continue working. A motivation of Salem as a citizen journalist to work in mainstream media was gaining social recognition for being a good writer. He told me:

“I think I am good writer, and I wanted to graduate from a journalism school to prove I am. After becoming a dentist I continued to write and won prizes in writing and created a personal blog, where I published my poems and articles.”

(interview with Salem, 2014)

Working in the media was a further validation of his writing talent. Clearly, Salem did not distinguish between creative writing and journalistic reporting, which also made him think that “working in the media satisfies my writing passion.”

When I asked Salem why Ghazal chose a dentist for a job as a citizen journalist, his answer was quick and confident: “Because of my activism.” In 2011, Salem was making videos for the *No Military Trials for Civilians*, an activist group and media campaign launched in 2011 to call for the release of civilians who were sentenced by military courts under the rule of the Superior Council of Armed Forces. Salem’s work for human rights was voluntary; however, he thinks this work helped him to start his career, as it garnered him more popularity on social media, where the videos were circulated, and this is what encouraged Ghazal, the OnTube producer, to select him for the job.

Spreading the word of activism through mass media channels was motivation for Salem to work in the broadcast media, i.e. “a way to spread the word about activism work and the ideas of the 25th January revolution,” as he told me. Salem understood the limited outreach of social networking sites, as “there are many more people on the street in comparison to those who are on Twitter.” He believed that internet users were mostly

young people, while television was for everyone. In addition, for older generations, the television held more credibility than social networking sites.

In fact, statistical data support Salem's assessment of the usability and credibility of both media. Television was rated (by a sample of Cairo residents) as the most credible source of political news in Egypt in a study conducted by Naila Hamdy in 2013: "Detailed results indicate that respondents rated the credibility of private television as slightly higher than that of state television" (Hamdy, 2013). Furthermore, in 2014, people between 15 and 29 years old represented 67 per cent of the total Arab users of social media¹⁴.

Aya Abullah, head of the SMD, did not make any link between her career and her activity on social media, stating "I am not an activist, and I should not use the channels of the newspaper to promote anything except the content agreed with the editors." I asked her if she had changed her behaviour on social media after taking her current job: "No! I know people normally are careful with what they write online after they work for a media outlet, but nobody has asked me to do so, and my writings are mostly funny and not political, so there's nothing to change."

The originality of the phenomenon (of citizen journalists being members of staff in mainstream media) stimulated citizen journalists to search for tools they could apply to improve their performance. So, while excellence in traditional journalism is gained through education, instruction and experience, being the first generation of citizen journalists in mass media required self-learning. Abdullah pointed out this notion:

"Journalists ask their editors questions about work, and they will find many experienced journalists to give them feedback and advice. But with us, there is nobody who is more experienced; therefore, we are always in need of finding the answers to questions that arise as we work."

In both *AlMasry AlYoum* and ON T.V., citizen journalists seemed to build a friendly working sphere for themselves, something that was facilitated by the fact that they all belonged to the same age group and some of them may even have been friends before working together, which boosted a peer-learning culture. In addition, it made the working system flow smoothly.

¹⁴ Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government, 2014. "Citizen Engagement and Public Services in the Arab World: The Potential of Social Media". 6th Edition. (<http://www.go-gulf.ae/blog/social-media-middle-east/>).

What Salem liked most about his job was his sense of belonging to the content they digested on OnTube, which he clarified as follows: “We work on material regarding what we say in our lives through social networking sites. I am part of the content, because I am a user of these sites” (interview with Salem, 2014). This belonging diminished the distance between him and his work. Thus, from a traditional journalistic perspective, Salem was not professional, as he was part of what he reported, and he was not in a profession but just living part of his life in the workplace. The accounts of Salem and Abdullallah on social networking sites reflect this notion as well, as both of them used their personal Twitter accounts for promoting new services on the newspaper and to invite guest citizen journalists onto the programme.

The abolishment of such distance between Salem and his job explains why he had some issues with the head of newsroom media at ON T.V., who used to be a print journalist before shifting to the broadcast media: “He thinks I am not someone who actually works; he just thinks I come to copy some content from the internet, call my friends on the phone and invite them as guests on the programme”.

The journalists at ON T.V. had a perception of Salem’s job similar to that of the head of the newsroom. However, they expressed it in a friendly manner. In their social interactions with their workmates, most of the traditional journalists treated the social-media workers as IT specialists rather than journalists. Mayada Ghazal, the OnTube producer, told me that she and the crew of the programme were known among their colleagues as the ‘internet folks’ الناس بتوع الإنترنت , their office/ meeting room was called ‘the cyber cafe’ السايبر and on some occasions journalists called on them when they needed IT help. Similarly, at AMAY, the SMD staff were called the ‘social media people’ الناس بتوع السوشيال ميديا (interview with Abdullah, 2013).

The two citizen journalists affirmed that they were never offended by being called ‘internet folks’, simply because they did not count themselves as journalists. In other words, the participants I met at AMAY and OnTube did not identify themselves as journalists, and so they were not upset about not being labelled in such a manner. This self-recognition as ‘not a journalist’ was formed according to the understanding of these citizens of the nature of journalism as the culmination of a set of reporting and interviewing skills and the ethics of neutrality. For Salem, “journalism is about news gathering, which I do not do. And journalism is about objectivity and drawing a line between one’s affiliations and their work, but I am not objective, and I’m incapable of

drawing that line” (interview with Salem, 2014). Abdullah, too, negated being a journalist: “I definitely am not a journalist. I make the ready-made content more visible online, or stimulate audiences to generate content, but I never make content by myself – you can call me a ‘marketer’” (interview with Abdullah, 2013). The fact that the participants of citizen journalists working for mainstream media share the same definition of being a journalist may reflect an agreement in the local mainstream media that journalism is a profession, which is mainly constituted by what is provided by citizen journalists.

However, traditional news gathering and text-based content are not the sole territory of journalists, as there are also press photographers and cameramen. However, they do not deny or reject being journalists. On the contrary, photographers in the press often believe they are media practitioners, and many of them use the title ‘photo-journalist’ in their biographies. Meanwhile, there is as yet no professional title to indicate a citizen journalist who has been hired by a media outlet.

Not identifying as journalists influences the self-development plans of citizen journalists. For instance, Abdullah was less concerned with her writing skills and was thinking of herself in the future working in a corporation, albeit not necessarily a media corporation. However, Salem had a different vision of his career. At the time of interviewing him in early 2014, he told me he was keen to “continue being a media person, without becoming a traditional journalist,” explaining that he would be “using the outreach of mainstream media to broadcast messages of the revolution, without being either neutral or objective” and have a “positive bias on the revolutions.” Salem was sure that he could achieve his goals because of the existence of what he called “revolutionary media,” meaning mass media where the message of protest is not censored.

Abdullah told me if she left AMAY, it would be for a corporation, though not necessarily a media corporation. At the time of completing this thesis, Abdullah was still working for AMAY, but Salem had left for the United Kingdom, where he was studying for a Master’s degree in multimedia journalism.

3- The Implications of Mainstream Media Recruiting Citizen Journalists

I have explained how the participants lived the experience of employment in the mainstream media, using the data collected from personal communications with Aya Abdullah, the head of the social media department (SMD) at *AlMasry AlYoum* newspaper (AMAY), and Zeyad Salem, the scriptwriter for OnTube. I introduced their educational background, age, motivations for working in the mass media and described their work environment based on their statements. Also, I used their quotes to explain how they regard their roles in their workplace, and the influence of the opinions of their journalist colleagues on the subject. I concluded by linking the self-perception of their jobs to the ambitions they had for career development.

In this section I track the implications of the phenomenon on the interaction between citizen media and mainstream media. As I mentioned in the introduction to the research, this phenomenon is a crossing point for the two media types; therefore, studying it should help in understanding the mutual effects of each of these media types on the other. I now answer the question: How does the employment of citizen journalists in mass media outlets influence both citizen media and mainstream media?

Generally, the foundation of the social media department (SMD) at *AlMasry AlYoum* and the production of OnTube reveal two facts about citizen media and mainstream media convergence. First, there is evidence that the confluence of these two media types prospered when the facilitators were not traditional journalists. There were no indications in my research that traditional journalists at the time were social media-illiterate, or even that they were less knowledgeable about social media than citizen journalists. However, this argument is supported by the changing content of training workshops for journalists from 2009. Abeer Sa'adi, Board Member of the Egyptian Journalists Syndicate (EJS), told me:

“Journalists were passionate about checking the digital world for news and seeing the discussions and echoes of their published work. After 2011 , we directed the passion of the internet and took a step further in such training. We teach them to make infographics, carry out surveys and train verify news items.”

(interview with Sa'adi, 2013)

The relative role of citizen journalists and traditional journalists in this converged media sphere is also supported by the fact that at ON T.V. the two citizen journalists, Zeyad Salem and Islam ElQady, were brought in after the perceived shortcomings of traditional journalists who were assigned the job before them (interview with Ghazal, 2013). Furthermore, citizen journalists at both sample organisations were consistently enthusiastic about converging the content of mainstream media and citizen media, especially for initiatives which optimised the outreach potential of the user-generated content (UGC) shared on social networking sites,. For Zeyad Salem, for instance, the dissemination of content related to citizen media coverage of political events was a way of raising political awareness amongst its participants.

Here, I stop to see in what ways the process I called ‘interaction’ embeds media convergence. In fact, both OnTube and AMAY supported cultural convergence, what Jenkins (2001) the process of giving average person the tools and knowledge to annotate, archive and recirculate content a form of cultural convergence, this is different from participatory media, as in the latter the user creates media content that becomes integrated into the product of the journalist, while the cultural convergence is only about the content migration between mediums. We find that OnTube encouraged its audience to share their video storied, while AMAY did more through its social media project Checkdesk and Sharek.

Obviously, there was digital convergence between the media of each of AMAY and OnTube. The two samples digitised all their content, the text and images, such digitalisation depended on transforming the content to several types, for example one article could be turned into a tweet with a hyperlink to the full text, a post on Facebook and a track on Soundcloud. ON T.V digital convergence was restricted to online streaming and sharing content online, the content did not transform, videos are uploaded to the channels’ account on Youtube as videos, and the script is copied to the video description field on Youtube.

Also, there was a textual convergence or a promulgating the content of citizen media through the broadcast media. Achieving this type of convergence, the citizen journalists had obstacles, especially in terms of the media ethics of presenting citizen media reports through broadcast media. For instance, OnTube broadcast citizens’ coverage of protests and killings included, in many cases, graphic images. This formed a challenge for editorial staff and was an ethical concern for OnTube’s crew, because cutting or editing

some of the content made by a third party (a citizen journalist), without their consent, may not be acceptable to the original content creator. Instead, OnTube selected the non-graphic parts of the videos for broadcast (interviews with Ghazal 2013, Salem 2013& Radwan). In addition, creating content valid for broadcast media, taken from citizen media content, raised the problem of the verification of citizen journalists, especially in terms of video material. However, the anchors had built a network of citizen journalists and activists across the region that could help with this verification process. Besides, attributing content to its originators was challenging sometimes, usually because safeguarding the anonymity of citizen journalists who lived in countries where journalists were endangered was a matter of life and death, or because the unusual handle or screen names of the content generators were not seen as professional practice. On many occasions, Ramy Radwan, the OnTube presenter, was not able to pronounce the words, or else it detracted from the value of the content itself. Deciding whether or not a video should be attributed to a bizarre name became both an editorial and an ethical issue, and ultimately the programme's team decided not to credit people with unusual names.

a. The Implications of the Phenomenon on Mass Media

Based on the data I collected from AMAY and ON T.V., I found that the hiring of citizen journalists in mainstream media led to some changes in their organisational laws and the qualifications of media workers. The different nature of the work of citizen journalism required flexible administrative rules for the mainstream; hence, working times at the SMD were left to the team leader to decide, according to the interaction of audiences on social network sites. As Abdullah explains:

“The department had three working shifts a day, starting at 9 am until 11pm, but in an emergency that may last until 1 am. The peak time for work is from 1 pm to 10 pm, and the time of lowest interaction is usually from 7 am to 11 am.”

At ON T.V., too, my interviewees from the OnTube crew agreed that the philosophy of Albert Shafik, the General Manager, was very flexible and “his philosophy is that any innovation or exception is approved as long as the work is done, and done in a way that does not contradict the ethics of the television station [which were communicated orally to the team by line managers]” (Salem, 2014). This encouraged the team of OnTube to devise their own work system: “Managing an everyday live programme could be a daunting task for a crew with little or even no previous experience in the media field, but the team members were very keen to do the job well,” as Mayada Ghazal, the producer of OnTube, told me. Therefore, Ghazal assigned responsibilities to everyone and to herself: “My role was to follow up with a segment for live reporting, following up the editing, airing and archiving each episode and arranging all logistics. Zeyad Salem and Islam ElQady, another citizen journalist, were assigned to make contact and write the script” (interview with Ghazal, 2013).

Furthermore, the administration of ON T.V. was flexible enough to handle variations in the work values of the citizen journalists in comparison to traditional journalists. For instance, after the suspension of OnTube, Salem admitted to his managers that he had had a problem with the traditional media ethics of impartiality, and that he was unwilling to be objective, as a broadcast journalist is expected to be. However, the administration kept him as a staff member and assigned to him work tasks which are compatible with his views, such as covering protests news and human rights stories (interview with Salem, 2014).

Second, the recruitment process in mainstream media institutions changed, by making use of social media to look for new personnel. Both media outlets used social networking sites, and especially Twitter, for the recruitment of citizen journalists. The scale of someone's followers on their Twitter account was regarded as an indicator of credibility, an equivalent, more or less, to the published work the employer would assess when hiring a journalist. In addition, it led to mainstream media outlets relaxing traditional requirements for their employees, such as a university degree, as some of citizen journalists at AMAY started their job before graduation.

For OnTube, specifying job requirements was not easy. Mayada Ghazal, production manager, told me it took a lot of time to hire scriptwriters: "I knew the required skills", she explained, "but did not know who would fit in. I tried journalists and did accept two of them to join the crew" (interview with Ghazal, 2013). The required skills were advanced internet knowledge, active use of social media and very good writing skills. The two people who finally joined the team were sourced from Twitter. In turn, the hiring of these citizen journalists by mass media accelerated the pace of professional development for media workers. All the staff members in the social media departments at AMAY and OnTube were under the age of 30, and among them were individuals who took on leading positions.

Accordingly, some existing rules and rights in the Egyptian media were not conducive to supporting the integration of citizen journalists into mainstream media. For example, membership of the Egyptian Journalists' Syndicate – which sets a bachelor degree, a contract with a newspaper and samples of published work as the three main requirements for membership – would prevent most social media department appointments. The syndicate would not recognise the production of hundreds of tweets and updates to social networks as journalistic work, but being an archive clerk in a newspaper would get them in. Eventually, to get round this restriction, AMAY contracted them as archive clerks (interview with Abdullah, 2013).

The employment of citizen journalists in mainstream media has, though, added new roles to the news-making process, including a mediator at OnTube and a promoter in the SMD of *AlMasry AlYom*. The qualifications and skills of mediators and promoters are different from traditional journalism. Citizen journalists in both AMAY and ON T.V. were not required to have a certain level of education, past experience, good Arabic language or

writing skills; alternatively, they were required to have strong technology skills and an extensive online network, represented by large numbers of followers on Twitter.

These newly converged forms and their new production processes and roles linked the traditional mass media with a new group of social media users. This connection between the mass media and social media users was created by embedding the content generated on social networking sites into media reports. It also demanded higher standards of technical provision within the production environment, including a speedy and stable internet connection. In the social media department of *AlMasry AlYoun* and at OnTube , high-capacity Web connectivity was essential to carrying out the work.

b. The Implications of the Phenomenon on Citizen Media

Generally, tracking the results of the phenomenon of citizen journalism is considerably harder than spotting them in the mass media, due to the breadth and complexity of the citizen journalism domain. But drawing on the lived experiences of the citizen journalists I interviewed, we can see two main consequences: the integration of citizen journalists into mainstream media has repositioned citizen journalism in the media landscape.

Changes in the functions have made citizen journalists, who were members of staff at mainstream media organisations, more observant of the features of social media and spend more time on them, in comparison to other citizen journalists. As I argued earlier, this makes it difficult for researchers to build typographies of citizen journalists, primarily because researchers tend to classify bloggers according to the year they started their citizen journalism, assuming that more years of practice lead to more experience. However, the intensity of use is just as important as the number of years a citizen journalist has spent on social media as an indicator of their knowledge.

Additionally, the hiring of citizen journalists in mainstream media has affected the position of citizen journalism as an alternative media format and promoted its convergence with mass media. As I have already shown, in Egypt, blogging (as the very first form of citizen journalism) was a form of rebellion against the Egyptian state, and all its machinations, including the political regime, social traditions, media conventions and taboos. Therefore, citizen journalism at this time was essentially a challenge to the state, and thus to mass media outlets which were loyal to the political regime. However, the commitment of citizen journalists, and the deployment of citizen media tools in mainstream media, seems to have affected this position and turned citizen journalism into a source of news, or the convention of circulating content on social networking sites. This notion raises further interesting questions that cannot be answered fully until the issue has been studied in a prolonged qualitative analysis explore the motivations of citizen journalists for making content and link that to their perception of the mass media and the political regime.

The employment of citizen journalists in mainstream media, conversely, did encourage journalists to learn more about the use of social networking sites and to become citizen journalists in the mass media. Mayada Ghazal, producer of OnTube, was an example of this, in that she became social media integration producer at AlHurra Television after leaving ON T.V. in 2012. At this Arabic-language satellite TV channel,

Ghazal was responsible for the social media of *Nabd AlSharee* 'نبض الشارع' (Street Pulse). The programme is a weekly show that started in September 2012. Self-categorised as an 'investigative documentary', it explores people's problems in the Arab region and discusses them with officials. In her new job, Ghazal was doing similar tasks to those a citizen journalist would do in mainstream media, such as updating each Street Pulse account on different social networking sites, collecting usage analytics, moderating user-generated content and leading social media campaigns. These work assignments assimilated with the job of Aya Abdullah, head of the SMD at AMAY. Ghazal seemed to be skilful at her new job, when we communicated in August 2013, and she told me exactly what posts she was sharing daily on Facebook, when they were shared and her policy on updating Twitter and how she choose the titles of the videos she shared on the YouTube channel of the show. In all, Ghazal explained why she did things the way she did.

I am not arguing that this work turns journalists into citizen journalists but that the interaction between citizen journalists and journalists helps the latter to optimise their career specialisation through their association with citizen media. Clearly, the reputation of Ghazal as a former producer of a programme about citizen media increased her chances of taking the job at AlHurra T.V., and her close work with the citizen journalists of OnTube was an opportunity to learn more about social networking sites, in comparison with producers of other television shows.

The employment of citizen journalists in the mainstream media moved forward the integration of amateur content in the mass media. This was particularly prominent at OnTube, where citizen journalists were authorised to select content. Generally, the use of mainstream media in relation to user-generated content (UGC) has been increasing in parallel with the popularity of social networking sites. In their global study on UGC in television and online news outputs, Wardle et al. (2014) observed that news organisations use amateur footage on a daily basis, which they collect from social media. However, "news organizations are poor and inconsistent in labeling the content as UGC and crediting the individual who captured the content" (p. 2). The study covered 21 days of eight television news organisations (including Aljazera Arabic) and concluded that UGC is often used as supplementary content to that provided by journalists, or to fill time gaps. However, to some extent, this was not the case with OnTube, where the content was indeed credited to citizen journalists. Even if they were not named, the programme made it clear that the content was not original. Besides, OnTube did not use amateur footage as an adjunct to the reports of their journalists but as independent content in its own right.

Concluding points

In this chapter I have covered the phenomenon of hiring citizen journalists in the Egyptian mainstream media to moderate the accounts of media institutions on social networking sites, to promote the content produced by journalists or to digest the user-generated content of these sites. I used two samples to study the phenomenon: the social media department at *AlMasry AlYoum*, a local privately-owned newspaper, and OnTube, a television programme produced by ON T.V., to highlight the content of social networking sites in the Arab Web sphere. Drawing broadly upon a phenomenological approach, I used in-depth interviews with citizen journalists in both samples to explain how they were employed, and the way they saw their role in mainstream media and their career plans. I used data collected from the participants to illustrate their interactions with the media institutions for which they worked, and with their journalist colleagues. Subsequently, I read through these data to present their implications for the interactions between citizen media and mainstream media.

Overall, the presence of citizen journalists in mass media institutions as staff members has pushed the management of these media outlets towards more administrative flexibility, to cope with the nature of these new jobs. In both SMD and AMAY, the team was allowed to shape its own work system. Furthermore, the employment of citizen journalists in mainstream media caused a change in the process of recruitment, whereby social networking sites were places where employers looked for job candidates and communicated with them accordingly. In addition, it made mainstream media outlets give up on traditional requirements for their employees, such as a university degree, as some of the citizen journalists at AMAY started their job before graduation. At the same time, the phenomenon has revealed that the full integration of these citizen journalists in the Egyptian media landscape requires the amendment of rules and the internal laws of the Egyptian Journalists' Syndicate (EJS).

At the same time, the phenomenon revealed that the skills required to produce the textual convergence of citizen media and mainstream media have become a job beyond the skills of traditional journalists, especially after the advancement of social media and the expansion of the user base. Thus, mass media outlets need citizen journalists who have a deeper understanding of social networking sites, their subcultures and technologies. The phenomenon encouraged journalists to learn more about the use of social networking sites and to become citizen journalists in the mass media arena. At the same time, citizen

journalists were enthusiastic to facilitate this convergence, because it is a way to spread user-generated content produced by themselves and their peer citizen journalists, and to provide some social media literacy to the mass media audience.

I found that the hiring of citizen journalists in some media outlets led to a change in the position of citizen journalism as an alternative media format. However, monitoring the exact results of the phenomenon of citizen media is a challenge, and my focused analysis would need further studies to ensure the results herein are more widely applicable.

In Chapter Seven, I move to the phenomenon of citizen media institutionalisation, by studying two samples of citizen media initiatives, namely Rassd and Mosireen, which were founded and run by citizen journalists and use social network sites as their primary publishing platforms. I start by outlining the creation and operation of the two media outlets. Then, from the accounts of the co-founders and members of the two samples, I explain how the phenomenon happened, their motivations for joining mainstream media and how they see the experience of establishing or working for a citizen journalism outlet. Then, I introduce the implications of the phenomenon on the Egyptian media scene, specifically on the interaction between citizen media and mainstream media.

II. THE INSTITUTIONALISATION OF EGYPT CITIZEN MEDIA

In Chapter Six, I described the phenomenon of employing citizen journalists in some Egyptian media outlets, specifically in the social media department at *AlMasry AlYom*, one of the most widely circulated newspapers, and OnTube, a television programme produced by the privately-owned satellite station ON T.V. I introduced this phenomenon through the perspectives of citizen journalists in the two examples, and in each case I presented their self-perceptions, the problems they encountered in their workplaces and their career ambitions. I followed this with an analysis of the implications of each case for mainstream media, citizen media and their interaction.

In this chapter, I continue to explore the interaction between citizen media and mainstream media and draw a complete picture thereof, before discussing its drivers. I develop my analysis into the scrutiny of the institutionalisation of citizen media as an example of the interaction between citizen media and mainstream media. I use an operational definition of a citizen media institution as a place where social networking sites (SNSs) are the primary publishing platforms of content produced by citizen journalists. The production of media content in these institutions may take the form of creating, generating, digesting, publishing or disseminating information, opinions or news reports. I use Rassd and Mosireen for my two samples of contrasting media outlets co-founded and run by citizen journalists. In Rassd the institutionalisation of citizen media occurred as a shift from the online sphere to real life. Rassd was originally set up in 2010 as a Facebook group, before being turned into a stakeholder media company in 2012. Meanwhile, Mosireen was established in 2012 as a media co-operative which relied exclusively on video-sharing sites such as YouTube and Vimeo for publishing video reports made by its members.

The organisation of citizen media helps us as researchers to observe closely the evolution of citizen journalism, its transformation and relationships with other media genres. The institutionalisation of citizen media in Egypt after the 2011 uprising gave citizen journalism a ‘revolutionary’ role, such as being the tool of citizens to build alternative narratives to events, different to what mass media were broadcasting, and experimenting with new models of ownership, fundraising and administration, again

different from mainstream media. Additionally, the organisation of citizen journalism created work opportunities for early-career journalists, where they enjoyed a set of advantages which would have been hard to secure in the wider mass media.

In this respect, I continue to use the perspectives of citizen journalists in the selected samples to explore the institutionalisation of citizen media. I communicated personally with many of the co-founders and sample members, which included in-depth interviews and collective interviews supported by observations of them at work. My six-week-long internship at Mosireen (May and June 2013) provided me with many opportunities to observe the organisation of their work. In contrast, at Rassd, the staff seemed more tentative, not very welcoming to outsiders and hesitant to expose themselves or give away much information. They perhaps feared being misrepresented after being criticised by an audience supporting the political regime and blaming them for criticising it. For these reasons my observations of the work environment here were restricted to my frequent visits to their offices over the course of four months.

I set out this investigation of the institutionalisation of citizen media by introducing each sample and the people who were my main sources of information. Then, I present their visions of the media outlets they have created, their self-perception and ambitions. I conclude the chapter by discussing the results of the institutionalisation of citizen media on its interaction with mainstream media.

1- How Egypt Citizen Media was Institutionalised

In this section, I establish Rassd and Mosireen as suitable samples for exploring the phenomenon of citizen media institutionalisation. For each of them, I clarify how they were established, the incidents that influenced their foundation, their administrative structure and activities. The chronological order of events I set out is useful in highlighting the process of institutionalisation as an organisational and cultural process which reveals the structural development of organisations over time.¹⁵

The account I outline was derived from extensive engagement with a number of key Rassd staff. The insights offered by Abdullah ElFakarani, one of the co-founders and the public relations officer, in my extended interviews provided key information about the early days of Rassd and its management strategy. He was the co-founder most involved in the everyday work of Rassd, while other co-founders were either living abroad or only attended managers' meetings. Information about the work carried out at Rassd after July 2013 was taken from personal communication with AbdelRahman X, a video journalist at Rassd. The rest of the information about staff and company structure were collected from Mohammad ElNoby, head of video production Adel ElAnsary, editor-in-chief of the newsroom, and four staff members from the newsroom, whose names I am withholding.

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. Rizk introduced me to the group and supervised my work as an intern. Said and Darwish were also general co-ordinators and full-time workers for Mosireen.

a. Rassd

When I researched Rassd رصد (translation: Monitoring) in 2013, it was a media production company using the official name Rassd News Network (RNN). It provided coverage of

¹⁵ For chronologies of the institutionalisation of Rassd and Mosireen, see Appendices.

current events in Egypt, mainly through video reports, short message services (SMSs) for updates (available in Egypt and Saudi Arabia) and training materials on media literacy as well as advanced levels of training for professionals. It also had a news portal that provided photo coverage, video reports, news stories, features and commentary. When President Mohammed Morsi was removed from power in July 2013, most of the co-founders were arrested and summoned to court, side by side with Muslim Brotherhood leaders, which was, for some people on social media, proof of the linkage between Rassd and the political group. Thereafter, the heads and managers of Rassd decided to take the company undercover, and so its offices were shut down and operations moved to an undisclosed location. The new address for Rassd is only known to the people who use it, and communication with the rest of the staff takes place online or in person in public places.

There were several structural transformations at Rassd, even before the start of my research. The organisation started in 2010 as a group on Facebook, run by a handful of young people from around the country. The group encouraged citizens all across Egypt to create a record of any violations or forgery in the parliamentary elections planned in October 2010. These co-founders were, according to ElFakharani, “motivated by the corruption of the Hosni Mubarak regime” (personal interview, 2013). This Facebook group proved very popular, and the number of members of the group rose consistently. According to an introductory account emailed to me by ElFakharani:

“During the 2010 election campaign, a total of 1,500 videos and pictures were uploaded, and the Facebook page’s membership rose to 80,000. On average, RNN [Rassd News Network] received 700 reports daily, and it published an average of 400 items from all over Egypt. During this time, RNN grew to 30 members and expanded its contributor base to almost all governorates in Egypt.”

The reason for starting on Facebook was probably because of its status as one of the most popular social network sites at the time, as by the end of 2010 there were 4.7 million Egyptian Facebook users, accounting for 22 per cent of the total number of Arab users of this network (Mourtada & Salem, 2011). Therefore, the choice of this medium may have contributed to Rassd’s popularity. In addition, there was already a high level of dissatisfaction with the regime, which was demonstrated by the countrywide protests against Mubarak in early 2011.

For many events, the Rassd group on Facebook achieved news immediacy, even outperforming mainstream media on some occasions. For instance, in December 2010, the group published a video from inside the Two Saints Church in Alexandria, when it was bombed on New Year's Eve. The video was sent in by an inhabitant of the neighbourhood near the church and was subsequently screened on many local and foreign television channels. This led to the fast growth of its popularity, and by January 2011, in Abdullah ElFakharani's account, the Rassd page had "reached 80,000 members [making] it the second-most popular Egyptian page on Facebook after *We are All Khaled Said*¹⁶ [with roughly 10,000 members]. In addition, the number of regular contributors reached 30 people and now covered all the Egyptian provinces."

During the 2011 uprising, Rassd's co-founders decided to cover the nationwide protests and operated a hotline for updates from protesters and their regular contributors. Even at the time of the internet blackout in Egypt (from 27th January to 2nd February 2011), Rassd managed to keep its Facebook page updated, "by using landline phones to make hourly calls to members of the group who were based abroad, and these members then published updates to the page" (interview with ElFakharani, 2013). At this point, the co-founders of Rassd wanted their Facebook page not to lose what ElFakharani called its "biggest advantage," i.e. its immediacy. Therefore, they sacrificed the verification of news to maintain their updates in real time. He explained:

"We used three bi-lines: 'Confirmed' مؤكد for updates sent by us [the administrators of the Facebook group] and trusted circle, 'Semi-Confirmed' شبه مؤكد for updates received from active members of the groups, who have a certain level of credibility but might miss important details when fact-checking, and 'Unconfirmed' غير مؤكد for updates received from anybody outside the founders, our trusted circles and the page's active members."

The institutionalisation of Rassd was motivated by the success of the Facebook group during a number of protests and Mubarak eventually stepping down, which was reflected in the growth of its popularity. In just 18 days, Rassd's audience grew to 500,000, with an average of 6,500 visits daily, and its Facebook page attracted an average of 40,000 new followers every day (interview with ElFakharani, 2013). In addition, the administrators of

¹⁶ A prominent Facebook page which was created in July 2010 to cover the story of the death of Khaled Said, a man from Alexandria who was beaten to death by police inspectors. The page became very popular and contributed to growing discontent in the weeks leading up to the 2011 uprising.

this Facebook group became reliable sources for flagship mainstream media such as AlJazeera, which conducted telephone conversations with them several times a day and provided them with satellite mobile phones so that they could stay in touch, even when the internet connection was disconnected, according to ElFakharani.

After Mubarak left his position in February 2011, Rassd had 50 reporters across Egypt. At this point, the administrators of this Facebook group had the ambition of becoming a news network, which would combine both the characteristics of a traditional media service and the use of social media tools. They took a step towards this ambition in March 2011, by registering Rassd as a joint-stock company and, to become fully institutionalised, renting an office in downtown Cairo, hiring a staff of journalists (25 people) and launching a website. In addition, Rassd contracted a mobile service provider and launched its SMS news service. However, these changes were not immediately profitable, leading to a number of staff members being released and the team being reduced to eight people. Rassd relaunched at the beginning of 2012, with the remaining staff moved to a new office. New staff members were hired, and a new website was launched with better technology and increased bandwidth (interview with ElFakharani, 2013).

Whilst it was expanding, Rassd's co-founders were conscious of maintaining the advantage of its wide outreach, by having correspondents nationwide. Therefore, in 2012, the Rassd Centre for Training and Development was established to provide regular volunteers with free workshops on making content. Also, some learning resources were made available for downloading on the centre's website upon request. These learning resources targeted its audience from different provinces of Egypt, who were seen as potential contributors. More structural changes were made at Rassd after for the foundation of new services; the video news reports unit, for example, was established in August 2012 to specialise in video making (interview with ElNoby, 2013).

While *AlMasry AlYoum* and ON T.V. were employing citizen journalists, Rassd hired full-time journalists to head-up their social media, website, multimedia and correspondent departments. Also, a group of young journalists were hired in the newsroom and the video reports unit (interview with ElAnsary, 2013).

Rassd was associated with the Muslim brotherhood group as its media arm. However, ElFakharani presents another perspective, arguing that Rassd was independent from the Muslim Brotherhood, claiming "it was our initiative and not the Muslim

Brotherhood nor any political group's media arm" (interview with ElFakhrani, 2013). ElFakharani argued that people tended to link Rassd to the Muslim Brotherhood, because "many of the staff and volunteers are Muslim Brotherhood members, and among us are the sons and daughters of Muslim Brotherhood leaders. In addition, Rassd had not called for the removal of Mohammad Morsi, the former president and Muslim Brotherhood member." Another reason, at least to my eyes, was the geographic proximity of Rassd's office in the Dokki neighbourhood in Giza to the headquarters of the Muslim Brotherhood leadership headquarters located in nearby the Manyal district. In addition, I observed that the staff of Rassd shared a conservative attitude similar to the Muslim Brotherhood members, which was manifested in gender segregation and the guise of its journalists.

However, X told me he believed that the Muslim Brotherhood members were not always happy with the performance of Rassd, as there was critical content on this political group. X even claimed that some members and supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood group tried to break his camera during two events he covered when they found out he was a Rassd cameraman. Nevertheless, on its website in 2013, there was an advertisement for the Freedom and Justice Party, the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood – what ElFakharani clarified as being a paid advert, though he confirmed that Rassd had never received funding from the Muslim Brotherhood. In contrast, in its report *Freedom on the Net*, the watchdog organisation dedicated to the expansion of freedom and democracy around the world, Freedom House, referred to "a leaked document from the office of the President [which] revealed a policy in which news was first circulated to media outlets sympathetic to the Brotherhood," specifically citing Rassd in this regard (Kelly et al., 2013).

In August 2013, after the arrest of most of Rassd's co-founders, X explained to me that "in order to avoid further arrests Rassd was relocated in a disclosed address where only a few people work, while the journalists and reporters are working from homes." By the end of 2013 X had become my sole source of information for Rassd and I was meeting him every few weeks in a public place, and communicating with him on Facebook messengers. Although Facebook is not a very secure medium for communication, X preferred it as it is the medium he uses the most and his colleagues at Rassd continued to use for communicating with the staff members.

b. Mosireen

Mosireen مُصَرِّين (translation: We are Determined) is a non-profit media collective. Its main products are short clips, usually video reports on events, interviews with strikers or torture survivors and short documentaries. The primary platform for disseminating these videos is social networking sites, especially YouTube. Mosireen's channel on YouTube 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 probably the biggest archive of the January 2011 uprising (interview with Rizk, 2013, Said, 2013 & Hamilton, 2013).

This media outlet undertakes several activities in which the group communicates with citizen journalists. One of them is Rahal رَحَال, a project Mosireen developed to convene media literacy workshops across Egypt. The workshop curriculum includes photography, video making, citizen journalism and open publishing, and training materials are prepared by five people and kept in a Wiki and depend mostly on open-source software. Besides, there is a bi-monthly public screening of documentaries at Mosireen's office.

Mosireen was introduced to the world in English (on its website and social media) as a 'media collective', while the term 'co-operative' تعاونية 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)

Moreover, Mosireen forms a unique case of media ownership in Egypt, as collective ownership was previously absent in the country. The idea of a media collective took almost a year to develop, and there were many milestones. It started with a conversation between four people, who were in Tahrir Square in Cairo in January 2011, 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 having co-operative media. In February 2011, military police forces cleared a sit-in at Tahrir Square (in Cairo) violently. 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 am, 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, precisely 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 me. 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 them. However, gathering in one place was a good idea for the co-founders, because it quickened 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 the goals of this media collective, its tactics and management policies and, eventually, launching the website. Meanwhile, the members of Mosireen made a number of videos about economic and social rights, and a workshop was convened to teach citizens how to capture a 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.

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’ not used 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).

In 2013, there were 11 board members, some of whom were co-founders and others that joined the media co-operative after it was established. This media collective consisted of founders and board members (15 people), the network (20 people), who were close supporters from the media industry, civil society and activists, and contributors (around 100 people), who provided technical and financial support, especially as this media collective relied on crowd funding (interview with Said, 2013). Although on the Mosireen website there is a section for those who wish to volunteer, there were no staff in the office and it 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 my case, as an intern, I was welcomed because most of the members knew me from political activism and human rights advocacy beforehand, and I knew Rizk personally, which supported my request to work with them for six weeks.

Meanwhile, while Rassd had its office in a relatively quiet neighbourhood in Giza, not far from the Muslim Brotherhood headquarters, Mosireen’s first location was a big flat in downtown Cairo in Adly Street. Its members preferred a central location, because they convened a lot of public events. But in August 2013, Mosireen moved to a rented office in downtown Cairo, not far from the old one, because the old office was just a few metres away from Shaar Hashomayim Synagogue, one of the oldest Jewish monuments in the city. Despite its good location in the heart of the city, this premise possibly affected their outreach, as Rizk explained:

“The proximity to the synagogue meant a continuous police presence near Mosireen’s office, since the Egyptian Ministry of Interior kept some Central Security Forces personnel there to keep it secure. The members felt some people may make a link between the police and Mosireen, rather than with the synagogue, [and this] may put people off or make Mosireen appear as an unsafe space that might be raided by police.”

(interview with Rizk, 2013)

2- How Citizen Journalists Lived the Experience of the Institutionalisation of Citizen Media

Having introduced Rassd and Mosireen as samples of citizen media institutions, I now describe the phenomenon of citizen media institutionalisation from the account of citizen journalists in these two cases. First, I present their cultural and educational backgrounds and their motivations behind becoming citizen journalists, following which I locate them within the work system of their organisations. Subsequently, I use their statements and my observations to explain the self-perceptions of the co-founders, members and workers at Rassd and Mosireen, how they regard their jobs and what ambitions they have for their citizen media initiatives.

Basically, there were two different groups of citizen journalists at Rassd and Mosireen. Although in both examples the co-founders were political activists, they varied in their ideologies. At Rassd, there were Muslim Brotherhood supporters and opponents, but after the July coup the political position of all the people who continued working for this news network was against the new regime, according to AbdelRahman X, a video journalist and my only source of data since August 2013. Alternatively, at Mosireen, all members of the group agreed they were left-leaning. However, all of the members I communicated with affirmed that they were not clones of one another, and that they did argue a lot, which occasionally caused delays in their collective decision-making processes.

Rassd was established by a number of students as well as early- and mid-career professionals, but none of the co-founders studied or worked in mass media. The first person I met at Rassd was Abdullah ElFakharani, a co-founder and the public relations person. When I met him in 2013, he was a medical student with a scholarship to study media and political science in France, and he planned to start this course after graduation. But in August 2013, ElFakahrani was among those who were arrested and charged with forming an operations room to direct Muslim Brotherhood, in order to defy the government. In April 2014, he was sentenced to life imprisonment.

Furthermore, at Rassd there were several journalists who wanted to develop their professional lives, such as Mustafa ElNoby, head of the video reports unit, who worked in Alexandria, his home city, for a number of local newspapers and was a scriptwriter for Amwag (translation: Sea Tides), an online radio station owned by the Muslim

Brotherhood. Then he moved to Cairo and joined the Rassd team in 2012. Although working for mainstream media would have been a better option for him, he believed that Rassd could be developed into a newsroom similar to the ones in mainstream media. Thus, ElNoby wanted to be part of this experiment from its conception.

Similarly, AbdelRahman X is a video journalist at Rassd, and he wished to become a TV host “like the iconic Yousri Fouda.” For him, Rassd was the best place to learn video shooting and editing, “because it is smaller than mainstream media; therefore, one could get to see all the work details, and it was easy to enter Rassd and become a member of staff after the foundation of the video report unit in 2012” (interview with X, 2013). On one of my visits to Rassd in 2013, I met Mohammed ElOmda, a 23-year-old Social Science student from Beni Suef (south of Cairo), who introduced himself to me as the director of Rassd correspondents in the north of Upper Egypt, i.e. “linking between Rassd and the correspondents, double-verifying their news reports.” ElOmda was in Rassd’s office to attend a monthly meeting. He was not paid for his work; however, he was rewarded with material and moral incentives, such as receiving media literacy training, a Sony camera as equipment for his work and the prestigious job title. Furthermore, publishing through Rassd and getting his reports placed on its popular social media page helped ElOmda to influence the community. He told me:

“To make my first video report for Rassd, I rented a camera at my own expense and made videos about the 2011 election ballots in my city. I was very happy that it made to the public and was viewed by many users. The people in Beni Suef were also happy to see something about them online. And the municipality printed off my work and pinned it on the billboard of the city’s administrative hall!”

There were also a number of established journalists who wanted to engage with social media, such as Adel ElAnsary, the editor-in-chief of the newsroom. He was the most experienced person at Rassd, with over twenty years of working experience in translation and then in print media. ElAnsary used to work for *AWafd* (translation: *The Delegation*), a partisan newspaper. When the internet started to spread throughout Egypt in the late 1990s, ElAnsary was doubtful about its usability and regarded it as an entertainment tool created by the West and Israel to monitor Arab youths. He then became the editor of the website of *AlSha’b* (translation: *The People*), another partisan newspaper. In 2007, he created his own

blog, in order to archive his work in the press, but continued to believe that social media sites were “spying platforms.” When I interviewed him in 2013, he was feeling comfortable with using Facebook for communication with his team and for publishing updates.

Meanwhile, many of the co-founders of Mosireen had Western parents or had spent a large part of their life abroad, and so they could all speak at least one language besides Arabic. Also, all of them had completed their university education, and a few held Master’s Degrees. Mosireen’s co-founders were from the same age group, namely mid-twenties to mid-thirties. Many of them were media workers, media producers, documentary makers and television journalists, as well as others in the creative industries (visual arts, acting, etc.).

Among the other co-founders was Omar Hamilton, a cinema and literature graduate who worked in the U.S. He was connected to different Arab cultures, as he had visited the Palestinian territories many times and had been engaged in the Palestinian cultural scene before settling in Egypt, the home country of his British-national mother, in February 2011. Hamilton’s decision to move to Cairo was motivated by the toppling of the president Hosni Mubarak. Another member of Mosireen was Aalam Wassef, a visual artist, who produced a lot of work in opposition to Mubarak, under the pseudonym Ahmad ElSherif. After Mubarak was removed, ElSherief revealed his identity. Khalid Abdullah was a British-Egyptian award-winning actor and media producer, and another board member of Mosireen was Mostafa Youssef, a professional filmmaker and broadcast journalist working for local and regional mainstream media.

Although Rassd and Mosireen were launched under different political regimes, the main motivation of citizen journalists in both outlets was their dissatisfaction with the relationship between the authorities and citizens. They all shared a vision of the media as a tool of resistance, a perspective that is rooted in the birth of citizen journalism in Egypt, as explained in Chapter Three. ElFakharni, one of Rassd’s co-founders, described himself and his friends at the time of creating the Rassd Facebook group as “angry” and “dissatisfied,” saying:

“Like many young people, we were a group of angry youths; some of us were students, and others were working in Egypt and abroad. We did not know each other until we crossed paths in political activism. You can say that we became citizen journalists because we

needed media in our activism and took to activism because we were dissatisfied with the [Hosni] Mubarak regime, with all its corruption and humiliation of citizens.”

(interview with ElFakharani, 2013)

One major motivation for the participants becoming citizen journalists was covering activist actions. In my personal communication with ElFakharani, he dated his practice of citizen journalism back to 2007, when the president of Ain Shams University¹⁷, where ElFakharani studied, used a number of ‘hooligans’ from outside the campus in order to end a student protest. ElFakharani managed to catch a video showing this event, in which the students held a rally against fraudulent Students’ Union elections, before the ‘hired thugs’ were brought in to attack them. With the help of one of his friends, ElFakharani sold this video to AlJazeera: “It was amazing how a mobile recording could reach such a vast audience and become proof against the university’s president” (interview with ElFakharani, 2013). Philipp Rizk, a member of Mosireen, had a similar 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. Unlike ElFakharani, Rizk did not target mainstream media to promote his videos.

Thus, both Rizk and ElFakharani did not support the political regime and instead utilised citizen journalism to rebel against it, according to their individual ideologies and political orientation. Rizk chose to back the working class, those whom he thought were the pathway to revolution, thus trying “to publicise their struggle, and share their words with the world” (interview with Rizk, 2013). Meanwhile, ElFakharani focused on the violations of the regime against its citizens, occurring in his university or elsewhere.

We can see that the visions of these two citizen journalists matured further when they started their citizen media institutions. In my personal communications with them, ElFakharani described the role of Rassd as “the watchdog,” and Rizk saw that Mosireen’s mission was “voicing the victims.” ElFakharani and Rizk were in citizen media outlets that matched their views. At Rassd, citizen media was an instrument for monitoring the political regime’s performance, while at Mosireen it was a tool used to create counter-narratives to the authorities’ claims regarding different events.

¹⁷ A leading public university in Cairo.

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 me “What we do [at Mosireen] is activism, not journalism; media are just our tools for that.” When I 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 we get reported.”

(interview with Said, 2013)

At Rassd, though, almost everybody agreed they were a ‘journalist’ and did not like being described as ‘citizen journalists’. This made sense in the case of Adel ElAnsary, editor-in-chief of the newsroom, as he had worked as a traditional journalist for more than two decades, and so being referred to as a ‘citizen journalist’ was, for him, a downgrade from the group of content makers in the participating audience. ElAnsary agreed to call the audience who sent reports, photos and video materials to Rassd ‘citizen journalists’, but his team were “journalists, because they intervene in the content they receive, by editing and verification, or they make content themselves.” In fact, ElAnsary hardly used the terms ‘citizen media’ and ‘citizen journalists’ in my communication with him, and he instead referred to the network of citizen journalists affiliated with Rassd by titles used in mainstream media, such as ‘correspondents’ and ‘reporters’, which could be an indicator of a lack of integration into the culture of collaborative media.

ElAnsary’s team consisted of eight people who saw themselves as journalists, too. Two of them told me in a collective interview that they hoped to work for the BBC one day. These media graduates disagreed with me calling Rassd ‘a citizen media institution’, and one participant distinguished between the work of Rassd before and after the institutionalisation, noting that “[It] started as a citizen journalism network, but gradually it was turned into a traditional newsroom, with employees who are specialised by study and

expertise” (focus group, Anonymous, 2013). Another participant believed that each component of Rassd could fit into different media types:

“For instance, its popular social media accounts could be citizen journalism platforms, especially since they have been used for engagement with audiences. The Rassd news website is an online journalism platform, because its content is made by journalists, not citizens, and the video reports are professional journalism, as they are done by trained journalists.”

(focus group, Anonymous, 2013)

The rejection of these media degree holders calling Rassd a ‘citizen media institution’ relates to their self-regard as qualified journalists. For most of them, working for Rassd was a starting point, a stepping-stone to a media career. Thus, calling their workplace anything that sounded deviant was translated by them as diverging away from their career plans.

Effectively, the emphasis of Mosireen co-founders that they were not journalists implicitly meant: we are free from all the conventional and moral restrictions of mainstream media, while the assurances of the people at Rassd that they were journalists said: we are well-qualified reporters. Meanwhile, the participants at Rassd and Mosireen shared the definition of ‘journalist’ as someone who is committed to making media content in accordance with the traditions and ethics of mainstream media, with which they were not satisfied and to which they did not commit.

Institutionalisation was a turning point in the self-perceptions of the people at Rassd and Mosireen, because every co-founder from both media outlets agreed they were citizen journalists when they used to film public events individually and then share them on social media platforms. But doing this collectively and in an organised manner, and having an audience, was a shift from being a citizen journalist to becoming a journalist of the citizens, which means making professional content but targeting citizen journalists as the primary audience.

I asked the question about being called a citizen journalist, either preceded or followed by a question about the definition of citizen journalism. Often, the answer was “alternative media” (interview with Darwish, 2013, Said, 2013, Hamilton, 2013, ElAnsary, 2013 and ElNoby, 2013). A full definition was provided by X as:

“Citizen journalism is a kind of journalism produced by non-professionals offering an alternative media product to mainstream media, and it must be for non-commercial purposes.”

Such a detailed definition indicates that X had already thought about the nature of his work – either as a citizen journalist or not – and therefore had a ready-made answer.

The answer of Philipp Rizk, a member of Mosireen, tackled an important point in the conceptualisation of citizen media. Rizk found that making citizens ‘journalists’ diminished the idea of everyone being capable of making content. He told me that “the people are both the newsmakers and the audience, and the existence of citizen journalists divides citizens into journalists and audiences.” Rizk thought that, ideally, everyone should be capable of being a journalist in his own right. He clarified that he rejected the idea that the role of a journalist had become mediating people’s news for an audience. So, even with mediated communication, there should be no distance between journalists and audiences.

The transformation from citizen journalists to journalists, whose target audience was citizens, did not happen swiftly at Rassd. There was a blurred line between the co-founders, staff and their audience. Effectively, since their launch in 2010, the co-founders of Rassd were not certain about the role of their Facebook group, and consequently their relationships with the audience, which was reflected in the changing names of the group.

At first, the title of the Facebook group was Rassd, the initials of its motto راقب وصوّر ودون which translate as ‘Observe, Document and Blog it’. At this point, the co-founders welcomed the contributions of visitors, not only sharing content, but also making it. Audience members were the content makers. However, at the end of the same year, the title of this group was changed to The Field Monitoring Unit وحدة الرصد الميداني, which in Arabic includes the word ‘Rassd’. The name reflected a tendency to appear like a media ‘unit’, whose mission was field monitoring. The newer name left the impression that Rassd was functioning systematically, and was less inviting for citizen journalists to contribute. Eventually, after its institutionalisation, Rassd was referred to on its website and in social media as Rassd News Network, which highlighted the expansion of its coverage and did not attribute news content to a certain group but to every member of the ‘network’.

Meanwhile, the participants from Mosireen believed they were capable of reducing the distance between themselves and their audience. Salma Said, general co-ordinator of Mosireen, 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. I have searched for and watched recordings of the Tahrir Cinema eventson Youtube and I have observed that in the daytimes, when the screening used to take place in a small venue, there was not even a physical distance between the organisers and the audience.

A broader look at the behaviour of the people in the two samples towards their audiences shows that they are encouraging them to institutionalise their citizen journalism. At Mosireen, the Rahal project “encourages people in the different cities and communities to start their own media collectives” (interview with Darwish, 2013). And Rassd does not “limit itself to increasing public awareness, but it equally encourages individuals to get involved in journalism themselves, by observing, documenting and uploading events they witness,” according to an introductory document shared with me by its co-founder, ElFakharani. Hence, Rassd wants citizen journalists to publish their reports through institutions, either formed by themselves or by audiences.

Also, I observed that while the medium and the content were not on the same level of importance for citizen journalists outside mainstream media, the co-founders and members of Mosireen were interested in content delivery more than the usage of the medium. In their media literacy workshops, the Mosireen members encouraged trainees to access SNSs and to make content with the devices they already had, instead of renting or purchasing new cameras or mobile phones. They believed that the message is the main thing, and the medium can be adapted to make and spread it. At Rassd, too, initially the

content was more important than the medium, which is reflected in the motto of Rassd's Facebook group 'Observe, Shoot and Blog it'. At the time, its administrators did not consider the quality of the videos and pictures sent to them – they did not care much about the medium used to create it but focused their attention on the exclusiveness of the message and its immediacy. Nonetheless, this changed after the institutionalisation of Rassd, whereby the importance of the medium grew, which could be seen in the professional equipment used by its video reporting unit, and using shooting devices as incentives for their active collaborators, such as Mohammad ElOmda, who received a professional camera.

As I noted in the Methodology chapter, I was able to see how they 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. Therefore, they had great ambition 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. At Rassd, ElAnsary, editor-in-chief of the newsroom, hoped their news network would become a news agency. Furthermore, ElNoby, head of the video reports unit, wanted Rassd to be turned into a television station. In several interviews at Rassd, the interviewees cited public figures from who had praised them at one time or another. The source of this confidence of success was mainly institutionalisation, because at the time of data collection, there were many popular Facebook groups and pages, and yet Rassd remained the only one which had transformed into an actual media company.

The growth of audience numbers supported the feeling of success perceived by the co-founders of Rassd. Moreover, the immediacy of news was something the leaders of Rassd often bragged about. In addition was the successful outreach of Rassd on the regional scale, as citizen journalism pages from Sudan, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia were created on Facebook in 2011 under the name of Rassd.

“These pages followed our traditions in covering political events in social media. They even used the same logo and motto of the original Rassd. However, none of these pages was connected to the Egyptian Rassd.” (interview with ElFakharani, 2013)

Effectively, the emergence of these sentiments should be linked to the circumstances of 2013, when I was collecting the data, 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 Rassd and Mosireen would not have been as remarkable as it was if there were high political stability, and therefore less searching for news content. The feeling of being the creators of a different media organisation benefitted my research, because, as noted in the Methodology chapter, 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 success and fulfilment of the people of Rassd and Mosireen influenced their work positively, as it formed an additional factor in their determination to sustain their citizen media institutions. Citizen journalists had a moral commitment of citizen journalists towards achieving the goals of their media institutions. When I asked Rizk ‘Do you think when Mosireen will stop its activities and 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!”, so he was willing to dedicate time and effort to Mosireen despite his awareness that these 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,” as she explained.

Unlike the staff at Mosireen, at Rassd I received different answers to my question regarding the closing down of citizen media outlets. Here, the commitment to watchdogging the political regime was mixed with other calculations. ElFkharani, for instance, replied “We do our best to keep working and to avoid shutting down!” (2013). Adel ElAnsary, editor-in-chief of the newsroom, had almost the same reply. While the answers provided by the members of Mosireen were driven by the fulfilment of their aims, the answers from Rassd were driven by the fear of being shut down. In other words, it seemed that the Mosireen members processed my question as: What success would we have to achieve, so that we no longer needed to run our media collective? At Rassd, the question was perceived as: When will we no longer be able to function? The variety in the perceptions of the question could be explained by the financial instability of Rassd at the time I interviewed them in March and April 2013, as for a period of time there were

concerns of sustainability due to lack of profit. But in late May 2013, monetising issues were solved, and ElAnsary was constantly telling me about his and the team's dream of becoming "a small news agency" someday.

The arrest of the co-founders changed the perspective of the staff at Rassd to staying in this citizen media network. When Rassd operated overtly, the people who worked for it were thinking about the continuity of their employment instead of the sustainability of the workplace. For instance, ElNoby, head of the video reports unit, told me "I will leave Rassd when I feel I have run out of ideas for it, or have no stamina to do any more work." And in my first interview with the video journalist X on May 2013, he told me "I may stop working for Rassd as soon as feel I am well-qualified for a job at a television station." However, in October of the same year, when many of his colleagues were behind bars, he said in a face-to-face chat:

"They [the authorities] want us [Rassd] to stop working, and we will not stop... Personally, I will not stop working for Rassd, because there is nowhere else where right words are said!"

2- Implications of the Institutionalisation of Citizen Media

The previous section covered how citizen journalists at Rassd and Mosireen lived the phenomenon of the institutionalisation of their work. I introduced the educational and ideological backgrounds of the participants and then mixed my observations with their statements to explain their motivations for establishing media outlets and sustaining them. I shall now detail the implications of the creation of Rassd and Mosireen on the relationship between citizen media and mainstream media in Egypt. I depart from the point I stopped at in the previous section, which is the perceptions of the co-founders and members of Mosireen as well as Rassd of their work.

The institutionalisation of citizen media in Egypt, which coincided with social and political change, allocated new roles to citizen journalism. The co-founders of Rassd and Mosireen described it 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. At Rassd, too, “revolution” and “remnants of the Mubarak regime” فلول were repeated in my conversations with ElFakharni and X in particular, because they were the two who clarified for me the work vision of Rassd.

For the co-founders of Rassd, ‘revolution’ meant “resistance to the Hosni Mubarak regime and its remnants” (interview with ElFakharani, 2013), but not necessarily opposition to every political regime. Therefore, Rassd’s co-founders distanced themselves from individuals or institutions which were affiliated with the Mubarak regime. While at Mosireen, members considered the media a front for the revolution; thus, while the masses were resisting the political regime, the media of the revolution was resisting the media of the regime. The members of Mosireen believed that citizen media is a tool for resisting the political oppressor; therefore, the state will do its best to prevent citizens from entering into journalism. They saw mainstream media as serving the political regime, and so it was necessary to have ‘revolutionary media’, such as their media collective, to serve the revolutionaries.

For Mosireen, challenging the traditional conventions of mass media was a revolutionary act. It was not only about making a counter-narrative, but also about creating counter forms of content production, media ownership and management. Thus, Mosireen

understood models of ownership, administration and fundraising which were new to the Egyptian media landscape, as explained in the previous section.

It could be argued that the institutionalisation of citizen media and the popularity of these outlets has created a competitive environment between citizen media and mainstream media. Such an idea was insistently proposed by the people of Rassd, who considered their citizen media outlet a real competitor to mainstream media, as Rassd outnumbered many established and more popular local media outlets in terms of fans and followers. However, this comparison of their popularity in social media circles did not necessarily prove the point; it only could affirm the efficiency of the way in which Rassd used these media.

As I mentioned in Chapter Four, ElAnsary, editor-in-chief of the newsroom at Rassd, once told me “We are a headache for Aljazeera,” claiming that Rassd’s output to every province in Egypt had obligated mainstream media to recruit more correspondents, in order to put them on an equal footing. Such a belief of being a competitor of mainstream media explains why Abdullah ElFakharani, co-founder, was keen to upgrade his staff members’ core journalistic skills (reporting, investigation and writing). He had already approached Germany’s international broadcaster Deutsche Welle, and the Egyptian state-run the Middle East News Agency, and had Rassd staff and reporters trained by them.

However, the fact that mass media entities needed to hire more members of staff was made clear to me a few months later when I met with Abeer Sa’di, board member of the Egyptians Journalists’ Syndicate (EJS). Sa’di explained to me that mainstream media had already looked for correspondents all over the country, “because during the years 2011, 2012 and 2013, Egypt witnessed nearly 10 elections and referendums, so more members of staff were needed in the broadcast media in particular” (interview with Sa’di, 2013).

Therefore, AlAnsary’s statement about AlJazeera almost doubling the number of its reporters in Egypt in parallel with the institutionalisation of Rassd was right, and yet his interpretation of the reason was not very accurate. I find this inaccuracy originated in the success and excellence experienced by the members and co-founders of citizen media institutions, which I referred to in the previous section. Obviously, this influenced not only their self-confidence, but also their perception of events. I would argue that the phenomenon did not create any rivalry between the two media types, but the immediate reports of citizen media institutions, and the breadth of their media coverage, did stimulate mass media to provide media literacy workshops for citizen journalists and to associate

them with the institution. This is the meeting point of the two phenomena covered in this research, namely the employment of citizen journalists in the mass media and the institutionalisation of citizen media.

However, if competition was rather dubious at the editorial level, it certainly emerged in the employment market, as the institutionalisation of citizen media made it a new domain for early-career professional journalists. At Rassd, I had a group interview with four full-time journalists, all fresh graduates and only two of them with less than three years' work experience before joining Rassd. As I detailed in the Methodology chapter, the group was chosen randomly. I arranged the date and time of the collective interview with Adel ElAnsary, the editor-in-chief, and met those who were around at the scheduled time. All the participants were female, because the administration of Rassd preferred to have women working during the daytime and young men on the night shift as an act of protection. In the interview, I sought to find out why they worked for Rassd, how they saw it, how they regarded their current jobs and what they had in mind regarding career ambitions.

These young journalists told me that Rassd provided them with career development and financial advantages which were hard to find elsewhere. For instance, "in the print media it can take a long time to become an established journalist, while in the online media you can quickly become a team leader" (Focus Group. Anonymous, 2013). In addition, "working for a news website means that one's name will appear on the news reports as soon as they start to create content, whereas in print media there is a very long wait before getting your work published" (Focus Group, Anonymous, 2013). This point in particular seemed to mean a lot to the group, because they were in the early stages of their career and needed to feel fulfilled in the quickest way possible. In addition, not having published content may result in family pressure. One of these journalists told me her parents would not be convinced that a website was a media outlet until they saw her name on an online news report. Another journalist told me that given the unstable conditions of Egypt at the time, her parents may have pushed her to quit journalism, if she had spent a lot of time at work without payment or moral recognition, which was the case in the print media.

Furthermore, one of the reasons that made it a workplace for early-career journalists was that "at Rassd there was more room to learn from mistakes and from peer learning" (Focus Group Anonymous, 2013). In addition, "there were training opportunities provided by flagship media outlets on journalistic skills and workshops, while most of the

local print and broadcast media would not offer such training to their staff members” (Focus Group, Anonymous, 2013). Moreover, Rassd offered to these journalists higher salaries in comparison to the print media, as working for a print newspaper would often not come with a salary but rather a small payment for every published story. Also, for them it was less difficult for them to find work at Rassd than searching for a job within a big media market, especially considering their limited work experience.

Additionally, the institutionalisation of citizen media stirred the formation of editorial policies and work values pertinent to citizen journalism, because when citizen journalists were in a position to run their media outlets, they needed to set some moral values for their work. For instance, the co-founders of Rassd agreed on credibility as a value and searched for tools to measure it accordingly. They used the Media Credibility in Egypt (MCE Credibility) website, a parameter for measuring the credibility of local print newspapers, online media and works according to 11 criteria set by media academics and professionals, which allowed visitors to report media content when they doubted its truthfulness.

Also, in both Rassd and Mosireen, the participants sought autonomy for their outlets and were determined to keep decision making in their own hands, thereby avoiding the pressures caused by financial support. Mosireen decided not to seek external funding and relied on its own capacities, audience and supporters as alternatives. At Rassd, too, the co-founders were keen to generate revenue from the content provided via the news network, in order to guard its autonomy. Thus, in 2011, they contracted a mobile phone service provider and launched a news short message service (SMS), which used to generate a monthly revenue of 70,000 EGP (around 10,000 U.S.D). Also, they received revenue from YouTube quarterly for each view of their content on the Rassd YouTube channel and by hosting advertisements on their content. Even when they were offered co-ownership in 2012 by an investor, they insisted that his share should not exceed 49 per cent. The people of Rassd continued to believe that prospective partners would not be allowed to intervene in the creation of its content, nor own a bigger share than the co-founders.

Financial autonomy was valued by the members of Mosireen, too, as after receiving a donation from the Arab Digital Expression Foundation (ADEF) in 2012, to launch the Rahal project, they decided to self-sustain through raising funds by providing services and activities. As such, they would charge for the use of their professional

equipment, as each hour 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. Moreover, crowdfunding was a major source of capital. 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 U.S.D) in donations of cash and video equipment. In September of the same year, an online fundraising campaign was launched, and in two months only it had collected 40,000 U.S.D (240,000 L.E) (Hamilton, et al., 2012), which made IndieGoGo, the crowdfunding online platform, list Mosireen's fundraising actions among the Top 12 Community Campaigns of 2012 (Nunnally, 2012). 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 making their output different to the more traditional mainstream media output achieved the aim of being revolutionary.

Concluding Points

The organisation of citizen journalism offers an employment domain for graduates fresh out of media schools, where they can pursue their journalism career in less time than the traditional mainstream media. For instance, the work of a journalist at Rassd was published online shortly after they started working, which would have taken much more time to happen in mass media. In addition, the phenomenon supports better investigations, because it makes citizen journalists' ideas more concrete by quickening the pace of the evolution of citizen media. In other words, it prompted them to revise and assess their practices and subsequently structure them and define their ethical frames.

Furthermore, the institutionalisation of citizen media may create an atmosphere of competition with mainstream media, as it stimulates citizen journalists to boost their success to the level of being a counterpart to mass media. This is especially the case when citizen media plays a role not executed by mainstream media, such as offering a voice to the victims of political oppression, being a form of resistance against state control over the mass media and becoming a domain of innovation in structures and conventions.

In this chapter, I studied citizen journalism institutionalisation by examining Rassd and Mosireen, two citizen media institutions which were founded in Cairo after the 2011 uprising. I used data collected from the co-founders and members of the two samples to introduce the organisation of citizen media, their motives, the way they see their work and how they see themselves and their work ambitions. After that, I discussed the implications of the institutionalisation of citizen media on its interaction with mainstream media. In the following chapter, I quickly recap the details I have provided here and in Chapter Five about the employment of citizen journalists in mainstream media and the institutionalisation of citizen media. Now, I move to underline the influencing factors of the interactions between citizen media and mainstream media.

III. THE DRIVERS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN CITIZEN MEDIA AND THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA

Over the last two chapters, I have explored the interaction between citizen media and mainstream media in Egypt through two comparative case studies between 2011 and 2013, emphasising the employment of citizen journalists in some mass media outlets and the institutionalisation of citizen journalism. I studied these two cases through samples of research data, to find out how and why the practices of these two organisations developed as they did, exploring the institutionalisation of citizen media by tracking their respective influence on each media genre. I gave the participants a pivotal position in my research, using data derived from my personal communication with them to present their self-perception, how they see the role of citizen media in society and their ambitions for the citizen media institutions they co-founded and for themselves.

In this chapter I take a step back from this microanalysis to look at the bigger picture of the interaction between citizen media and mainstream media, and to identify its key drivers for change at the macro level. I also argue that there were five significant factors for such interaction. First, social networking sites (SNSs) as the medium used in both citizen and mainstream media played a noteworthy role in shaping the interaction between these two media spheres. Second, the distinctive differences in the political economy of mass media and social media enabled and often privileged certain ways in which each operated and how they related to each other. Media organisers – the people in charge of running the media outlets as journalists, citizen journalists or media owners – had significant agency in shaping both the practices and structure of individual organisations and the way they operated in wider fields of media reporting and audience engagement. Fourth, my analysis makes it clear that the relationship between citizens and the political regime played a major role in determining both the context in which different organisations and media spheres operated, but this relationship also became a reference point for all the actors in the unfolding events of the years under scrutiny herein. Overshadowing all these political, organisational and economic drivers was the role of the state as the focal point of interaction between citizen media and mainstream media. I clarify the effect of each agent and determining social force and give examples from the four samples I set out in my earlier chapters, connecting this analysis to the theoretical

work I explored in the literature review. In addition, I cite some of the paradigms which I introduced in the literature review and use them to support my arguments and interpretations of the phenomena.

1. The Medium

In this chapter, I use the approach I established in setting out the theoretical framework of this research, conceiving social networking sites (SNSs) as the medium of citizen media, referring to them as ‘the new medium’ or the ‘new media’. I use the term ‘media’ to denote the technologies which connect communicators and mediate content. Hence, in this section ‘the media’ are channels or the communication devices. The advantage of SNSs is the ability of any user to make content and share it with others, which means that citizen media is the message of SNSs.

The medium was a key player in the construction of the structure of citizen media institutions and influenced the internal setting of mainstream media. The spread of social networking sites as a medium has not only created a need to bring citizen journalists to mass media and facilitated their hiring, but it has also shaped the work routines of these citizen journalists, which vary from their journalist colleagues’ routines. As I mentioned in Chapter Five, shift working times in the social media department at AlMasry AlYoun were fixed according to periods of high social networking site use. I felt the difference made by the medium in fashioning the working day of citizen journalists in my personal communication with Aya Abdullah, head of the SMD, as my interviews with her were scheduled at the times that were less busy for her, and surprisingly they were unusual to me. For instance, at a newspaper the evening is normally the time journalists receive guests, but for Abdullah and her colleagues it was the most work-heavy time, because users on SNSs become interactive in the evenings. Thus, Abdullah and I met in the afternoons, although this was still a hectic time for the journalists, as they were finalising their work; nonetheless, it was less stressful for her because fewer users were on the social networking sites at that time.

The upgrading and sophistication behind using social media have created a need for personnel who not only grasp the technological features of social networking sites and utilise them accordingly, but also understand the subculture of these sites. Such a job was above the skills of traditional journalists and required people who spent a great deal of time on social media and were aware of its specialist language, inside jokes and semiotics.

Therefore, mass media organisers looked for citizen journalists to take the job of handling the social media of their establishments. The continuous improvement of social media breeds the need to have citizen journalists in media institutions.

Furthermore, the demographics of the medium's users determined the age range of this new group of journalists, namely those who entered as citizen journalists and the organisers of citizen journalism. In other words, the fact that SNSs were used mostly by young people directed the choice of mainstream media editors towards the younger generation, which explains why the staff at both the social media department at AlMasry AlYoun (SMD) and OnTube were under the age of 30. Effectively, having a middle-aged broadcast journalist talking about Twitter and YouTube, and communicating with citizen journalists, could have been less convincing than Ramy Radwan, who was in his late twenties when he presented OnTube. Also, it could be argued that the newness of the phenomenon pushed mass media to follow the most economical methods of production, in order to avoid the risk of big losses in the case of failure. Hence, hiring undergraduates in AMAY and relying on early-career producers and presenters on OnTube lowered the risk of spending money on the salaries of far more experienced journalists or information technology experts, or publicity for a well-known anchor.

Moreover, the use of new technologies, such as the SNSs in mainstream media, pushed management teams to make partial changes to administrative traditions, such as using social media to facilitate the recruitment of citizen journalists, as seen in the cases of both AlMasry AlYoun and ON T.V. SNSs were also used for the recruitment of journalists at Rassd, where all the job vacancies were advertised on Facebook in closed groups for active members, who could apply themselves or share them with their peers. Next, the co-founders of Rassd shortlisted applicants and ran interviews for the final selection. In some cases, the medium replaced traditional work contracts, such as at Mosireen, where email correspondents mediated the recruitment of its two full-time general co-ordinators, whose work assignments and payment were negotiated in email threads as well as board members' meetings.

Interrogating ideas expressed by Marshal McLuhan, in his exploration of the 'medium' and 'message', it is useful to note that the popularity of social media sometimes affected the message they carry, as it encourages users to benefit from the social network sites as content promoters and disregard the culture created by the medium. This could be observed in the social media department of AlMasry AlYoun (SMD), where citizen

journalists did not intend to contribute to the messages of social media they used but only used SNSs to mediate ready-made content by journalists. Therefore, they disseminated the same content through various media formats. Even when AMAY's citizen journalists adapt content to the medium, it was for the sake of promotion. For instance, they would always attach pictures to the updates they published on the Facebook, in order to get more views for them (interview with Abdullah, 2013).

In the same regard, the case of OnTube, which lasted for around 18 months, suggests that in the interaction between citizen media and mainstream media, both old and new technologies may mediate each other's messages. Basically, OnTube used SNSs as a primary source of content, not as a medium. Television was the medium OnTube utilised to deliver the social media content. This television programme practically mediated the content and messages of citizen media to a mass media audience. Achieving this aim required the accommodation of social media content on television, as well as explaining the culture of citizen media to television viewers, which ended with the emergence of the challenges discussed in Chapter Five.

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 Rassd and Mosireen to deploy SNSs 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, SNSs played a role in fundraising for independent citizen media institutions, either in the case of Rassd, by selling advertisements on behalf of a network, such as on YouTube or, in the example of the foundation of Mosireen in 2012, as a means of running crowdfunding campaigns. Also, in many cases, SNSs as communication tools altered face-to-face interactions in citizen media institutions. For instance, in the case of Rassd, Facebook was used all the time, and only one general meeting was held per month, which saved both time and money in comparison to collective meetings, especially as not all staff members were located in Cairo.

Furthermore, the technological development of the medium as a platform stimulated and assisted the entrance of citizen journalists into mass media establishments, and it also acted as a channel of communication with job candidates. The novelty of the medium also determined, to some extent, the age group and the skills of the required

citizen journalists at AlMasry AlYoum and ON T.V., and as such the experiences and approaches of these citizen journalists fashioned their work systems.

I argue that new media has promoted the abstract thoughts of its users and created a space for turning these ideas into actions. This happens in 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 try to handle the defects of the old medium by integrating the new medium into it. While they are doing that, 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, either in a virtual room, like Rassd's Facebook group, or in physical media institutions. The fourth stage involves customising the new medium and probably developing it to fit the abstract thoughts it generated in the second stage.

In the case of Rassd and 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 ElFakharani, co-founder of Rassd, with Alajzeera to screen his video of a university protest, which he recorded in 2008. In the third stage, Rassd was created on Facebook, and some of Mosireen's co-founders collected the 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 Rassd and Mosireen did actually reach the last stage and generated new uses for the medium in the operation of their media initiatives. For instance, at Rassd, Web 2.0 tools were employed in decision making in the form of closed Facebook groups, where the administration and paid members of staff communicated, discussed issues and voted on resolutions (interview with ElFakharani, 2013).

2. Mass media

The older technologies were neither the sole nor the dominant player in the interaction between old and new media, a hypothesis proven by the administrative and editorial differences between the samples. Although both Rassd and Mosireen were founded under the same media ecology created by the old medium, they were not copies of each other, because more variables contributed to their fashioning. The question that emerges is: How is the mass media an agent in interactions, and how does it influence the two phenomena studied within this research?

Overall, the practices of citizen journalists are originated through mass media conventions, because they have observed them before becoming citizen journalists and then made the cognitive decision to repeat or abandon these practices in their media organisations. What may possibly give mainstream media a level of supremacy in interactions with citizen media? We can see that the explicit and implicit assimilations between citizen media and mainstream media in both Rassd and Mosireen were looking at mass media (the old medium) and then, intentionally or unintentionally, copied some of their conventions. In the case of Rassd this copying was explicit; for instance, it had a top-down management hierarchy similar to mass media, and the job titles for the citizens were taken from traditional media. For instance, active contributors were called ‘reporters’ (if they were in Cairo) and ‘correspondents’ (if they resided outside Cairo). Subconsciously, Rassd copied the gatekeeping concept, as hired journalists were authorised to edit, mash up and verify the content sent by regular volunteers. The hired journalist was the gatekeeper, who selected items and published them. At Mosireen, too, there was emulation of the mass media; for instance, in its relationship with the audience, Mosireen had a broadcast model in which the audience was the receiver and not invited to collaborate on the production or the development of any content whatsoever.

I propose that citizen journalists who organised their media during 2011, 2012 and 2013 were among the masses that were previously targeted as core audiences by mainstream media. They observed mass media outlets and reproduced them, according to other agents. Applying Bandura’s (1996) theory of social cognition, in which he sees behaviour as one’s response to the conduct we observe, to the study of interactions between citizen media and mainstream media is productive. We find that citizen journalists at Rassd and Mosireen did not have to copy mainstream media – it was their cognitive

choice to do so, based on mental and environmental factors. For instance, the Rassd team used the bi-line 'Breaking' for some news stories, which is a convention exported from mass media. They opted to do this because when *they* made up the audience of these media outlets, this particular bi-line succeeded in grabbing their attention on specific stories. Plus, due to the environment of their workplace, where many incidents happen consecutively, there was a need to highlight more events than others. Thus, they simulated mainstream media.

The dissatisfaction of citizen journalists with mass media did not reduce their impact on the organisation of citizen media. On the contrary, their dissatisfaction with the performance of mainstream media led to a decision to take the opposite approach to them, which required more observation of these media. For instance, before the foundation of Mosireen, its members barely watched or read Egyptian media, especially as many of them used to live abroad; instead, they relied on the internet to keep themselves updated about Egypt. But when Mosireen was established, its members organically consumed more media, even those of them who had no television set (such as Philipp Rizk and Omar Hamilton), though they occasionally watched popular talk shows online. They did this because they wanted to know the narratives of the state of events, and make a counter version of it for their own audience.

I asked the participants from Rassd and Mosireen a direct question about the relationship between their media institution and mainstream media. Their answers revealed two contradictory positions, summed up as “a love-hate relationship” (interview with Darwish, 2013). The first position was dissatisfaction with mass media, because of its loyalty to the political regime, which had led to two behaviours. First, the participants were less prone to engage with mass media journalists in their activities. For instance, Mosireen team members purposely excluded journalists from attending their media literacy workshop training sessions, as “the project aims at enhancing citizen media, and the training of early-career journalists is the responsibility of their employers and syndicate” (interview with Darwish, 2013). Second, with the allegiance of mainstream media to the state, citizen journalists saw this clash with the mass media as part of the confrontation with the political regime. This vision existed at the very beginning of Egyptian citizen journalism in 2004, and it lasted well after the 2011 uprising. The creators of Rassd were invited onto national television in February 2011. ElFakharani, one of the co-founders, described this incident to me as “a victory for Rassd,” because such an invitation was recognition of the quality of Rassd’s media performance, according to him. The second

position of citizen journalists towards mainstream media was necessity. They were not open to mainstream media; however, they understood the advantages of broadcasting their content on television and through the press (interview with Rizk, 2013 & ElNoby, 2013). Instead, mass media tended to use Rassd's video reports and embed them in their media coverage, without displaying the name of the reporter or the logo of Rassd (interview with X, 2013 & ElNoby, 2013).

The effect of mass media was not restricted to editorial conventions; it also affected the structure of citizen media institutions. As audiences and media workers, citizen journalists witnessed how mainstream media ownership affected content and directed the bias of television stations and newspapers. Therefore, they sought to preserve the autonomy of their media format and protect their content from affiliations with media owners. For instance, the co-founders of Rassd insisted that their media company should not be owned completely by a businessman or an investor, and they therefore allocated no more than 49% of the shares to the owner. They also rejected the offers of co-ownership from people affiliated with any political regime, for the sake of keeping Rassd independent. Also, the members of Mosireen refused to be funded by any local or foreign government, in order to keep their media collective far away from allegiance to any political system.

Moreover, news culture fashions the vision of the participants in relation to the meaning of 'journalism' and, consequently, their self-identification. This could be observed in their answers to the question whether they see themselves as journalists, as their definitions of 'journalist' were almost the same, namely someone whose profession is news gathering and reporting stories in an objective way, or who is biased in favour of the regime. However, citizen journalists attributed new meanings to the roles which were new to news culture, and they needed to answer questions such as what does it mean to be a citizen journalist at a television station or a newspaper? Hence, individually and collectively, they created definitions for their own jobs.

Mainstream media outlets do not always serve the evolution of citizen media, through the erection of certain barriers. For instance, the continuous media defamation of the protestors during the 2011 uprising led to the hacking of Rassd's Facebook group, which was later attributed to an Egyptian ex-pat hacker living in Saudi Arabia, who believed Rassd was harming the image of Egypt (interview with ElFakharani, 2013). This man was possibly affected by the discourse of Egyptian state-run television, which

extensively used the phrases ‘harming the image of Egypt’, ‘rioters and saboteurs’, ‘conspiracies’ and ‘foreign agendas’ in their news coverage of the 2011 uprising.

To some extent, mainstream media needed to interact with citizen media, because the intensification of competition in the local media market urged the organisers of mass media to widen its audience. Therefore, mainstream media treated the internet as a virtual extension of the market and competed to gain more online market share. Effectively, the environment of the media industry during 2012 and 2012 became more challenging for the press as well as the broadcast media, in a way that urged them to attract new audiences. As for the press, the circulation of newspapers and periodicals, by 2013, had decreased by 20 per cent since 2011 (Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics 2013). Hence, gaining more audiences became essential to sustaining a high level of readership and making profit. The internet was an ideal place to attract sources, because of the low costs involved in running accounts on different social network sites.

Meanwhile, the broadcast media were becoming more competitive, as increasing numbers of satellite channels were being licensed by the state. In 2011 alone, 16 television channels were launched by the ruling Supreme Council for Armed Forces as a sign of good intentions regarding freedom of expression. Later on, though, the council rescinded on its decision and ordered that no new licenses would be granted for satellite channels. It also threatened to “take legal measures against satellite television stations that jeopardise stability and security” (Freedom House, 2014).

Citizen journalists proved to be a new type of media worker capable of boosting the viewership/readership of mass media outlets at low cost. In the case of *AlMasry AlYoum* (AMAY), workers in the social media department (SMD) succeeded in making their establishment the most popular local newspaper on social network sites at the time of doing this research. This was achieved through the use of free SNSs, where was no additional cost for creating accounts (except for Soundcloud). For ON T.V., too, OnTube was a low-cost production, in that the guests were not paid and the content was collected from the internet; hence, the television station would not bear have to bear any production costs. At the same time, it filled airtime on Live ON T.V., which had recently launched and lacked content.

In practice, mainstream media concerns expected to generate profit from their openness to citizen journalism. At AMAY, the popularity on the internet bolstered the advertisement revenues of the establishment and promoted its position as the most popular

newspaper in the country. It deserves to note that AMAY usually do not reveal any numbers regarding advertisement revenue or rates, and the participants did not cite any statistics at this regard.

3. Media Organisers

The third agent that governs the interaction between citizen media and mainstream media is the media organiser. As I explained in the introduction, I am not concerned with all users of the medium, whom are often referred to in the literature as ‘humans’; instead, I wish only to focus on those who influence the usage of the medium, who own media outlets and who are the decision makers, those whom I describe as ‘media organisers’. Human agency is seen differently by many scholars. It has minimal efficacy in the medium theory, where technology drives human interaction with the medium, whereas human agency is of an equal significance with technology in the active network theory, as human and non-human agents interact in a complex manner.

In the previous section on the agency of the mass media, I referred to Bandura’s social cognitive theory to explain the behavioural changes in citizens, from observing mass media to organising their own media, and argued that citizen media organisations are a form of adaptation or rejection of the old media structure, which depends on the cognitive choices of the organisers. Nevertheless, what are the roles of human agency and social systems in the construction of a social structure? In other words, are humans more powerful than their societies, so they therefore produce or reproduce the social system into a structure? Or does the society have supremacy over individuals, as they are the outcome thereof?

In this thesis, the structures of citizen media were influenced by the activism of its organisers. In the case of Mosireen, the members were radical opponents of the political regime and desired an alternative format to the state. Thus, they not only created a counter-narrative of local media, but they also created counter forms of media ownership, management, production, staffing, monetising, work values and work systems. However, Rassd’s co-founders were more reformative and pragmatic about political regimes; therefore, their media outlet was an adaptation of the conventions of mass media. At Rassd it was no problem to borrow work techniques, structures or anything else from mainstream media, and then to remould it in the best way possible. For example, a citizen at Rassd would learn video reporting on a professional level, from journalists in the broadcast

media, and then produce and disseminate his own video reports in a way that matched Rassd's perspective on 'revolutionary media'.

The social cultures of citizen journalists have influenced their media organisations. For instance, I noted an attitude of conservatism at Rassd, represented in the behaviour of its personnel (e.g. female journalists would have needed the permission of their parents to go to a coffee shop, in order to attend the collective interview I conducted, and so they preferred to convene at Rassd's office instead) and in the work organisation (e.g. the separation of males and females, and scheduling night shifts to males only). This culture is explained by the fact that many of the co-founders lived and were raised in Gulf countries where this conduct is traditional. At Mosireen, too, I noted the cultural diversity of the members, most of whom held dual nationalities. Hence, almost the entire Mosireen website was bilingual, their videos had English subtitles and descriptions and its videos addressed the foreign audience in particular.

Moreover, journalists who had leading positions in the mass media facilitated and executed the employment of citizen journalists at *AlMasry AlYoum* (AMAY) and ON T.V. Actually, the decision to launch an online edition of AMAY, and recruit citizen journalists to look after it, probably would not have been taken, or at least would have come later, if the organisers of this media establishment did not believe in the necessity of openness to Web 2.0. As a result, both the website and the social media editions were launched while Hisham Kassim was publisher. Kassim was connected to the international media from early on in his career, and thus he was aware of large mainstream media corporations needing a Web presence, which made him less fearful about adopting innovative approaches. The recruitment of citizen journalists was backed by the journalists who were affiliated with citizen media and, at the same time, were decision makers in mass media, such as Noura Younis, an award-winning blogger and head of the AMAY online portal until 2011. Ehab ElZelaky is the current executive editor-in-chief and the first journalist in Egypt to cover the Arab blogosphere in print media in 2007.

Journo-bloggers brought more citizen journalists to work as professional media people after 2011. AbdelMoneim Mahmoud, content manager of Masr AlArabia Television, told me that citizen journalists were in greater demand in the newsroom after 2011, because SNSs had become primary sources of information, and sometimes the sole publishing platforms for official authorities. Mahmoud cited the example of the Supreme

Council for Armed Forces (SCAF), which tended to use its Facebook page to publish statements in 2011 and 2012.

In practice, citizen media audiences were part of the human agency fashioning the interaction between citizen media and mainstream media, because the extensive nature of their use of SNSs encouraged mainstream media openness to citizen media. Additionally, the audience influenced the self-identification of citizen journalists. Those who worked in mainstream media did not define themselves as journalists, because their work lacked what the audience looked for in a journalist, such as the skills of news gathering, a good command of classical Arabic and objectivity.

At this point I come back to the question I asked the participants at Rassd and Mosireen: ‘When will you stop doing this job?’ Their answers varied, but all of the participants had a high sense of commitment to sustaining their institutions, especially through the growth of audiences. This determination to continue was engendered by the feeling of pride after their media organisations gained contributors and followers on social media platforms and in reality.

4. The Relationship between Citizens and the State

The relationship between citizens and the ruling regime drove interactions between citizen media and mainstream media in Egypt between 2001 and 2013. Such a role was not new, as originally Egyptian citizen media was the outcome of dissatisfaction with mainstream media coverage of the relationship between the state and its citizens, as explained in Chapter Three. Citizen journalism has been used as a way to rebel against the state and all its machinations, including the political regime, social traditions, media conventions and taboos.

After the 2011 uprising, the relationship between the state and its citizens influenced the different aspects of citizen media-mainstream media interaction and reshaped the media 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.

During 2011, 2012 and 2013, this relationship varied from rejection of the political regime at the start of 2011, represented in the uprising against the then president Hosni Mubarak, to resistance against the regime in 2011 until the presidential elections in mid-2012, when protests continued in parallel under severe governmental suppression. Human Rights Watch documented that “in the first eight months of its rule, the SCAF [Supreme Council of Armed Forces] tried 12,000 civilians before military courts, more than the total number of trials of civilians before military courts under Mubarak” (2012). Subsequently, the country faced growing political polarisation in 2012, after the Muslim Brotherhood-backed Mohammed Morsi won power, which lasted until after his removal in 2013.

All of these events were milestones in the interactions between citizen media and mainstream media. For instance, the moment the military police brutally cleared a sit-in on March 2011, which some co-founders of Mosireen had attended, was a spark for the foundation of their media collective. Plus, the coup d'état in July 2013 provoked divergence between Rassd and the local mainstream media, especially as the latter were loyal to the new interim regime of Adly Mansour. This political change marked a massive structural change at Rassd.

Effectively, various relationships between citizens and the political regime have refashioned the environment of citizen media-mainstream media interaction. The 2011 uprising changed the behaviour of many mainstream media journalists toward their institutions, and SNSs became the channels these journalists used to announce their positions on the mass media. Specifically, the uprising evoked a degree of moral crisis for journalists in the state-owned and privately-owned media, since the coverage of their newsrooms was not compatible with what was happening on the ground. This impasse was what led to the resignation of several journalists, as pointed out by Nadia Idle and Alex Nunns:

“One of the features of the uprising was the gradual undermining of state TV and newspapers, to the extent that journalists began to resign as the public saw the ludicrous coverage for what it was.”

(Nunns & Idle, 2011)

By rejecting the editorial policies of their media platforms, SNSs were a way to denounce what newsrooms were publishing or broadcasting. In an article in *Egypt Independent*, Mai ElWakil cited a number of state T.V. workers tweeting and writing on their Facebook pages messages against the coverage of the Maspero massacre.

Mahmoud Youssef, who worked for state television, announced on his Twitter account that he had rejected the way the news was covered: “I work as a host for Egyptian television, and I’m innocent of what Egyptian television is broadcasting,” he said. Similarly, Taghreed El-Dossouky, who worked in state television, wrote on her account: “I reject the Egyptian state media’s coverage because it incites sectarianism, and I condemn all those who partake in it.” Dina Rasmy, a long-time host on Egyptian television, also wrote on her Facebook page: “I’m ashamed I work for this disrespectful television..’

(ElWakil, 2011)

.Effectively, the status of the citizen in the state determined the receptivity of user-generated content (UGC) in the traditional media. So, the more participative the citizens of the state, the more interactive with citizen journalism mainstream media they become. I measure the position of the citizen in the state via civic engagement, precisely the

percentages of voters in referendums and elections. In fact, the presidential elections in 2012 witnessed a participation rate of 51%, which went down to 47% in 2014. Furthermore, in the referendum on a bundle of constitutional changes in 2012, 63% of the overall registered voters participated, whilst in 2014, only 38% of the voters attended the referendum on a new constitution (Hassan, 2015).

I will now compare the names given to the citizen media projects of AMAY (*Sharek* and *Checkdesk*) to *Skoot Hansawwat*, the collective blog Islam Online launched in 2005 to engage the audience and cover the parliamentary elections held that year, or what I highlighted in the theoretical framework of this thesis as an early citizen journalism project. The comparison reflects the influence of citizen empowerment on the choice of titles. As such, '*Skoot Hansawwat*' هِنصَوْت! سَكُوْت (translation: *Silence! We Gonna Vote*) is an inside joke, only understandable to an Egyptian. It is a twist on *Skoot Hansawwar* (Silence! We are Rolling), a drama film produced in 2001. The title is not clear to everybody but to the well-cultured only. Whereas '*Sharek*' شَارِك (translation: *Participate*) is a verb that is connected with participation in public life and democracy, and it is clear to everyone. '*Checkdesk*' is press media jargon. *Sharek* and *Checkdesk* began in 2012 and 2013, when citizens were politically empowered.

The titles of each project are indicative of their target audience. *Skoot Hansawwat* sought the participation of bloggers and was launched when citizen media was a new media format. Thus, it was intended to be deviant and less formal than traditional media. The titles of AMAY's citizen media projects originated from the vocabulary of the press and democracy. *Sharek* seems to be addressing all the audience and inviting them to send in their reports, thereby representing a degree of the openness of mass media to citizen journalism. *Checkdesk*, while launched only a year later than *Sharek*, focused more on audience members who would become regular contributors to newspaper content. Hence, its title was a word used in journalism.

Concluding Points

In this chapter I have introduced the drivers of the interaction between citizen media and mainstream media as the medium, old media, media organisers and the relationship between citizens of the state and the political regime. I started with McLuhan's 'medium is the message', to discuss the priority of the medium in the four samples and its relationship to content. The influence of the medium on the message varied in each sample, for instance, content was more important at Rassd and Mosireen, the independent citizen journalism institutions I studied, because the co-founders of the two initiatives were mainly concerned with the usage of content in their political activism, and so the medium was only a tool for creating and publishing.

I found that the features of social networking sites helped citizen journalists to turn their existing thoughts into reality. I suggested this occurs in four phases: disagreement with old media formats, exploring the new medium and trying to use it to amend old media, which raises ideas about the best ways to use it, then these ideas being turned into actions, which gradually develop into structures, and, lastly, generating more functions for the medium.

Moreover, the technological advancement of social media created a need for citizen journalists who enjoy a deep understanding of their use and subcultures. Also, the social network site Twitter was the place from where these citizen journalists were selected for mass media jobs. The medium not only facilitated the entrance of this group into mainstream media outlets, but it also shaped its characteristics; for instance, the fact that most social media users are young meant that all of the citizen journalist staff members at AlMasry *AlYoum* and ON T.V. were all under the age of 30. Additionally, the medium fashioned the work systems of these citizen journalists, as their working time was built around user engagement statistics.

Thereafter, I moved to the role of mass media in the driving its interaction with citizen media. I argued that the practices of citizen journalism originated in old media, because what the individual does is the sum of their observations. Basically, mainstream media was observed by citizen journalists when they were part of the audience. Then, they cognitively chose whether to imitate or oppose what they had observed. Also, I noted that the citizen journalists continued to consume mass media products, even if they were not satisfied with their quality, because if they decided to do the opposite of what they did not

like about mass media, they still needed to observe what they were unhappy about and understand its creation, so they could then do something different.

Furthermore, the political economy of the Egyptian mass media after the political uprising in 2011 led to the openness of these media bodies to citizen media. Effectively, the local media industry became more challenging and competitive, which urged the media to attract new audiences. The internet was an ideal place for achieving this aim, because it was low-cost, had a great deal of different social networking sites and could be employed to make newspapers appear more modern. According to an official report, the number of newspapers and periodicals in circulation in Egypt declined by 20% between 2011 and 2012 (203 periodicals in circulation in 2012 compared to 249 in 2011). Therefore, gaining more audience share became essential to sustaining a high level of readership, and to making profit. Meanwhile, the broadcast media were becoming more competitive, as more satellite channels were licensed by the state, albeit in 2011 only, when 16 new television channels were launched. This increase in television channels urged media owners to apply every conceivable method that would help in widening their audience. Therefore, mainstream media treated the internet as a virtual extension to the market, and competition grew accordingly.

In addition to the medium and mass media, media organisers were also drivers of the interaction between citizen media and mainstream media. I argued that these media organisers exported their cultural and ideological principles to the interactions. I used a number of sociological theories to explain this point and to illustrate the processing of societal culture into new structures (institutions). In addition, I explored new meanings of 'self' (e.g. what does it mean to be a citizen journalist for a newspaper or a television station?).

Finally, the relationship between citizens of the state and the political regime governs interactions between citizen media and mainstream media. Since its emergence in Egypt, citizen journalism has been as a way of facilitating political dissidence, and after the 2011 uprising it was used for documenting the subsequent crackdown against citizens. Also, citizen media was influenced by the people's action against the then president Hosni Mubarak, as the success of the protests in overthrowing him caused a psychological change that motivated citizen journalism toward collectivism. In addition, the political uprising had a further impact on the interaction of citizen media and mainstream media, because it changed the way in which journalists in the mass media regarded their work.

Many reporters and presenters working at state-owned and local privately-owned media outlets resigned from their jobs in protest over the inaccuracy of the content broadcasted by the media about the uprising and its protestors. Moreover, I argued that the civic engagement of citizens feeds the interactions between mainstream media and citizen media.

In the next chapter, I conclude the thesis with a summary of its findings and outline my main argument by underlining the central role of the state in this interaction. I follow this by discussing the implications and significance of this research, setting out some of the key ways in which it could be developed further within the field and looking toward the future regarding interactions between citizen media and mainstream media.

CONCLUSION

Through this research, I made two achievements in regards to findings and methodologies. Firstly, I adapted the phenomenological approach to study the process of content making, which is uncommon in the study of citizen media scholarships. However, linking my research to phenomenology would be problematic or even unsettling for the phenomenologists who may see it as non-phenomenological. In practice, the adaptation or inspiration of phenomenology enabled me to see angles of the objects of study which I would not have been aware of otherwise, such as the motivations of the citizen journalists to organise their media outlets or to join the mass media. I was then able to link that to their practices and ambitions. Furthermore, this thesis provides a microscopic picture to a number of untraditional media outlets, such as the social media department of the Al Masry Al Youm newspaper. Also, it records the process of a citizen media organisation in the midst of political instability, and highlights the effect of the political ecology on citizen media. Also, the third chapter of the thesis treats the mutual influences of citizen media and mainstream media on each other through journo-bloggers, people who practice both types at the same time. There is little literature on this type of journalist, and almost no study related to the case of Egypt. The timing of the in-depth interviews, which was approximately eight years after their experience as bloggers, helped me to determine the short and long-term influences on the media landscape, and allowed the interviewees to reflect on it.

My findings represent original primary data and frames of analysis that help explain the set of relationships between media types and the agents which shape these relationships. Over eight chapters, I have studied the interaction between citizen media and mainstream media in Egypt after the political uprising against the former president Hosni Mubarak in January 2011. I used the term ‘interaction’ to denote the impacts of each media type on the other. The research explored the mutual influences of mainstream media on citizen media, and vice versa, in order to define ultimately the driving forces behind fashioning the interrelations between these two media genres.

The research specifically investigated the interaction between citizen media and mainstream media in Egypt during 2011, 2012 and 2013. The research strategy involved looking for meeting points for the two media genres, and then sampling and studying them in-depth. The thesis identified four intersections of mainstream media and citizen media.

The first involved journo-bloggers, those journalists who were active bloggers before 2011. They bridged the Egyptian blogosphere and mainstream media and complemented their traditional media work with citizen journalism, where they could report freely, without the editorial restrictions placed on them by their employers, and articulate their subjective opinions. Studying the interactions between mainstream media and citizen media before 2011 framed it later on.

The second meeting point of citizen media and mainstream media was the employment of citizen journalists in mainstream media after the 2011 uprising. This phenomenon represented an openness from mass media to citizen journalism, which was reflected in the flexibility of media institutions to change a number of administrative rules in order to hire citizen journalists as members of staff. For instance, media outlets used social networking sites (SNSs) to find the best candidates and to communicate with them, when necessary.

And the third crossing point for mainstream media and citizen media, was the hiring of citizen journalists in mainstream media, thereby proving the recognition of some editors and owners of the advancements of social media being beyond the skills of their traditional journalists. Meanwhile, citizen journalists expressed their enthusiasm for facilitating a textual convergence between citizen media and mainstream media, because they saw this as a way to spread the user-generated content produced by themselves and their peer citizen journalists. Also, I observed that the journalists who worked alongside citizen journalists were motivated to enhance their knowledge about SNSs.

Lastly, the fourth junction between citizen media and mainstream media was the institutionalisation of citizen media, i.e. the shift from being a Web-based practice to an organised institution, where citizen journalists set the managerial structures and defined editorial policies in a physical location. This phenomenon was a reproduction of mainstream media, as citizen journalists used SNSs to fulfil the 'revolutionary media' model to which they aspired. They simulated mass media in some aspects, innovated in others and contradicted some. Basically, the participants rejected the bias of mainstream media toward the political regime, by organising media outlets which acted as regime watchdogs, giving a voice to the victims of political repression and bringing the voices of the common people to the fore rather than the experts. Additionally, citizen media institutions were a new workplace for early-career professional journalists, where they

were paid better than in the mass media and could get their work published faster than in the print media.

I relied on sampling and set accessibility and popularity as key selection criteria. The thesis focused on four local media platforms as objects of study: the social media department of the AlMasry AlYoun newspaper, the first department for social media in the Egyptian local press, OnTube, a daily television programme digesting material sourced from social network sites, produced and screened by the ON T.V. satellite channel, the Rasd Facebook page, started by a group of young activists in 2010 and transformed into a media company in 2011, and the journalist- and activist-run media co-operative Mosireen.

The thesis suggests a strong influence of the medium in the structures of media outlets, either in citizen media or mass media industry. The spread of social networking sites and their constant technological upgrades created a need to hire a new group of workers in mainstream media, who would be in charge of using these sites as sources, content promotion tools and as communication channels with their audiences. The medium shaped the work routine of this new cohort, as well as their users in citizen media institutions, where social media platforms were given many roles and integrated in the managerial process.

Furthermore, I argued that citizen media is rooted in mainstream media, even though it was practiced particularly to alter mass media. This derives from the fact that citizen journalists are among the mass audience of televisions and newspapers. They observe the performance of mass media and assess its strengths and weaknesses. When these audience members become citizen journalists, they make a cognitive choice about whether or not to simulate the mass media. But even when they opt to contradict the conventions of mainstream media and create alternatives, this decision by itself proves the influence of mass media on alternative media.

In addition, mass media organisers and citizen journalists shape the media scene according to subjective factors, such as their personal life history as political activists or investors, and their objective of establishing media outlets. Also, these media organisers fashion the media landscape according to objective reason, mainly the political economy of communication in their societies, media laws and the political and social environments.

We can observe that the agents which shaped the relationships between citizen media and the mainstream before 2011 assimilated with those which fashioned their

interactions later on. Basically, the variables in interactions from the mid-2000s until the 2011 uprising were the human agency of journo-bloggers, the mass media agenda and loyalty to the political regime, besides the attention paid in the foreign mainstream media to Egyptian citizen journalists and the relationship between citizens and the authoritarian state, which motivated the former to create alternative structures, including the media. After 2011, these factors remained drivers of the interaction between citizen media and mainstream media. Yet, the technological advancement of Web 2.0 and the fast spread of social media gave a role to the medium.

I used personal communication and observations as primary research methods, and I also maintained a phenomenological approach throughout the thesis. Thus, the study of the interactions was from the viewpoints of citizen journalists. I described their personal experiences, observed their work, analysed their replies to my questions and their spontaneous statements, in order to underline the most influential agents in the interaction between citizen media and mainstream media, as lived by the participants.

Therefore, the drivers of citizen media-mainstream media interaction in Egypt between 2011 and 2013 were as follows:

First was the medium or technology, namely SNSs, the channels for creating, generating and publishing citizen media content and which, recently, have been integrated into mainstream media, too. Technology was a key player in the two phenomena studied in this research, by being a space where citizen journalists could turn their abstract thoughts into actions. I contend that citizen journalists observed mass media before the invention of social media, and they were conscious of certain weaknesses, such as the lack of objectivity, lack of immediacy or the misreporting of events. Then, social media appeared, and so some mass media spectators tried it out and explored its capabilities – these users of the new medium became citizen journalists. Subsequently, they tried to integrate the new medium with old media, represented in the different forms of collaboration between bloggers and SNSs users with journalists.

Moreover, the new medium was a push toward the interaction between citizen media and mainstream media, because citizen journalists used it as a way of implementing alternative strategies to the mass media, such as using a crowdfunding website to support the financial independence of their media institutions. For the mainstream media, the popularity of SNSs and their low cost encouraged mainstream media to use them as an

instrument for widening their audience share, as it gave them access to a vast swathe of active users of the internet, all of whom were social media users.

Second are traditional print and broadcast media outlets. Mass media organisations were the primary learning source for citizen journalists, because prior to the invention of social media they had been audiences of television and newspapers, by observing the media, and learned what were perceived as good or bad practices. Later on, SNSs enabled these audiences to become journalists. At that point, they made a cognitive choice to take the opposite stance to the media they had observed in some aspects, and simulate it in others. The impact of mass media continued, as citizen journalists still observed their output, in order to either refute their narratives or to learn lessons from them. Moreover, the political economy of the mass media stirred its interaction with citizen media, by inducing them to open up to citizen journalists, especially following the decline in the circulation of the print media in Egypt in 2011 and 2012.

Third were the media organisers, people with authority in a media institution. They could be owners, co-founders or editors. Effectively, the culture and professional backgrounds of these people, and their objectives behind organising their company, influenced interactions between citizen media and mainstream media. Clearly, citizen journalists who established media outlets organically built and operated them in a way similar to their political leanings.

Fourth was the relationship between the state and its citizens, including journalists, citizen journalists and audiences. The state, as I denote in this research, constitutes political and social institutions, including the regime. The dissatisfaction of citizen journalists with the performance of the local media was part of their dissatisfaction with the state. Fundamentally, the inception of Egyptian citizen media was mixed with political activism against the Mubarak regime. The early generation of citizen journalists were political activists, who used their Web blogs to tell the stories mainstream media omitted from their agendas. They started to do this in the mid-2000s, coincidentally with calls for political change and the formation of grassroots groups that denounced the continuation of Mubarak's rule. Thus, Egyptian citizen media originally meant to spread the content mainstream media ignored or underreported, and to publish activist materials and coverage that would mobilise people against the political regime.

Political conditions most certainly had an impact on the different variables in citizen media-mainstream media interaction. For the citizens, their empowerment and civic

engagement often led to greater convergence between citizen media and mainstream media. Moreover, the decisions of citizen journalists regarding the organisation of their media were usually associated with political incidents. For example, the institutionalisation of Rassd occurred after the stepping down of Hosni Mubarak, and the decision of their staff to go undercover was taken after the arrest of most of the co-founders as a consequence of the 2013 coup d'état. For journalists, political change in 2011 blurred the lines between professional life and their political positions. A number of journalists in the mainstream media experienced a moral crisis when they observed contradictions between what they had witnessed and what they were told to report. Often, they used SNSs to express their assessments of the newspapers and television stations for which they worked, and on many occasions they used them to announce their resignation.

My findings represent original primary data and frames of analysis that help explain the set of relationships between media types and the agents which shape these relationships. Clearly, the holistic approach of Golding and Murdock (2005) in analysing the media has influenced my thesis. These two scholars connect economy with society, culture and politics. Similarly, I draw on the cultural background of citizens, the relationship between citizens and the state as a political element, and the uprising against President Hosni Mubarak in 2011 as social change. Moreover, some of the key findings assimilate with their arguments, precisely, the four drivers of the interaction between citizen media and the mainstream media (the medium, the media organisers, the relationship between citizens and the state, and the mass media) are very close to the four drivers proposed by Golding and Murdock (2016) as “key drivers of change” in the political economy of social media, or what they call the “organisation of contemporary capitalism” (p.267), which are: financialisation, marketisation, globalisation, and digitalisation. Nevertheless, the two scholars are concerned with “the balance between capitalist enterprise and public intervention” (Golding and Murdock, 2005. p. 61). However, in this research I do not regard the mainstream media as a capitalist enterprise. In fact, the thesis reveals that citizen journalists who established media outlets sometimes simulate the behaviour of mass media owners. For instance, in Rassd, citizen journalists built hierarchal structures, and board members were the chief decision makers.

Therefore, this research will be valuable when used to understand changes in the media within a country in transition, such as Egypt, or in societies within a similar media setting. By their very nature, the qualitative findings are “highly context and case dependant” (Patton, 1999, p. 1197), as they are limited to the situation and time period in

which the samples were observed. In order to cope with social and political change, some of the samples changed their work techniques over time, while for others their experiences were repeated in a completely different way.

Hence, this thesis is limited to the period in which it was conducted, which means that the replication of the data collection should lead to different data, because some of the samples changed working techniques to adapt to the new political conditions. One example was the Follow On programme, which nowadays focuses on the soft and entertaining content of Wed 2.0 instead of the reports of Arab journalists about serious events, including political uprisings and conflicts which were originally covered on its forerunner OnTube.

Clearly, more qualitative research should be conducted on media people. Using a phenomenological approach in this thesis, and arguing for human agency to be a driver of the interactions between citizen media and mainstream media, I propose that any study of the media industry cannot be complete without studying this cohort. It is essential to understand why journalists become journalists, and how they prepare, work and professionally develop themselves. However, reaching out to citizen journalists often requires the persistence and patience of the researcher. Moreover, studying citizen journalism in some societies requires a high awareness of online and self-protection, and of the researcher's ability to achieve the ethical issues of not harming participants, data protection and anonymity.

Fellow researchers should start a revision to the methodologies they are using. When the social networking sites (SNSs) appeared and started to become objects of academic studies, a question came to the fore: should we use the 'old' media theories (developed in the sixties onward) to understand these 'new' media? Yet, another question needed to be posed: should we use the 'old' research methods to investigate the 'new' media types? I believe there are major differences between citizen media and the other types of media, not only in channels and political-economy, but also in terms of being practiced by individuals who do not share a common perspective to what they do. For instance, in Rassd, some identify themselves as journalists, others as citizen journalists. Even more identities may appear on the same group, some active users of social media do not accept being referred to as 'citizen journalists', they may think of themselves as creative writer, artists, storytellers or anything else.

Moreover, scholars should be open to experiment with uncommon research approaches and methods to understand citizen media. Reconsidering the methodologies of researching citizen media is becoming essential, because as academics we are focused on studying the impact and the channels of citizen media; we seldom stop to study the content makers themselves. This focus on content and medium leaves many topics without in-depth investigation of factors such as the transformation of citizen journalism (for instance from individualism to collectivism, from a habit to a profession). One reason that researchers are not borrowing paradigms of social sciences, for instance, to study citizen media, could be that they do not have solid backgrounds in these areas, as they graduated with social media degrees or were educated in specialised internet research institutions. Gurak (2004) observes that with the emergence of internet studies, “a new group of researchers [appeared], raised in the dot.com age and emerging from their graduate studies” (p. 29).

Possibly, the methods used in social media research contributed to this limitation, for instance, nowadays there is a significant amount of software which collects curates and analyses social media content. One shortcoming of this is that these tools have become a handy option for emerging researchers, thus leading to more research on content rather than content makers. On the other side, there are hardly any references to qualitative research about citizen media based on personal interaction between academics and citizen journalists. I identified a gap in the research method literature, namely the absence of guidelines for researching new media people. I suggest that researchers who have studied citizen media, community media and alternative media start sharing their experiences in data collection along with any concerns, and ethical considerations and describe how they dealt with them accordingly.

One way to take this research further would be to study the same samples beyond the timeframe of the thesis, investigating how they are running their outlets or doing their jobs in the mainstream media, how they see value in it, whether their goals have changed, and finally compare the findings with this thesis to determine how citizen media responds to political, economic and social change.

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Appendix 1

CHRONOLOGY OF THE FOUNDATION OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA DEPARTMENT IN *ALMASRY ALYOUM* NEWSPAPER (AMAY)

Year	Event
2002	<i>AlMasry AlYoum</i> newspaper (AMAY) obtained the required official publishing permits.
2003	Staffing and start of work.
2004	The first issue appeared in the local market. AMAY launched website where a digital copy of the paper was made available for download at the evening.
2007	Enabling readers' comments on the website
2008	A group of youths were hired to moderate readers' comments; they were given the title Web Community Managers.
2009	The establishment of the Web Department as independent from the newsroom.
2011	The creation of a social media unit within the Web Department. The Social Media Unit was detached from the Web. It became an independent department responsible of managing the presence of AMAY on the internet, while the Web was making content for AMAY news portal.
2012	AMAY's Social Media Department starts ' <i>Twitter hashtag debates</i> ' which is hosting a public figure on the newspaper premises, get questions from the users of Twitters on a certain hashtag and tweet their answers in real time.

Appendix 2

CHRONOLOGY OF THE PRODUCTION OF ONTUBE TELEVISION PROGRAM

Year	Event
2011	The first episode of OnTube goes live.
2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Zeyad Salem and Islam ElQady joined the team work of OnTube.▪ The duration of episodes was extended to be 90 minutes.▪ A new segment was added, in which a social media journalist is hosted from a newsroom.
2013	The program suspension due to the lack of its advertising revenue.

Appendix 3

CHRONOLOGY OF THE INSTITUTIONALISATION OF RASSD

Date	Event
August, 2010	Rassd Facebook group was created.
January, 2011	Rassd branded itself as a news network, with a logo, motto and fixed styled updates.
February, 2011	<p>Rassd continued to publish updates on the Uprising against the political regime of Hosni Mubarak despite the internet blackout. The co-founders of Rassd were supported by Aljazeera, which provided the co-founders with satellite phones.</p> <p>The identities of Rassd's administrators were revealed, as they had phone interventions on Aljazeera to describe and comment on the events in Egypt.</p> <p>The Rassd Facebook page was hacked during the protests of January 2011. It was later discovered by a member of Rassd's admin team that the hack was performed by an Egyptian ex-pat living in Saudi Arabia who believed Rassd was harming the image of Egypt. He was probably affected by the discourse of the Egyptian mainstream media, especially the state-run television, who extensively used the phrases 'harming the image of Egypt' in their news coverage.</p>
March, 2011	<p>The administrations of Rassd were hosted in the national television to speak about how they have used Facebook to live cover the uprising.</p> <p>The administrators of Rassd started the legal work to register Rassd as a media stakeholder company.</p>
April/May, 2011	<p>Rassd started to function as a media production company with 25 full time staff members and an office in Downtown Cairo.</p> <p>The co-founders of Rassd were invited to a tour in the Military Investigation buildings and offered to be conveyed as press delegates to cover a military show in Spain. They accepted the invitation to visit the military investigation headquarters, but refused to cover the military show, as considered it an attempt of containment.</p> <p>The co-founders of Rassd visited Turkey after receiving an official invitation from Ankara.</p>
September, 2012	Due to financial difficulties, the Rassd company was restructured, and the full time members of staff were cut down to 8 people only.
February, 2013	<p>Rassd was settled in a new premises in Dokki neighbourhood in Giza/Cairo.</p> <p>Rassd team received a comprehensive training by the Deutsche Welle on reporting and running small media outlets.</p> <p>A full administrative reform to Rassd, and a board of directors was formed.</p>
August, 2013	<p>Arrest of some founders.</p> <p>The Dokki office was shut down, and Rassd was moved to an undeclared address</p> <p>The staff of Rassd, except the video reporter, started to work from home.</p>

Appendix 4

CHRONOLOGY OF THE INSTITUTIONALISATION OF MOSIREEN

Date	Event
April, 2011	<p>A group of activists agreed to establish a media collective, and called themselves Mosireen.</p> <p>One of the group members donated them a part office of his media production company to be their premises, the flat in Downtown Cairo had the sign and logo of Mosireen.</p> <p>Mosireen convened a workshop for citizens journalists at its premises, where they learned how to improve their use of mobile phones in video reporting.</p>
June, 2011	An account on Twitter was set up with under the name and logo of Mosireen.
July, 2011	<p>Mosireen started an initiative called Tahrir Cinema to screen archival footage and other works by various groups in Tahrir Square in Cairo during a protest sit-in.</p> <p>The Mosireen's website went live (mosireen.org).</p>
August, 2011	A Youtube channel was created under the name Mosireen.
October, 2011	The Mosireen channel Youtube published its first video of a policeman beating up a protestor. It continued to be updated with videos of advocate groups, such as No Military Trials and the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights.
January, 2012	The members of Mosireen and people from their circles started a public-awareness and alternative media campaign called Kazboon (means: Liars). The main goal was mobilisation against the governing Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF), by screening videos that shows the brutality of the military police against civilians in the streets all over Egypt.
March, 2012	<p>Mosireen held a fundraising party, invited people of their 'pro-revolution' circles of public figures and establishments, got their donations. The party made 90,000 L.E as cash and equipment.</p> <p>Mosireen got a grant for 22,000 USD from the NGO Adhf to start Mosireen-Rahhal, a project to teach video making to citizen outside Cairo.</p>
August, 2013	Moving to a rented office in Downtown Cairo.

Appendix 5

The Interviews' Guide

1. Planning Protocol

a. For all Interviews

2. The participants should be invited to select the location and time of the interview.
3. I must form participants with the approximate time of the interview duration.
4. Scheduling the interview must be done via the communication channel preferred by the participant, which guarantees its responsiveness and lowers risk for them.
5. I should show time flexibility and do not pressure on the participants to change their time planning if they are not matching with mine.
6. The interview is 50 minutes in average.
7. The participant may be asked for a second interview.
8. Not more than 70 minutes, and in case the time was limited, I should request arranging another interview.
9. Short conversations (20 minutes or less) that help in data collection may be developed later into an interview.
10. The interview must be stopped in any case of emergency resulted from the instability of the research field.

b. For the Face-to-Face Interviews

11. I should specify an alternative meeting location in case I or the participants could not reach the previously specified location.
12. I should carry enough cash to pay for the participants' drinks.
13. I should not carry any consent forms with me to the interview.
14. I should not use any devices (such as laptops or recording devices) that do not fit in my women bag.
15. I should double check the tools I am using in the interview beforehand (having a spare pen and mobile charger).

c. For the Social Media facilitated interviews

16. To ask the participant if they feel both comfortable with not face-to-face communication.

17. To ask the participant if they hold any security concerns regarding our communication, and affirming that other alternative could be arranged.
18. Doing the interview from home not at public places.
19. Checking the connectivity of my computer before starting the interview.
20. Use third-party applications to record the interview.

2. The Interview

a. Introduction-Key components

1. Thanking the participant.
2. Introducing myself again
3. Clarifying the purpose of the interview
4. Inviting the participant to ask me question about what I research, and using the topic of citizen media as an icebreaker.
5. Implicit invitation to the participant to speak about something they like (i.e: the internet, their memories in the 2011 uprising or their memories as bloggers).
6. Explaining how the interview will be conducted.
7. Asking the participant about their preference of confidentiality.
8. Asking the participant's permission for audio recording the interview and informing them that I will be writing down some notes.

b. Questions

i. For citizen journalists

1. What you studied/what is your job? And how was your life in the last few years?
2. Do you watch television or read the print media?
3. What do think 'citizen media' is?
4. Do you call yourself 'citizen journalist'? If not, what then?
5. Why you became a citizen journalist, or starting making content outside the mass media?
6. How you started your job in the mainstream media/co-founded the citizen media outlet which you are part of?
7. What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon?.

8. What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon (motivated you to continue or stop, affected your relationships with your peers)?.
9. Why they chose to get involved in the experience?.
10. When would you stop citizen journalism?
11. What are your career ambitions/ prospect for the citizen media institution you co-founded?
12. How the media outlet you work was established?
13. How the staff was hired?
14. What is your daily work routine?
15. Have you participated in deciding the work system?
16. What hardships you have in this place?
17. What are the best advantages of your job/ the place you co-founded?
18. How do you think the mainstream media and citizen media are interacting in Egypt at the time being?

ii. For Journo-bloggers

1. What do think 'citizen media' is? What are its core characteristics?
2. Did you start your journalism career first? Or became a journalist after blogging?
3. Why you did both professional journalism and blogging at the same time?
4. How blogging have influenced your career and vice versa?
5. How do you think the mainstream media and citizen media are interacting in Egypt at the time being?

c. Closing- Key Components

- Ask the participant if they have additional comments or questions for me.
- Ask the participant if there are people they think I should meet with for my research.
- Asking the participant if they have said something that would like me not to include it in my research.
- Informing the participant of the possibility of asking them for another interview

- Ask the participants about their preferred communication channel in the future if I needed to clarify something from them.
- Thanking the participant.

d. Post- interview communication

No public discussion about the interview arrangements (for example not using public tweets for agreeing on a time and location for meeting), for the confidentiality of research and safety of researchers and participants.

Appendix 6

Consent Form

The Research

Noha Atef – The Interaction between The Mainstream Media and Citizen Media in Egypt in the years 2011, 2012 and 2013.

This research is an attempt to understand the interaction between mainstream media and citizen journalism in post-revolutionary Egypt, I will be collecting data from different newsrooms of mainstream and citizen media. The findings of the collected data will be written up in a PhD thesis and possibly academic articles or books.

I am seeking your consent to use things you tell me in my academic work. When you sign below, you agree to a number of things. If you request it, I will endeavour to show you a copy of the research I intend to publish and I welcome your comments and suggestions.

Your statement of consent

I freely give my consent to participate in this research study.

I have had the research satisfactorily explained to me by the researcher, and I will keep a copy of this consent form as record of that information.

I consent to be interviewed by the researcher and to give all the information she asked for and I which I feel comfortable sharing. I understand that I can ask for things I have said in the interview not to be used in published work by the telling the interviewer at the time.

I consent to my real name being used in this research, to have the data in its written and recorded forms shared with other researchers and academics, in the context explained to me as the research topic. I understand that any audiotape material of me will only be used for research purposes undertaken by this researcher. And the material will not be used in media publications without my consent.

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 4- Translation

إستمارة الموافقة على مشاركة في بحث أكاديمي

بحث عن: التفاعل بين الإعلام العام والإعلام الشعبي في مصر ما بعد الثورة (بين عامي 2011 و 2013) - للباحثة: نهى عاطف

هذا البحث محاولة لفهم التفاعل بين الإعلام العام والصحافة الشعبية في مصر ما بعد الثورة. يعتمد البحث على جمع بيانات من مختلف المساحات الإعلامية داخل مؤسسات الإعلام العام ومبادرات الصحافة الشعبي. الغرض من جمع هذه البيانات هلى تحليلها والوصول إلى استنتاجات تتضمنها رسالة الدكتوراه الخاصة بي ، وربما بعض الأعمال الأكاديمية مثل كتاب أو مقالات علمية.

أطلب منكم الموافقة على استخدام البيانات والمعلومات التي قمت بجمعها منكم ذلك من خلال التوقيع على هذه الإستمارة التي تحدد ما أود إثبات موافقتكم عليه. حال طلبكم، سوف أعرض عليكم الإطلاع على نسخة من البحث عند الإنتهاء منه وقبل نشره، وأرحب بتعليقاتكم عليه.

صيغة الموافقة

أوافق على المشاركة في هذا البحث، وقد قدمت لي الباحثة شرحاً وافياً له، وسوف أحتفظ بنسخة منه . وأؤكد قبولي إجراء مقابلة مع الباحثة وإمدادها بكافة البيانات التي تطلبها والتي لا أمانع مشاركتها. وأحتفظ بحقي في الإشارة إلى عدم رغبتني في إستخدام بعض هذه البيانات، حال رغبتني في ذلك.

أعبر عن موافقتي في استخدام إسمي الحقيقي ضمن هذا البحث، ومشاركة ما قدمته من بيانات في صورة مكتوبة أو مسموعة كما مع أكاديميين آخرين عبر الباحثة، وفقاً للسباق التي قامت بشرحه لي. وأتفهم أن التسجيلات التي أجرتها الباحثة للمقابلات التي دارت بينها سوف يتم استخدامها في السياق البحثي والأكاديمي فقط، ولن يتم تداولها عبر وسائل الإعلام بأشكالها المختلفة دون موافقتي.

التوقيع -----

التاريخ -----