Social Movements, Constitutional Debates and Online Deliberations in the Post-Mubarak Egyptian Public Sphere

A vibrant and pluralistic, yet brief phase emerged in Egypt's public sphere after the ouster of Mubarak in 2011. The last five years have witnessed intense contestation over the legal-political road forward, whether through political communication or by bargaining processes. The pluralistic deliberative processes that took place were marked by high degrees of dynamism and polarization. In a phase of building a new republic, and drafting the legal foundation for Egypt's future, a multitude of civil society organizations and initiatives shaped public contentsions over the constitution. The unprecedented freedom of expression widened the boundaries of a traditionally controlled public sphere. In this regard, the constitution drafting process was a symbolic national event in the forging of a new social contract for Egypt's future. The constitutional debates consumed large portions of the public sphere, whether in online or traditional mass media. They generated unprecedented levels of politicization and participation among ordinary citizens. In this pluralistic public sphere, social movements have used the Internet, in particular the social media, not only as a means of mobilization, but also to circulate preferred frames of various political and social issues and to present their interpretation of the political reality.

Social movements are defined as "sustained challenges to the power holders in the name of one or more populations living under the jurisdiction of those power-holders by means of public displays dramatizing those population's worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment". Research on social movements and regimes uses the contentious politics approach to scrutinize the dynamics of political contestation. Social movements utilize a wide range of repertoires to sustain their claims publicly and to assert popular sovereignty by expressing the rights of ordinary people to hold power and to limit the actions of rulers. Also relevant in the analysis of regimes and social movements is the concept of political opportunity structure, which is helpful in studying the dynamism of the political landscape. A political opportunity structure includes five elements which are "the multiplicity of independent centres of power within the regime, the openness of the regime to new actors, the instability of current political alignments, the availability of influential allies or supporters, and the extent to which the regime represses or facilitates collective claim-making". Each of these elements can be static or dynamic. The interactions between one or more of them make a change in

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2 Tilly: *Regimes and Repertoires*, (see FN 1), 182.
3 Tilly: *Regimes and Repertoires*, (see FN 1), 182.
the regime possible, if the opportunity is used by the social movements to gain public support for their claims. In addition, the concept of discursive opportunity structure provides a link between public sphere theory and the political opportunity structure concept in social movement theory, because it focuses on discourses as part of a broader concept of political opportunity. Discursive opportunity structure is defined as "all of the institutional and cultural access points that actors can seize upon to attempt to bring their claims into the political forum". Cultural access points include religion, history and language. They shape the slogans, rhetoric, rallies, campaigns and other repertoires of the social movements. The access point can be achieved by using subcultural elements in the discourse, such as youth slang and sarcasm.

A social movement constitutes a counter-public sphere. This means that it challenges a hegemonic public sphere, and promotes a particular societal discourse structured around a certain position. In doing so, public discourses become increasingly important to establish and express the identity of the social movement. Habermas views social movements as liberation potential, as they are reactions to the attempted "colonization" of life-worlds by the interlocking subsystems of the bureaucratic state and the economic apparatuses. Social movements can use the public sphere to advance their own claims and engage in public deliberations. In his analysis of the new feminism in Europe, Habermas concluded that social movements can manifest universal values in the form of liberal-democratic claims, and particularistic identity formation claims at the same time. These are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Accordingly, with the pluralistic nature of various social movements, a process of social learning through rational argumentation should produce democratically legitimate outcomes.

The discourses of the social movements reproduce their particularistic positions and ideological-political orientation. This might present some challenges to the societal consensus-oriented deliberations, because deliberative processes postulate impartiality as a value, as well as openness to a transformation in position in order to reach a minimal consensus. For social movements this can lead to a tension between the universalistic and particularistic approaches to claim-making. In public sphere theory the value of impartiality and the willingness to change one's position demonstrates responsiveness, but from the perspective of social movement theory a change of position might be problematic if it clashes with the ideological foundations of the movement itself. A major element of social movements is collective identity, which is conceptualized as "a sense of 'we-ness' or 'one-ness' that derives from perceived shared attributes or experiences among those who comprise a group, often in contrast to one or more perceived or imagined

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5 Wimmer, Jeffrey, (Gegen-)Öffentlichkeit in der Mediengesellschaft: Analyse eines medialen Spannungsverhältnisses (Wiesbaden, 2007), 14.
sets of others.” The identification with a particular group is the basis for collective action and participation because it affirms existing identities. Social movements can target general or specific causes. While the new social movements in Europe since the 1970s have aimed at increasing the autonomy of individuals instead of focussing on the classic struggle against the power holder, this cannot be uncritically applied to social movements in the Egyptian setting. In authoritarian settings, the call for democratic rule and human rights are often still framed in terms of a struggle against the regime.

Unlike conventional political actors represented by political parties, the social movements are characterized by their adoption of unusual forms of political behaviour. They use tactics that are “disruptive” in order to capture the attention of the public and to exert pressure on power holders. So, social movements seek to amplify their voice through a (more or less symbolic) challenge to law and order. Their repertoires are marked by protest as a non-conventional form of action that interrupts daily routines. Often the social movements use combative language and confrontational rhetorical styles that convey an image of unity to the outside. Classic research on social movements stresses their conflictual relationship to other competing actors in the society, rather than a consensual approach. Conflict is defined as “an oppositional relationship between actors who seek control of the same stake – be it political, economic, or cultural power – and in the process make negative claims on each other.” If the demands were realized, they would damage the interests of the other actors. However, new directions in research about social movements move towards the notion of civil society, stressing the importance of deliberations and of peaceful consensus-building practices.

The Internet and social media function as a means of resource mobilization with an array of online activism. Internet activism includes four broad categories: online information dissemination; online facilitation of offline protest; online participation; and online organizing. Indeed, the scope of repertoires was expanded by the emerging new media technologies. For the social movements, online political communication itself

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8 Cross and Snow: “Social Movements” (see FN 7), 528-29.
10 Della Porta and Diani: “Social movements”, (see FN 9), 71.
11 Della Porta and Diani: “Social Movements”, (see FN 9), 71.
12 Della Porta and Diani: “Social Movements”, (see FN 9), 71.
13 Della Porta and Diani: “Social Movements”, (see FN 9), 75-77.

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constitutes a repertoire of Internet activism. Social media include various forms of political communication, such as status updates, videos, political cartoons and newspaper links. At the same time, studies show that civil society actors use the Internet to mobilize the public towards a certain action, while the institutional and governmental actors use it to disseminate information\textsuperscript{15} Social media and Facebook have the potential to function as a platform to present the social movements' claims and arguments through online deliberations.

The digital public sphere is not bound by strict professional norms in the same way as the established media, because it is less complex; reaching out direct to the public is simpler than going through the traditional media production processes. On the one hand, this reflects the limited resources of the youth social movements and their reliance on the formation of a public that favours their causes. On the other hand, online political communication via social media is spontaneous, decentralized, participatory, often using informal language, popular forms of expression or satirical humour that is closer to the young public. It is different from the official, stagnant political language offered by political institutions. The social movements use social media for disseminating information, news about activities and mobilization, interaction and dialogue, offering internal and external links and engaging with other discourses in the society\textsuperscript{16}

**Social movements, social media and the Arab Spring**

During the last decade Egypt witnessed a rise and diversification of the social movements and civil initiatives that spread awareness and mobilized people in support of democratic rule under Mubarak. In the decade 2000–2010 a number of movements and coalitions emerged, such as Kifaya, the National Association for Change, and various workers’ protests, to name a few\textsuperscript{17}. These platforms enabled cross-partisan networking among the youth from secular and religious backgrounds to organize joint campaigns and activities. Initially, the institutional capacity of youth movements was enhanced by the organization of public mobilization events associated with international events, in particular solidarity with the Second Intifada (2000-2002) and protests

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\item \textsuperscript{15} Drüeke, Ricardo, *Politische Kommunikationsräume im Internet* (Bielefeld, 2013), 134-35.
\item \textsuperscript{17} Kifaya, or the National Movement for Change, refers to a loose grassroots' network of activists founded in 2004. Before the presidential elections in 2005 they rejected Mubarak's candidacy and possible extension of his presidential term. In addition, they rejected the possibility of him transferring presidential powers directly to his son, and they campaigned against the stagnation and corruption of political life in Egypt. The National Association for Change was founded in 2010 by a number of Egyptian public figures and politicians as a new, non-party political association that demanded substantial reforms of the political scene under the Mubarak regime. It was a loose network of civil society members, public figures, and youth movements like 6 April. Mohammed El-Baradei, a legal scholar and former Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, was the leader. The National Association for Change demanded far-reaching political reforms by the Mubarak regime. The workers’ protests refer to the series of strikes, protests and occupations of sites by textile industry workers in the north Delta city of Al-Mahalla Al-Kubra. Since 2004, the labour movement had repeatedly protested against the neoliberal policies and corruption by Mubarak's regime, which had led to closures and privatizations without adequate protection of the workers' socio-economic rights.
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against the US invasion of Iraq (2003)\(^\text{18}\). Eventually, the stagnation of political and religious discourses, the failing developmental policies, continuing socio-economic grievances, and a long record of persistent human rights violations redirected the attention of civil society to domestic issues\(^\text{19}\). Sociologist Tara Povey rejects the thesis of Arab exceptionalism, stressing that the activism of social movements in Egypt has also been in response to global issues, like the imbalances caused by neo-liberalism and its socio-economic and political repercussions for equality and citizenship, in an authoritarian Egypt supported by the United States and its allies.\(^\text{20}\)

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Since the removal of Mubarak, a number of social forces have pushed for genuine and transformative change. Social movements were able to utilize new forms of online communication to discursively sustain their claims. Egyptian political scientist Bassem Sabry contended that social media can function as a tool for national debate, shaping public opinion, supporting massive political and grassroots organizations, and also becoming a primary source of news.\(^\text{21}\) In the wake of the revolution of 25 January that led to the opening up of the political system, the post-revolutionary civil society and social movements had an opportunity to operate freely, unhindered by the previously imposed restrictions. Workers, women, students, the poor, activists in left-wing and nationalist groups, and activists in Islamic groups with differing orientations increasingly took part in a debate over the country's future – an activity that was not possible during the 30 years of Mubarak’s rule.\(^\text{22}\)

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The prelude to the 2011 revolution included several protests in which the activists made use of the phases of liberalization under Mubarak to organize shared events that showed unity and lack of a partisan agenda by focusing on freedom and democracy.\(^\text{23}\) Through joint activities, the networks of youth activists soon showed an increasing use of online activism in blogs and later in social media. They established a network of connected activists that succeeded in overcoming the mistrust that existed along secular and Islamist lines. Mutual trust among youth activists is a key category in understanding the radical polarized political culture in the pre-revolutionary phase and in overcoming it. The marginalization of youth from public life has led them to accumulate shared grievances that differ from those of older generations. This reflects the influence of the


\(^{19}\) Sika, Nadine, "Dynamics of a stagnant religious discourse and the rise of new secular movements in Egypt", in Bahgat Korany and Rabab El-Mahdi (eds.), *Arab Spring in Egypt* (Cairo, 2012), 63-81, 65; Shehata: *Youth Mobilization in Egypt*, (see FN 18), 7.

\(^{20}\) Povey, Tara, *Social movements in Egypt and Iran* (London and New York, 2015)


\(^{22}\) Povey: *Social movements in Egypt and Iran* (see FN 20).

youth bulge in Arab demographics, their particular issues and lifestyle, and their high exposure to media technology and social media. Here, the theory of social movements refers to the biographical availability of actors, which is determined by their stage of life cycle and their lifestyle characteristics. These are pre-conditions for activism because they impact individual rational processes and outweigh the costs and risks associated with participating in protests and campaigns. "Here, revolution theory meshes with social movement theory, which has documented the importance of resource mobilization (organizational and material conditions for assembling groups for action, publicizing an ideology, keeping the movement going during slack times) and of the 'frames' that a series of movements provide for each other in building up a tradition of workable tactics, ideological appeals and networks of recruitment". The new constellations in Egypt after Mubarak offered the social movements a chance to advance their own anti-hegemonic frames, by injecting public debates with ideas that otherwise would not have been circulated in the mainstream public sphere due to the constraints of the political economy in the Egyptian media landscape. In the political vacuum after the power of the incumbents crumbled, different political actors contended with one another about taking part in shaping the political arena in post-Mubarak Egypt. Each promised a new utopia in discourses based on his respective ideological background. Naturally, the social movements took advantage of the political opportunity structure in order to mobilize around their own claims and to offer their particular frames on political reality.

Social movements within Egypt’s radical polarized political culture

The logic of polarized dichotomies dictated the public sphere after the 25 January revolution, which led to heavily contested and fragmented discourses, aggravated by external media pluralism and an obvious parallelism between the press and political positions. In addition to the divisive contestation structures used by authoritarian regimes, the "opposition groups in Egypt have struggled with one another at least as much as they struggle with the authoritarian incumbents: pitting parties against human rights groups, engagement in formal political institutions against street protest, Islamists against secularists and leftists, moderates against radicals, and young against old."

Given Egypt's radical polarized political culture, four distinctive social movements have been selected to

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24 Cross and Snow: “Social Movements”, (see FN 7), 529-30.
27 Albrecht, Holger, Raging against the Machine (Syracuse, NY, 2013), 174.
further scrutinize their online discourses and the frames of their constitutional debates. These are: 6 April, Revolutionary Socialists, Muslim Brotherhood and Salafyo Costa. The selected movements represent four major ideological currents in the Egyptian public sphere: the social democratic, the socialist leftist, the political Islamist and the independent Salafist. While showing a high degree of unity during the revolution, after Mubarak's ouster each promoted a political project with different political and ideological foundations. The four selected movements also differ in their development stages. In spite of their ideological diversity, different histories and stages of development they have several characteristics in common: a) they primarily target youth, whether in their recruitment or rhetoric, to a less degree the Muslim Brotherhood; b) they make intensive use of social media in their political communication with members and with the public; c) at some point, all of them have constituted an oppositional challenge to the institutional political system, with the exception of the Muslim Brotherhood between June 2012 and July 2013, when Morsi was president; and finally, d) after the revolution, all social movements were propelled into the foreground of the mainstream media. Each of the selected social movements is briefly presented below.

The 6 April Youth Movement (from now on, 6 April) was officially formed in May 2008 by a group of previously unpolticized youth, after they had successfully organized the 6 April 2008 strike. This "Facebook Strike" was a virtual campaign originally planned in solidarity with the Mahalla workers who had demonstrated to obtain their social and economic rights. The 6 April movement successfully connected the causes of the working class with those of urban middle class youth. The event posed a serious challenge to the Mubarak regime. The movement's founding members had experience in Kifaya and the Egyptian National Association for Change, both of which opposed the continuation of Mubarak's rule and the possible rule of his son. 6 April describes itself as an "Egyptian resistance movement". While under Mubarak 6 April mainly operated underground, since its successful mobilization of online collective action in 2011 it gained status and grew rapidly. After 2013 it was forced back to the underground. Contrary to the Revolutionary Socialists, 6 April does not have a strict ideological (economic) philosophy, but in general it supports social democratic policies, human rights and citizenship. It calls for flexibility in economic policies and promotes a social market economy. Its principles include a call for a "civilian and democratic state based on all rights for all people." They demand that the state should not accept social or religious

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28 See Badr's chapter in this issue of OIS.
29 As explained in FN 17 the labour movement of textile industry workers in Al-Mahalla actively protested against the neoliberal policies of Mubarak's regime to improve their social and economic rights in numerous demonstrations.
33 Official website of 6 April Youth movement in Zaytoun district (see FN 32).
marginalization; it is a state for all people. Already in 2010, 6 April had organized its first conference in the Egyptian Journalists’ Syndicate, where developmental projects on food scarcity and energy crises were discussed. The campaign aimed at challenging the official discourses, so the conference was organized in parallel to the annual conference of the then ruling National Democratic Party.

The success of the 2011 uprising in toppling Mubarak from power was a decisive point in the evolution of the April 6 movement. It gained massive popularity for its political goals of building a democracy and empowering the youth. The unprecedented opening up of the public sphere in 2011 gave the movement freedom to organize several successful public campaigns. This phase witnessed a rise in its membership, but at the same time, 6 April firmly refused to become a political party. It preferred to remain a pressure group, and to maintain its independence and manoeuvrability without seeking political power. Their view is that the transition process towards democracy is not over yet, so it is too early to revert to institutional politics when the revolutionary goals have not yet been realized. Throughout the turbulent post-revolutionary years, several internal conflicts within the movement led to recurrent splits. Divisions resulted from polarizations around several decisions such as turning the social movement into a party, or participating in the Second Constituent Assembly, or conflicts over power and hierarchies within the movement. Due to 6 April’s ideologically heterogeneous make-up, some of the splitting groups openly embraced ideological positions such as the 6 April Youth Movement Islamist current, the 6 April Democratic Front, or the 6 April Revolutionary Front.

Gradually, the triangular relationship between 6 April, the then powerful Muslim Brotherhood and the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), leading the transition phase, became complex and volatile. Although 6 April supported Morsi in his runoff against his competing presidential candidate in 2012, towards the end of Morsi’s rule, the 6 April had supported the popular mobilizations against him and demanded new presidential elections. It joined the broad anti-Muslim Brotherhood coalition on 30 June 2013 and indirectly approved the road map after Morsi’s ouster. But since August 2013 there has been a massive crackdown on the public sphere, harshly delegitimizing oppositional political actors and social movements. The margin for the 6 April movement’s activities has been severely curtailed. The state security apparatuses tolerated neither a rising tone of criticism from 6 April members, nor their persistence in defending the right to protest. In November 2013 the movement challenged the very restrictive law of protest that had been issued by the interim president, arguing that it was unconstitutional. In December 2013, the movement’s founders and key figures Ahmed Maher and Mohamed Adel were sentenced to three years imprisonment for organizing and participating in an unauthorized protest against this law. On 28 April 2014 an Egyptian court ordered that the

34 Interview with a member of the 6 April youth movement and a Facebook page administrator who wishes not to be named, 10 September 2012.
35 Interview with a member of the 6 April youth movement (see FN 34).
6 April movement should be banned, and its offices and properties nationalized. The current situation reminds of the old authoritarian framework; key members are tracked down, imprisoned or forced into exile, and the movement is subject to infiltration from loyalist informers. Among the challenges faced by the movement are its sinking popularity, being confronted by the official delegitimizing discourses, and fear of a further escalation of the control measures. In addition, the organizational collection of monthly subscription fees had to stop, to avoid allegations of foreign funding or financial corruption. Currently, the movement needs to find a new way to operate under repressive rules, without being pushed into the same camp as the Muslim Brotherhood.

Social media play a crucial role for 6 April, as a “platform providing access for the ordinary citizens.” Despite the limited margins of the public sphere, 6 April coordinator Sawsan Gharib maintains that Facebook has a future; nowadays every child has access through his or her smartphone and is exposed to what the movement publishes. The criteria for posting include a focus on timely issues in politics, economics and society. "Entertainment does not belong to our priorities," says Gharib. "We want to keep the people mobilized; by uncovering stories that cause dissent or give credibility to the movement figures and activities." The administrative process for social media posts is similar to an editorial meeting in a newsroom. The publishing options are guided by designating trending topics for the day or the week to focus on. A team of news gatherers collects material for the page administrators. Controversial and unique stories are then picked up and posted with a sensational angle and attractive hashtags to gain visibility and secure increased viewership. At the same time, the stories are verified independently by the social movement's trusted members on the ground, in particular during times of clashes. Yet manipulation of the online public sphere is evident, according to Gharib: popular Facebook pages are being sold, administrators are co-opted, and fake Facebook celebrities are created by pro-regime loyalists to manipulate the online discourses and discredit the opposition. In spite of this, the 6 April main page has launched several successful hashtags that framed political events for the general non-politicized public in recent years, including 2015.

The Revolutionary Socialists social movement has a strong ideological focus on the socio-economic and political field of conflict. Established in the early 1990s, the Revolutionary Socialists are ideologically inspired by socialism. Amid the crisis of socialist movements worldwide and also in Egypt after the collapse of the

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36 Interview with Sawsan Gharib, a media coordinator and administrator of several 6 April movement Facebook pages, 10 October 2015.


38 Interview with Gharib (see FN 36).

39 Interview with Gharib (see FN 36).

40 Interview with Gharib (see FN 36).
Soviet Union in 1990/91, the Revolutionary Socialists focussed on the renewal and reinterpretation of the socialist current, which is internationally fragmented and weakened. In order to rejuvenate the socialist thought they circulated key literature on socialism, Marxism, Leninism and Trotskyism, and organized rounds of discussion and public readings about the main principles, issues and problems.\(^{41}\) They concentrated on advancing the labour movement by taking a strong anti-capitalist position against the neoliberal market economy in Egypt and the world. The capitalist class, in their view, is built on the exploitation of workers and the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, against the interests of the working class.\(^{42}\) The movement seeks to revitalize socialist ideas, because socialism has been defamed more than any other political tradition in the past two decades.\(^{43}\) Besides fighting against capitalism, the Revolutionary Socialists believe that capitalism cannot be reformed from within. They are firmly convinced that a mass revolution from the bottom up is possible and even necessary to achieve change. In their view, the working class is the real leading actor in the revolutionary struggle, and revolution should aim at freeing the whole world from the global capitalist system.\(^{44}\) The Revolutionary Socialists are linked to the Centre for Socialist Studies.\(^{45}\) The movement relies on voluntary work and donations from its followers. Based on their organizational experience in the Egyptian pro-Palestinian solidarity movement they learned techniques of campaigning for workers’ rights, mobilizing demonstrations and promoting awareness. The Revolutionary Socialists have always called for a full revolution to establish a state based on social and economic justice in Egypt. In their view, reform alone will not result in successful changes to society.

The Revolutionary Socialists have continued to be active in spite of the general demobilization of leftists in the Egyptian public sphere since the fall of the Soviet Union.\(^{46}\) Their movement is different from the previous classic "communist waves" shaped in the 1960s and 1970s and embodied in leftist parties like al-Tagammu and al-Arabi al-Nasser. The "old left" has been weakened and divided since Anwar Sadat's presidency (1970–1981). While the moderate institutionalized parties presented only a limited challenge to the regime and were co-opted into the political game under Mubarak, the radical leftist movements were pushed underground and harshly repressed, and shifted nearer the violent margins in attempting to achieve social


\(^{42}\) Interview with Hatem Tallima, a member of the political bureau of the Revolutionary Socialists, 7 May 2015. According to him, the term working class is not limited to the proletariat class in the classic socialism, but refers to any employees who are deprived of their rights or marginalized in a way.

\(^{43}\) Interview with Tallima (see FN 42).

\(^{44}\) Revolutionary Socialists: "On Socialism", (see FN 41).

\(^{45}\) The Centre for Socialist Studies was established in early 2000 by Kamal Khalil, a socialist activist and a former member of the Revolutionary Socialists. As an academic, non-governmental organization, it aims at spreading awareness of socialism and offers a platform for public events and discussions on politics, economics and current affairs.

\(^{46}\) Duboc, Marie, “Egyptian Leftist Intellectuals’ activism from the margins: Overcoming the mobilization/demobilization dichotomy”, in Joel Beinin and Frédéric Vairel (eds.), *Social Movements, Mobilization and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa* (Stanford, CA, 2011), 61–82.
change. In this context, the Revolutionary Socialists belong to Egypt's New Left. The movement has also witnessed a generational shift towards the youth, who spurred the revival of "street politics" in Egypt, and it has informal personal ties to the newly founded party, The Popular Coalition (al-Tahaluf al-Shaabi), through some of its members.

> However, criticism of the movement includes that it is not representative of the Egyptians it defends, since a majority of its members belong to the upper and middle classes. Hence they pursue different lifestyles and do not share sufficient real grievances with the people they seek to mobilize and defend. This criticism can be refuted by the fact that personal networks across the socio-economic cleavages came into being during the 18 days of the Tahrir protests. Belonging to a particular socio-economic class should not limit a person's freedom to pursue a certain political position that might even clash with their lifestyle and economic interests.

> For the Revolutionary Socialists, the revolution proved right a long-held assumption that no gradual reform was possible from within the system, and only a full revolution would rebuild the state according to principles of social justice and equitable redistribution of the benefits of the political economy. After the successful toppling of Mubarak, the Revolutionary Socialists, like 6 April, experienced a surge in popularity and membership applications. But the movement has strict recruitment policies that rely on deep academic knowledge of key Trotskyist literature, absorption of the socialist world-view and participating in active discussions. The membership process can take several months, until a person has proved worthy of admission. This exclusive and cautious selection process ensures that the movement cannot easily be infiltrated or sabotaged from within, as the security apparatuses managed to do in other movements and parties. It also minimizes the splitting processes of the movement. Even ex-members of the Revolutionary Socialists rarely cause trouble or discredit the movement.

> The internal decision-making process demonstrates confidential deliberations within the elected members of the political bureau. Selected members from the political bureau also function as responsible persons for

49 Interview with Sherif Younis, Professor at the Department of History, Helwan University, 5 April 2013.
50 Interview with Tallima (see FN 42).
51 Interview with Tallima (see FN 42).
52 Interview with Tallima (see FN 42).
53 Interview with Tallima (see FN 42).
conceptualizing and implementing the movement’s media strategies, including administrating and publishing on the Facebook pages. The Revolutionary Socialists regard the media as an important tool to reach out to the public. Their communication style varies between the Facebook page and the main website. While the language on Facebook should be attractive, concise and clear, often accompanied by visual elements, the Revolutionary Socialists’ website offers lengthy theoretical texts or longer explanations on certain political positions. Publishing policy on the Facebook page prioritizes news and interpretations by the movement that fit its political goals. Although not consistently known by its exact name in the media, individual members of the Revolutionary Socialists, like Hossam al-Hamalawy and Moustafa al-Fouly, are well-known and regularly quoted in the international and Egyptian media. The older generations include veteran opposition key figures such as Kamal Khali and Sameh Nagib. Currently, the Revolutionary Socialists have a small margin of operation, as the whole public sphere is tightly controlled. In summer 2015 the Revolutionary Socialists stirred a political debate by their press release entitled ‘Once again on terrorism and national unity’. Criticism from both, revolutionary and pro-stability camps claimed the release sympathized too much with the Muslim Brotherhood. The latter dedicated a statement and welcomed the press release by the Revolutionary Socialists stating that the “streets (as in protests) unite us”.

The third movement is the Muslim Brotherhood, the oldest social movement54 in this study’s sample. It was founded by Hassan El-Banna in 1928 while Egypt was under British rule. Its main collective identity is based around Islam and its principles. Throughout the years the Muslim Brotherhood has adopted the non-radical, conservative approach preached by its founder, Hassan El-Banna. Members believed in “religious determinism”,55 meaning that spreading a righteous way of living would ultimately result in the desired Islamic state. Their work focused on da’wa (preaching the principles of Islam) and charity through NGOs. Organizationally, the Muslim Brotherhood is structured in a hierarchy; at the top of the decision-making pyramid is the Supreme Guide, who heads the Muslim Brotherhood and presides over the 13-member Guidance Bureau, which retains a significant degree of power in the organisational and ideological decision-making processes.56 He Shura Council of the Muslim Brotherhood, comprised of 90 members, has the task of planning, organizing and debating important decisions and policies. Decisions are deliberated centrally, and then carried out in a decentralized way by the basic members in various geographic regions. Here the units range from the family, branch and district levels up to the governmental level, which takes over the

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54 The Muslim Brotherhood qualifies as a social movement because it conforms to the definition of a social movement. Since its foundation the movement has sustained its challenge to successive regimes, except in the year in which Mohammed Morsi was elected president. Its claims are inspired by the Islam and by the teachings of its founder, Hassan El-Banna, promoting a collective identity and group unity. The choice of the Muslim Brotherhood to keep its organization intact in parallel to the Freedom and Justice Party, with which it was closely aligned, is further reason to study its discourse, because it continued to qualify as a movement.


56 The Guidance Bureau acts as the political office of the Muslim Brotherhood. It is the most visible political organ within the Muslim Brotherhood. Tadros, Mariz, The Muslim Brotherhood in Contemporary Egypt: Democracy Redefined or Confined (London and New York, 2012), 7-8.

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As a result of its long and complex history the Muslim Brotherhood has different generations: the first generation or "old guard" prefers to confine the movement's work to Hassan El-Banna's original vision that the slow Islamization of society will gradually evolve into an Islamic state. Here, the focus is on community building. The second generation, mainly influenced by the 1970s, believe in participating in the political process and elections, in the belief that success at the ballot box will lead to the Islamization of society. The third generation, mainly youth under 40 years of age, adheres to social conservatism while also being familiar with modern life and its global tools.

Retreating from their violence of the 1980s, the Muslim Brotherhood opted to enhance their participation in the political process under Mubarak through a "constitutional struggle". They adopted legal-inspired rhetoric to prove the legitimacy of their existence and to pursue institutional inclusion, arguing that subsequent regimes violated the constitution by banning the Muslim Brotherhood. The Brotherhood attempted to shape the religious public sphere, moving into the space that the state had abandoned by its neoliberal strategies in service sectors like health and education.

The Muslim Brotherhood's wide and diverse base of cross-class members from a variety of socio-economic, educational and geographic backgrounds can be seen as both, a source of strength but also an internal challenge. Their organizational capacity has relied on the legitimacy of the leader's Islamic virtues and sacrifice, but in the past years the Muslim Brotherhood faces an internal struggle about leadership. Its youth generation believes in building a cross-ideological coalition and in their right to free speech and dissent. This younger, modernized urban generation endorses ideals of democracy, equality and – to great extent – women's rights, in contrast to the older generations of the Muslim Brotherhood. The youth constituted large parts of the blogosphere affiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood and believed in reaching out to change public perceptions of the Brotherhood. Often they engaged in negotiation processes with the older leaders in the Brotherhood, such as asking for permission to participate in the 25 January protests as individuals. A few days after refusing to participate officially in the planned protests, so as to avoid an open challenge to Mubarak's regime, the Muslim Brotherhood stepped in by mobilizing large numbers of their urban members in Cairo, when the National Democratic Party and the security apparatus had imploded. At the same time,

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57 El-Houdaiby, Ibrahim, "[The] Muslim Brotherhood after the transition" Arab Reform Initiative (2015), 5, http://www.arab-reform.net/ar.%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%AE%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A8%D8%B9%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%84 (Accessed 19 September 2015).


59 El-Houdaiby: "Muslim Brotherhood", (see FN 57), 5.

60 El-Houdaiby: "Muslim Brotherhood", (see FN 57), 5.

61 Radsch: "From Brotherhood to Blogosphere", (see FN 58), 77-78.
the leaders asked members not to advance any particularistic slogans, such as "Islam is the solution", but to voice the demands put by the masses.\textsuperscript{62}

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The most relevant phase for the purpose of this research is the rise and fall of the Muslim Brotherhood after the uprising. The revolution undoubtedly catapulted the Muslim Brotherhood into the foreground of politics as the "most powerful civilian actor".\textsuperscript{63} From 2011 till 2013, the Brotherhood obtained the majority of votes in all subsequent parliamentary and presidential elections, as well as in constitutional referenda, even if this was not an absolute majority. In 2012 their position changed, for the first time in history, from that of challengers to the official power holders to incumbents. During the one year of Morsi's rule, however, the broad-based coalitions and popular support slowly waned, as a result of the Muslim Brotherhood's mismanagement as well as of the constitutional declaration that cost them valuable legitimacy from non-Muslim Brotherhood supporters (for details, see the chapter by Badr in this OIS issue). Eventually the Tamarod campaign\textsuperscript{64} mobilized wide popular dissent against the Muslim Brotherhood; a campaign that was quickly adopted by secular opponents and counter-revolutionary forces, but also -to a certain extent- by revolutionary segments critical and sceptical of the Muslim Brotherhood. After a short three-day ultimatum, President Morsi was ousted by then Defence Minister Abdelfattah El-Sisi on 3 July 2013. A new political road map was declared. The Muslim Brotherhood reacted by creating the so-called Anti-Coup Alliance (ACA) or National Alliance Supporting Legitimacy (NASL) that organized sit-ins at Raba'a al-Adawiya and al-Nahda squares, intending to defend the legitimacy of Morsi's ouster. The rise of the hawkish wing from within the broad coalition led to the massacre in Raba'a al-Adawiya Square by Egyptian security forces. Any oppositional framing of post-2013 Egypt that questioned the legitimacy of the new regime or described the ouster as a military coup was harshly dealt with. The public sphere has been massively closed since then. The Muslim Brotherhood was declared a terrorist group; its political organization the Freedom and Justice Party was disbanded, and the religious and financial assets have been confiscated. Because the state radically delegitimized the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist group conspiring against Egypt, the way was opened for the security apparatus to use its classic repressive policies. The crackdown included systematic arrest of Brotherhood members, severe sentences, and also the maltreatment of prisoners. It also weakened the Muslim Brotherhood organizationally.

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After the Muslim Brotherhood's sudden and abrupt exclusion from the political scene in 2013, their position

\textsuperscript{62} Wickham: \textit{The Muslim Brotherhood}, (see FN 23), 161.

\textsuperscript{63} Wickham: \textit{The Muslim Brotherhood}, (see FN 23), 154.

\textsuperscript{64} Tamarod campaign (Arabic for rebellion) was a youth campaign that mobilized for the 30 June 2013 protests against the then president Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood due to their alleged failures in running the country. According to their own statements the Tamarod campaign successfully collected more than 20 million signatures from Egyptian citizens demanding Morsi to step-down from his office as well as early presidential elections. It is assumed that the campaign was backed by the military.
radicalized. Developments since the Raba’a al-Adawiya Square events prompted the Brotherhood to return to their particularistic discourse based on victimization, sacrifice and isolation from society. The events broke the bonds of trust that had been established during the days of the uprising. The political developments were strong blows to the movement that needed time to reorganize. The Muslim Brotherhood need to develop new structures to adapt to the imposed challenges that include their return to the underground and the increased confrontations between its members and the security forces. On the other hand, the official discourse speaks of successful crisis management, a national security threat that the state has to deal with. Especially after the assassination of Public Prosecutor Hisham Barakat in June 2015 as well as repeated terrorist attacks in Sinai, neither reconciliation between the state institutions and the Muslim Brotherhood nor a political inclusion seems likely soon. At the same time, the Muslim Brotherhood’s old guard seems to find it more difficult to control the younger, moderate generations in their midst, who are becoming increasingly radicalized in face of the indiscriminate repression and injustice that they perceive. At the heart of this conflict between the old guard and the new leaders in the Brotherhood is the conflict over top-down management style, as well as over resorting to violence. Political analyst Georges Fahmi concludes that “deeper disagreement between proponents of the rules of the old guard and proponents of the new rules borne out of the political climate since 2013 will likely persist.”

Throughout their long history the Muslim Brotherhood launched many communication platforms that evolved according to the margin of freedom permitted in their relationship with the ruling regime. While they managed to voice their demands in a few oppositional newspapers under Mubarak, as al-Shaab and Afaq Arabiya, the Internet offered a remarkable new opportunity to advance their interpretation of political reality in the last decade. This reflected in a vibrant Islamist blogosphere and later social media. Social media in particular offered a platform to committed youth for creative and cost-effective methods of communication. But the diversity of members led to a plethora of affiliated pages that varied widely in tone according to the backgrounds of the content producers and the target audience. One of the new players on the independent media scene is Rassd. Initially an election monitoring portal that was launched in 2010, it played a vital role

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66 El-Houdaiby: “Muslim Brotherhood”, (see FN 57), 7.
67 Fahmi: “The struggle for the leadership”, (see FN 65).
69 Radsch: “From Brotherhood to Blogosphere”, (see FN 58), 80.
70 Initially, the portal was launched as a Facebook page and Twitter account to monitor the October 2010 parliamentary elections under the slogan “Raqeb – Sawwar – Dawwen” (Monitor – Photograph – Blog, with the acronym RSD, which later became Rassd). During the revolution the portal turned into a platform for citizen journalism, effectively reporting the protests and clashes during the revolution. It relied on a wide network of volunteers who supplied the central editing team with information and visual material. These are verified before posting online. Since then it has developed further into an Arabic and English platform called Rassd News Network (RNN), which has been highly critical of the current regime
in covering the protests in January 2011. While it is officially unrelated to the Muslim Brotherhood, it was founded by young former Muslim Brotherhood members. Its success inspired youth from the Islamist camp to pursue citizen journalism. This institution organized several training sessions on media reporting and journalism values, such as objectivity and balance. While Rassd is not organizationally affiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood, but it did not openly challenge the foundations of the Brotherhood, even if it differed from them on short-term political tactics.

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Between 2011 and 2013, unprecedented freedoms resulted in launching a mix of Islamist media that reflected religious actors ranging from Salafist-oriented Muslim Brotherhood groups to more liberal social conservatives. The rise, diversity and visibility of Islamist media led to the hypothesis of an increasing role of religion in the Egyptian public sphere. Because the Muslim Brotherhood includes a wide base of diverse members in terms of socio-economic, political and religious views, the decentralized social media also reflected views that ranged from the loosely sympathetic to their cause, to the strictly dogmatic and ideological who followed the official position only.

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After the crackdown that started mid-2013, a tight control and surveillance now take place in the digital public sphere. Although the anonymity of the Facebook page administrators is cautiously protected by the activists, their safety was not guaranteed if they were openly affiliated with the Islamist camp or other oppositional movements. Repeatedly, admins have been reported imprisoned for allegedly supporting a terrorist group and conspiring against the state. A statement released by the prosecutor's office named Rassd and Amgad TV, among others, as media outlets that collaborate with the Muslim Brotherhood to undermine Egypt's military and its government. The crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood is a serious organizational challenge to the movement and affects its communication performance. The current media scene shows geographical and organizational fragmentation. In addition to the media mentioned above, the Muslim Brotherhood either uses existing pan-Arab platforms as Al Jazeera TV Channel or new online platforms like al-Araby al-Jadeed website as well as the affiliated al-Araby TV channel (based in London). The political economy of Muslim Brotherhood media institutions reflects the political ties to the governments of Turkey and Qatar.

since the ouster of Morsi in July 2013. One of its co-founders is the ex-Muslim Brotherhood member Anas Hassan. For further details see Elsayed, Yomna, "Revolutionary media on a budget: Facebook-only social journalism", in Arab Media and Society 17 (2013), http://www.arabmediasociety.com/?article=814 (Accessed 10 October 2015).


The fourth and youngest movement in this study is **Salafyo Costa**, which was formed in March 2011. Salafyo Costa integrates seemingly incompatible identity elements by combining the corporate name of the global coffeehouse chain, Costa Coffee, with classic Salafism. It wants to express a message of modernity, tolerance, and above all co-existence. Mohammed Tolba, a Salafi and co-founder of the group, criticizes three characteristics of the traditional Salafist discourse as expressed by the Salafist Front. “First, Salafists believe they represent the ultimate right, second they are isolated from the public as they seek purity, and third they adopt an arrogant discourse towards the others”. These traits have affected the public perception of Salafists, according to him. This is why Salafyo Costa is trying to establish a common ground for Islamists and liberals that transcends mutual stereotypes. The movement wants to improve the image of the Salafists in Egyptian society, but it also seeks to “create a community in which people of different religions, political views and lifestyles can live together peacefully and harmoniously.” Unlike other movements, Salafyo Costa is a “non-mobilizing movement”. Co-founder Tolba stated that “the movement's members simply lack common religious and ideological ground, thus we prefer to work together on social issues that affect us all, like poverty and development. We contribute to the society; we do not seek political influence.” He also admits the difficulty to shape a unified political position due to the members’ heterogeneous backgrounds. Their open Facebook page has more than 90,000 likes, and the more restrictive group has 20,000 members. But only 80 members in the movement are active offline, and organize charity activities and initiatives such as medical caravans to underprivileged areas in Upper Egypt.

Salafyo Costa operates independently of the traditional Salafist sheikhs and their networks, although the sheikhs remain a source of religious and moral inspiration. The Salafists were in a dilemma, according to Tolba, as they always assumed an apolitical stance; the 2011 protests caught them off guard. Originally, oppositional politics constituted a trial or "a great fitna" for the Salafist sheikhs, because they can divide the society. Therefore many sheikhs at first opposed participation in the protests and challenging the ruler, and justified this by Sharia. Other Salafist sheikhs were co-opted by the security apparatuses to inform about activities of Islamists or to sabotage them from within. Yet the post-2011 Egyptian landscape witnessed the foundation of Al-Nour party, the first Salafist party in Egyptian history, which joined the anti-Brotherhood Tamarod coalition in 2013.

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73 Interview with Mohammed Tolba, co-founder and head of Salafyo Costa, 20 May 2012.
75 Interview with Tolba (see FN 73).
76 Interview with Tolba (see FN 73).
77 Interview with Tolba (see FN 73).
Salafyo Costa is not part of a Salafist movement and publicly criticizes it. Salafyo Costa is a smaller, independent movement that primarily advances co-existence, which makes its discourse particularly unique because of the tension between traditional Salafism and independent political activism. Salafyo Costa participated in protests and sit-ins in Tahrir Square even when prominent Salafi sheikhs had explicitly forbidden it. This embodies the dilemma of being caught between two fronts, Islamist and secular, which is a challenge for the young movement. It reconciles this by building its collective identity as a revolutionary group that adheres to the principles of democracy, freedom and social justice. The highest value for the group is inclusion and tolerance. In the course of the post-Mubarak developments, Salafyo Costa was mostly on the side of the challengers of the Muslim Brotherhood as well as of the counter-revolutionary powers. Between 2011 and 2013 they regularly assumed positions that are closer to the revolutionary camp, demanding democratic rule and social justice. At the same time they promoted women's rights, freedom of expression and the rule of law. Yet since the violent dispersal of Raba'a al-Adawiya Square and the killing of a founding member of Salafyo Costa, the movement has chosen to avoid any political discourses, because of internal divisions and external pressures in the polarized public sphere. This was a culturally sensitive decision, but also a survival strategy. The events of the Tamarod campaign and the group's decision to call for Morsi to step down divided Salafyo Costa. Since then the movement's unity has been heavily tested, and it has almost imploded. After the killings at Raba'a al-Adawiya Square, 15 key members left the movement, Tolba was forced out of his office, and was then re-elected as one of the "watchers of principles" (resembles a steering committee). Nevertheless, the movement's members were determined to remain united and hold themselves together by democratic principles. Nowadays, Salafyo Costa, while still critical of the political situation, focuses on charity work. In 2014 they obtained a license as a non-governmental organization that organizes regular activities in the fields of development and eradication of poverty.

The social media have been crucial for the Salafyo Costa movement from the start. "Facebook is our only window to the public, because we own no other media outlets. Even though there are many Salafist media, we never resort to them because of our fundamental differences in approach and identity". The social media provides "a 'parallel media', which can offer space to taboo topics that otherwise, will never be discussed". Salafyo Costa perceives itself like no other existing social movement in Egyptian politics, since its highest priority is co-existence and reaching a middle ground, and not a particular political agenda. In order to preserve this ideal of tolerance, the movement follows a rigid moral and ethical code in moderating

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78 Interview with Mohammed Tolba, co-founder and head of Salafyo Costa, 8 June 2015.
80 Interview with Tolba (see FN 78).
81 Interview with Tolba (see FN 78).
its Facebook group. Five so-called "watchers of principles" are elected. They are in charge of monitoring the
group page for any violations of the declared principles, along with four additional committee facilitators.
Similar to a steering committee they deliberate in a secret group for founding members only, on the posts to
be published. Publishing guidelines include the following: highlighting statements and activities of the
movement's members, no anonymous news, no incitement to hatred or racism, and no involvement in petty
conflicts with other political actors. In addition, no religious rituals of any religion are highlighted or
celebrated, no sarcasm is allowed, but constructive criticism is tolerated. According to Tolba, "the main
source of posts is the Facebook group administrator, but occasionally we share posts from other activists,
but only if they incorporate our values." In its moderation of the social media the group supports freedom of
expression, yet at the same time applies the moral restriction on the posts and comments. The posts are
regularly monitored and inappropriate public member contributions are deleted. Repeated violation of the
principles results in kicking offending members out of the group.

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Following this discussion of the political foundations of the different social movements and their
communication strategies, their positions towards the drafting process and text of the 2012 constitution will
be scrutinized. In the following part, the online discourses in the movements' Facebook pages will be
reconstructed.

**Research Questions, Method and Sample**

The central question of this study is how the social movements performed contestation through their online
discussions about the 2012 constitution, within the radical polarized political culture that marks the
Egyptian public sphere. Additional questions include: a) how do the social media perceive the values of the
public sphere, as consensus or deliberations?; b) how the social movements used social media to shape
their online discourses on the constitution debates; c) what arguments do they use to frame their positions in
the online deliberation process?

In order to answer these questions, the online political discourses by the four social movements introduced
above, within the time frame 2011–2013, are qualitatively analysed. The selected social media are the official
Facebook pages of 6 April, Revolutionary Socialists and Salafyo Costa, and the Muslim Brotherhood's page
IkhwanOnline. Despite the fact that the contested constitution issued in December 2012 was annulled in July 2013, the phase from 2011 to mid-2013 offers an interesting case study of transformative public sphere deliberations in a post-authoritarian country. Choosing the controversial issue of the constitution is also a prime example of a contentious issue that has served as a foundation for institutional and legal change in post-Mubarak Egypt. The constitutional debates generated wide interest and symbolized the transformation process that was envisaged at the time. By linking the findings to the concept of political culture as well as to the history of legal struggle, both of which are discussed in Badr’s chapter in this OIS issue, the findings will shed light on the evolving Egypt's public sphere during the years of the transformation.

Empirically, the study applies qualitative content analysis to all posts related to the issue of the draft constitution that were published on the Facebook pages of each of the four social movements within the time frame of 13 February 2011 to 10 April 2013. This phase started with suspension of the 1971 constitution by SCAF in February 2011 (yet it was officially voided in March 2011 after the referendum), and ended with the postponing of the parliamentary elections scheduled for March 2013 (which took place two years later in November 2015). The qualitative content analysis applied the following steps: first, all available posts in the defined time frame were secured and categorized according to topic. This yielded a total of 4,109 posts: 6 April had the most, with 2,074 posts, the Revolutionary Socialists published 1,206 posts, the Muslim Brotherhood Facebook page IkhwanOnline published 1,370 posts, and Salafyo Costa published 829 posts. Second, the corpus of the material, i.e. Facebook posts related to the constitutional debates, were extracted from the original data pool. Here, 6 April published 168 posts on its Facebook page about the constitution, the Revolutionary Socialists published 151, the Muslim Brotherhood 154 and Salafyo Costa 14 posts. The study further utilizes interviews with actors from each social movement, or those in charge of the Facebook posts, to explain the messages communicated at that time. This method adds depth to the interpretation and discussion of the analytical results.

In order to reconstruct the online deliberations on the 2012 constitution a total of 487 posts were analysed. Varying in length and complexity, these posts contained 965 central statements that were reconstructed and categorized into the main arguments. In order to distil the arguments of each social movement, the framing

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87 This excludes the posts that dealt with the referendum on the constitution in March 2011 or the constitutional declarations. Although these are part of the constitution building process in Egypt, the comparative approach and qualitative focus on the deliberation process requires coherent material and argumentation processes on a single issue, otherwise the arguments are fragmented. The posts were obtained from the Facebook pages of the social movements in March and April 2013. The availability of the Facebook material sets a possible empirical limitation on the representativeness of the results. With this in mind, the research team is interested in the qualitative results of the discursive patterns. The study does not claim to offer generalizable results.

88 The administrators of the Muslim Brotherhood Facebook page Ikhwan Online were not available for the semi-structured interview.
analysis tool was applied. Simply put, a frame is a "central organizing idea" that offers a certain interpretation and meaning attributed to events or issues by the text producers. Researchers can reconstruct the underlying frames through the analysis of raw data. Here, the technique of inductive category development from the qualitative content analysis was applied. Textual material is reduced into central statements that are further distilled into the main frames that describe the type of facts and argumentation. In the discussion, links will be made to the public sphere theory and to Egypt's political culture, as well as to post-revolutionary legal struggles.

The online discourses of the four social movements reveal an intensive contestation on the constitution both as process and text. The communicative processes had two main goals, either to legitimize or to de-legitimize the constitution drafting process and its resultant legal text. The discourse can be divided into: a) procedural arguments tackling the constitution drafting process; and b) arguments related to the constitution text itself, which includes debates on certain articles related to the political system, human, social and economic rights, the role of religion and of the military; and c) arguments explaining the movement's final position towards the constitutional referendum. A framing contest over each of these central issues took place.

**Procedural debates on the 2012 constitution**

The first part of the results discusses the procedural arguments. It includes claims about the a) representativeness and diversity as the criteria for forming the first and second constituent assemblies (who wrote the constitution), b) the views of the social movements on the quality of the deliberations, with their voices included into the discursive argumentation (sources of arguments), and finally, the desired outcome of the constitutional debates (consensus or particular interests).

**Debates on criteria of representation in constituent assemblies**

A remarkable number of posts tackled the question of who writes the constitution, which particularly challenged the first and second constituent assemblies. The criteria for forming these two assemblies were

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92 The formation of the constituent assembly for the 2012 constitution was a turbulent process. The first constituent assembly was elected by the Islamist-majority parliament. But it was dissolved on 10 April 2012 by the Supreme Administrative Court for breaching the constitutional declaration of March 2011. A more balanced, second constituent assembly was formed on 13 June 2012. It approved the constitution on 29 November 2012, in a session that lasted 16
deliberated intensively. Obviously, the formation criteria, like the fairness of representation and degree of
diversity in those authoritative assemblies and the qualifications and achievements of their members, were
central issues that were contested in the online discourses of all four social movements. While 6 April and
the Revolutionary Socialists expressed scepticism and delegitimized both successive constituent assemblies
as well as their members in most of the posts, except during short phases, the Muslim Brotherhood
maintained that neither assembly lacked legitimate foundation because they both reflected the electoral
majority. Salafyo Costa was moderately deliberative, and offered critical arguments without delegitimizing the
whole process.

In regards to the **fairness and representativeness** of the constituent assembly, the 6 April movement
completely rejected the criteria for forming the first constituent assembly, calling it unrepresentative because
half of its members came from the parliament and only half from outside. The movement maintained that the
decision to elect half of the constituent assembly from within the Lower House did not represent the people
fairly; it was exclusionary and lacked the necessary separation of powers. The movement also referred to
members of parliament who abstained from participating in this "charade". According to the 6 April, a
constituent assembly that lacks clear criteria signifies no real change. Both 6 April and the Revolutionary
Socialists were dissatisfied with the representatives in the first constituent assembly. They highlighted the
excluded segments of the populations, such as Egyptian scientists and citizens abroad, as well as an
adequate number of women, youth and Copts. Another criticism of the first constituent assembly was that it
neglected numerous legal and economic experts, and preferred loyalists. Later, 6 April harshly criticized the
exclusion of Egyptians living abroad from the second constituent assembly. When Saad El-Katatny,
Secretary General of the Freedom and Justice Party, a former member of the Guidance Bureau in the
Muslim Brotherhood and then Speaker of the People's Assembly, argued that Egyptians abroad would be
foreign hands meddling in Egyptian politics to potentially overturn the regime, the secular movements
criticized his words as xenophobic. The 6 April movement reminded the Muslim Brotherhood that Egyptians
abroad supported the economy financially and their large number could not be neglected. In addition, the
Revolutionary Socialists pointed out the exclusion of the martyrs' families, activists and workers, and instead
including some National Democratic Party figures and

constituent assembly represented the ruling class, the Muslim Brotherhood and the military, and did not
share the concerns or demands of the vast majority." The Muslim Brotherhood countered that, on the
contrary, the representation was fair because the constituent assembly incorporated the popular will through
the electoral majority. Salafyo Costa did not cover this issue of representation, because their discourse

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93 Posts by Mostafa El-Naggar, the ex-Muslim Brotherhood and elected member of the People's Assembly were
highlighted on the 6 April Facebook page on 28 March 2012.

94 The Revolutionary Socialists' Facebook groups contained a link to the movement's statement: "No to banning strikes"
focused on other issues at that time.

Debates on diversity or Islamist domination in drafting the constitution

The second contested issue on the constituent assemblies was diversity versus the domination of Islamists in the constituent assembly. The secular-oriented 6 April and Revolutionary Socialists persistently criticized the Muslim Brotherhood's dominance in the constitution drafting process. Both argued that the constituent assembly reflected the Islamic current that held sway over the political process, because it combined electoral and administrative power. They alleged that suggestions from the opposition were not incorporated. 6 April and Revolutionary Socialists maintained that a constitution should not be written by the political majority, because it is intended to build the foundation for a state for generations to come. "A constitution belongs to all people and should be written by consensus. Yet the religious currents wanted a constitution that only reflected themselves." This unilateral approach, as perceived by the secular movements, was compared to the practices of Mubarak's National Democratic Party. 6 April even warned the Muslim Brotherhood that their greed and arrogance would take its toll: "This would be the beginning of the Muslim Brotherhood's end, because the National Democratic Party showed similar contempt to its opposition when it was blinded by power and falsified the parliamentary elections in 2010." The movement also criticized the political actors who agreed to play their part in a fake democratic charade in the first constituent assembly. Later the same year, 6 April criticized the neutralizing of the constituent assembly's decisions by a presidential decree, when then president Morsi issued the constitutional declaration in November 2012 granting himself broad powers, which resulted in his losing popular support (see Timeline).

Similarly, the Revolutionary Socialists rejected the first constituent assembly because it was dominated by Islamists who wanted to control the drafting of Egypt's constitution. They complained that the assembly was controlled by an "arrogant and power-hungry gang". The movement regarded Morsi as a despot who was not working to reach consensus as he had promised, but was pursuing the Brotherhood's own interests by monopolizing the political process. They declared that Islamists have rigid minds, practice guardianship over the people and do not even understand what a state is or how it functions. Both secular movements sharply criticized appointing the only student representative in the first constituent assembly from among Muslim Brotherhood students.

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55 The 6 April movement Facebook page, 20 March 2012.
56 The 6 April movement Facebook page, 27 March 2012.
57 Revolutionary Socialists Facebook page, 2 April 2012.
58 Revolutionary Socialists Facebook page, 24 November 2012.
However, at the opposite end of the spectrum, the Muslim Brotherhood maintained that the constituent assembly was balanced and ensured the representation of all population segments, which guaranteed the desired consensual approach. After dissolving the first constituent assembly and the formation of the second constituent assembly, IkhwanOnline defended it, arguing that the judiciary, meaning the Supreme Constitutional Court (SCC), had neither the right nor the legal grounds to dissolve the constituent assembly this time. In addition, the Muslim Brotherhood Facebook page hinted that the bias and undemocratic nature of the judiciary were behind the conflict with the Brotherhood and the attempts by the SCC to dissolve the second constituent assembly. The Muslim Brotherhood also defended Morsi's decision to neutralize the constituent assembly by his presidential decree, making reference to the recommendation of the legal advisers to do so in order to enhance the independence of the constituent assembly. In addition, IkhwanOnline relied on electoral procedures to legitimize its actions. The Muslim Brotherhood Facebook page maintained that the conflict over the constitution between the president and other political powers had already been settled by the public referendum of March 2011; democratic procedures alone determined the transformation process, therefore the constitution drafting process was democratic, and the secular powers only wanted to sabotage the process. The Brotherhood was not taking matters into its own hands, as the opposition claimed. At the same time IkhwanOnline discredited its opponents, claiming that they had no alternative political vision, they just refused all that was on the table in order to justify their own existence. Again, this issue was not debated by Salafyo Costa, as its policy was not to take partisan positions.

**Debates on qualifications and background**

The third contested issue was the qualifications and background of the constituent assembly members. The 6 April movement, whose central figure and speaker Ahmed Maher participated in the second constituent assembly, initially welcomed this assembly. Yet, when the representative of the Coptic Church withdrew from the committee, 6 April realized that the constitution did not reflect the diversity that the revolution demanded, and Maher withdrew in November 2012 after a poll taken by the movement's members. 6 April defended its participation as the way they deemed fit to realize the revolution's goals from within the political system, a position that was not seeking power. In the early days of the second constituent assembly, the 6 April Facebook page highlighted the cooperation and brotherly spirit among the members. They worked hard on a voluntary basis, without compensation, to finish drafting the constitution for Egypt's future. The commission for societal dialogue made strenuous efforts to collect the suggestions of

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99 Ikhwan Online, 27 November 2012.
100 Ikhwan Online, 23 October 2012.
101 Ikhwan Online, 29 March 2012.
102 Interview with Gharib (see FN 36).
103 The 6 April movement Facebook page, 20 July 2012.

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people from all walks of life, provinces and syndicates, to ensure pluralism. Yet after the withdrawal of Coptic, secular and young voices, 6 April expressed its scepticism towards the efficiency and credibility of the second constituent assembly. "Although the assembly had a majority of elderly people among its members, it held long, 16-hour sessions working, convening and debating every day, this was exhausting and resulted in a lack of real concentration to discuss each article properly." To highlight the generational conflict, the page concluded: "They are messing with our future and our children's future."

The Revolutionary Socialists firmly rejected the first constituent assembly on grounds that too much weight had been put on the representation, which should not be the only criterion. The movement thought that expertise and specialization in legal matters were equally important. In the second constituent assembly the Revolutionary Socialists were invited to a hearing where they called for radical reform of the political system. "A revolution means all power and wealth to the people. The constitution should reflect that." Revolutionary Socialists justified their participation in spite of the Islamist hegemony and lack of fair representation, by explaining that it was "a more pragmatic approach to achieve the desired change."

The Muslim Brotherhood described the first constituent assembly as efficient, patriotic and loyal to its homeland. Its members were praised as non-partisan professionals, who represented the society. In the face of growing criticism towards the second constituent assembly, the Muslim Brotherhood highlighted the progress achieved by assembly members who worked hard despite the negative polarized atmosphere surrounding the political and legal process. They loyalty focused on their work. The Muslim Brotherhood Facebook page treated the members of the constituent assembly as victims of slander campaigns intended to obstruct the constitutional march towards democracy.

Salafyo Costa participated in the hearing in the second constituent assembly. It used its Facebook page as a forum for deliberations on the constitution’s articles. The movement perceived its participation as a positive role towards rebuilding Egypt, and justified its participation in the hearings of the second constituent assembly by both general and particular reasons. Their goal was to prove that co-existence was possible by solving conflict constructively from within official bodies, and by offering recommendations and suggestions for the benefit of the country. They perceived themselves as taking part in a national political development.

104 The 6 April movement Facebook page, 30 November 2012.
105 The 6 April movement Facebook page, 30 November 2012.
106 Revolutionary Socialists Facebook page, 22 July 2012.
107 Revolutionary Socialists Facebook page, 22 July 2012.
108 Statement by the Islamist legal scholar and public figure, Tarek El-Bishry, posted on Ikhwan Online, 27 March 2012.
109 Ikhwan Online, 31 July 2012.
which showed that the country included Salafists, Copts, Liberals, Socialists and all the other political currents.\textsuperscript{110} Afterwards, they wrote a testimony on their page summarizing their speech and their experience in the hearing sessions. They described themselves as a pro-revolutionary movement that seeks co-existence and understanding the other.

**Sources of the social movements' Facebook posts**

The second question about public deliberations on the constitution relates to the sources of the discursive argumentation expressed on each Facebook page in their posts and its reflection of public sphere ideals. As shown in Table 1 below, the social movements utilized diverse sources for their discourses. Here, these sources are discussed in terms of the openness of the movement's page. Both 6 April and Salafyo Costa published the overwhelming majority of their posts through the page administrator, who phrases his post in line with the social movement's goals and communication strategies. IkhwanOnline and the Revolutionary Socialists, however, regularly shared content from their respective webpages elaborating on their positions on the constitution. Neither page shared any material from other activists' pages, while April 6 movement and Salafyo Costa occasionally did, on the condition that they accurately reflected the movement's position.\textsuperscript{111} 6 April shared posts from the Facebook page "We are all Khaled Said" as well as those from prominent activists such as Wael Ghonim.\textsuperscript{112}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>6 April</th>
<th>Revolutionary Socialists</th>
<th>Muslim Brotherhood</th>
<th>Salafyo Costa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>63 %</td>
<td>9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>144 %</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3.6 %</td>
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<td>Members of the page</td>
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</table>

\textsuperscript{110} Salafyo Costa Facebook page, 21 July 2013.

\textsuperscript{111} Interview with Gharib (see FN 36), and with Tolba (see FN 78).

\textsuperscript{112} Wael Ghonim, a manager at Google Middle East and an activist, is one of the administrators of the Facebook page, "We are all Khaled Said". The page is named after a young man from Alexandria who was beaten to death by police officers in 2010. The page demanded democratic freedoms and human rights. It announced the demonstrations to take place on 25 January 2011, originally a day marking the role of the Egyptian police against British colonial rule in 1952. Ghonim was abducted for a few days during the January revolution, but his release was negotiated during Mubarak's last days as president.
The 6 April and IkhwanOnline used TV material in the constitutional debates. Even if the movements varied in their sourcing strategies, they mostly selected the posts that reinforced their own position on the constitution. The analysis of sources shows that in general the social movements did not allow a decentralized or interactive communication, such as the social media permit. The highly ideological Revolutionary Socialists and IkhwanOnline in particular were closed to external influences from other pages, except from their own web pages.

**Quality of public deliberations: Transparency of the drafting process**

The third set of procedural arguments deals with the quality of public deliberations on the constitution. These include transparency, speed and the desired outcome of the constitution writing process. For 6 April, transparency of the drafting process was realized through awareness campaigns. The movement argued that the constitution is a public property, so it is the people's right to participate in the process. Under the slogan, "Write your constitution", the movement engaged in a deliberative discussion with page members, empowering them with information and collecting their suggestions. 6 April also organized various activities within this awareness campaign. The movement coordinator undertook the task of delivering all suggestions to the constituent assembly. For the Muslim Brotherhood transparency was expressed through highly praising the mass media for transmitting live pictures of the constitutional deliberations and hearing sessions. In the Brotherhood's discourse, such transparency lent the process additional procedural legitimacy and public acceptance. Salafyo Costa used its Facebook page primarily for disseminating information and promoting awareness, as well as making its own critical inputs. Salafyo Costa defined the constitution as a "social contract" that regulates the relationship between the state and its citizens. As a group of heterogeneous non-politicized Egyptians, the page tried to spread awareness and to encourage deliberations among its members, and asked them to share their aspirations for the new republic. In a lengthy post, Salafyo Costa explained the role of the constitution in shaping competencies, obliging the state to perform its duties and protecting people from any majority or ruler developing into a dictatorship or authoritarian rule. It aimed at building a collective cross-ideological identity highlighting the ideals of citizenship and the common good, by questions such as: "what would you like to see in my constitution, in your constitution, in our constitution?"

113 Salafyo Costa Facebook page, 5 July 2012.
114 Salafyo Costa Facebook page, 5 July 2012.
Quality and speed of public deliberations

The social movements discussed the quality of deliberations in terms of the speed of the deliberative processes. The Muslim Brotherhood Facebook page asserted that the constitution drafting should be swift, because it led to the desired political stability. The Brotherhood maintained that Egypt's economy was promising, yet the counter-revolutionary powers were trying to damage it. On the other hand, while 6 April cautiously agreed on the need for stability, it also argued that stability did not come with "hastily half-baked texts". Undue haste in issuing a non-consensual constitution draft would only deepen the rifts in public opinion. The movement referred to the first referendum in March 2011, which did not bring the desired stability. 6 April was critical of the "race against time to push the constitution through", especially in December when the deadline set by SCAF was approaching. 6 April also criticized the pressure put by SCAF to coerce the political powers into choosing either to establish a consensus on a new constitution, or to reinstate the old 1971 constitution. Both 6 April and the Revolutionary Socialists agreed that SCAF was the true power holder, not the other executive state institutions. SCAF dictated the transformation path by setting goals and deadlines, which prevented deliberations from developing naturally in their own time. 6 April also harshly criticized the constitution that was issued in 2012, describing it as "fast food", "quickly boiled as an egg", since it was deliberated and ratified in only 19 hours. 6 April here referred to the final session of the second constituent assembly. The 6 April movement Facebook page, 10 April 2012.

Quality of public deliberations: consensus as a desired outcome

The third criterion for quality of deliberations was consensus as a desired outcome of societal and political deliberations. All movements agreed that national unity could only be established through processes of consensual deliberation on the constitution, yet the argumentation about this varied according to the political positions. 6 April repeatedly used the phrase, "everything can be done by contest, but the constitution should be reached through consensus". 6 April also lamented the lack of consensus and of a collective spirit among the members of the first constituent assembly, especially those from the Salafist side, while negotiations are important to produce viable political solutions. Once the disputed first constituent assembly was dissolved in June 2012, 6 April launched a new campaign called "Towards consensus".

115 The 6 April movement Facebook page, 25 November 2012.
116 The 6 April movement Facebook page, 1 December 2012.
117 6 April here refers to the final session of the second constituent assembly. The 6 April movement Facebook page, 19 December 2012.
118 IkhwanOnline Facebook page, 20 December 2012.
119 The 6 April movement Facebook page, 10 April 2012.
The movement initiated an awareness campaign, discussing individual paragraphs of the then proposed constitution draft. It maintained that consensus was created by deliberations, not by a numerical majority, because the constitution belonged to all Egyptians. In its criticism the movement referred to the Prophet Muhammad, who wrote a consensual, constitution-like political document upon his arrival to Medina to create a plural community embracing different segments of the population.\textsuperscript{120} Shortly before the referendum in December 2012, 6 April lamented that the Muslim Brotherhood had wasted a real opportunity to build a post-revolutionary consensus on the constitution. Morsi had deeply disappointed the 6 April movement. In a post directed to the Muslim Brotherhood, the 6 April Facebook page said: “Your masks had fallen. You had a chance you never dreamt of, but wasted it within few months due to your stupidity and eagerness for power. People and history will not have mercy on you.”\textsuperscript{121} The movement accused the Muslim Brotherhood of abusing religion by trying to make religious values take precedence over democratic ones, and warned them that this would cause years of instability in the country. After the referendum on the constitution in December 2012, 6 April criticized what it perceived as a slim majority, because only 57 per cent voted in favour. It accused the Brotherhood of falsification and tolerating some irregularities at the ballot boxes. This, in the view of 6 April, showed the Muslim Brotherhood's indifference about the country's future.

The Revolutionary Socialists argued similarly; that stability only comes with a constitution that protects people's rights and achieves the revolution's goals. The movement was highly critical of the non-consensual approach of the Muslim Brotherhood, which neglected the voices of oppositional minorities. The Muslim Brotherhood maintained that consensus was important, yet it framed this as a result of the referendum on the constitution, which paved the way to collectively build the country. Since the constitution belonged to the people, and not to the political elites, i.e. to parties and social movements, the Muslim Brotherhood argued that it was entitled to speak on behalf of the people because it had the majority of votes in the Parliament and was therefore closer to the public. IkhwanOnline highlighted the validity of the democratic procedures that entitled the Brotherhood to lead the negotiations. Furthermore, the Brotherhood called on the opposition to set aside elite discussions and to listen to the people on the street, in effect accusing the opposition of isolation from the public.\textsuperscript{122} IkhwanOnline also mentioned that the second constituent assembly showed no internal divisions or tensions; on the contrary, its members themselves, like the Muslim Brotherhood parliamentarian Azza El-Garf, declared that consensus inside the constituent assembly exceeded 90 per cent.\textsuperscript{123} The Muslim Brotherhood repeatedly quoted members of the movement and of the Freedom and Justice Party saying that the draft of the constitution was not subject to outright rejection or acceptance; it

\textsuperscript{120} The 6 April movement Facebook page, 20 April 2012.
\textsuperscript{121} The 6 April movement Facebook page, 22 December 2012.
\textsuperscript{122} Ikhwan Online, 17 July 2012.
\textsuperscript{123} Ikhwan Online, 31 October 2012.
was open only for modifications.\textsuperscript{124}

When conflict escalated after President Morsi's constitutional declaration on 22 November 2012 and the resulting deadly clashes with protesters around Al-Ittihadeya presidential palace on 5 December 2012, the opposition firmly boycotted the national dialogue that Morsi called for. The Muslim Brotherhood Facebook page stated that the president believed in dialogue, and made sure that he listened to all opposition factions from various organizations, universities, parties and syndicates. He was not a despot; the constitution was drafted by the constituent assembly independently of the president. IkhwanOnline described the opposition as not constructive, because it obstructed the dialogue and only wanted to reach a political deadlock, without offering a real alternative. Salafyo Costa tried to reconcile its own ideological views with the constitution draft. In its online posts it urged page members to be active in stating what they think. Salafyo Costa criticized all parties for being unable to co-exist and to deliberate constructively. Thus the analysis showed that all movements agreed on establishing consensus, yet the instruments to reach it varied from one movement to another depending on its power and political position.

\textbf{Contested content of the 2012 constitution}

The analysis of the online discourses identified five prominent contested topics in the constitution articles. These five issues concerned the quality of the constitution in relation to the desired political system in the future Egyptian state; the identity of the state; the role of the military; freedoms and liberties; and social and economic rights.

\textbf{Online constitutional debates on the quality of the political system}

The quality of the political system in the future Egyptian state was perceived differently by the social movements studied. The 6 April movement described what was offered by the Muslim Brotherhood as a theocratic state that limits liberties. 6 April was opposed to keeping the Shura Council, the Parliament's Upper House, as a branch of the political system. It recommended its abolition because it was too costly and added no real value to the political process. Keeping it served only the particular interests of the Muslim Brotherhood, because they could use it to mobilize in elections through their religious discourses and social networks. The Revolutionary Socialists radically criticized the vision offered by the Muslim Brotherhood in the new constitution. They said that the constitution did not make any significant radical change towards creating a new Egypt, since democracy could only be established when the "mould of the old system had been swept

\textsuperscript{124} A statement by Mohammed El-Beltagy, general secretary of the now banned Freedom and Justice Party, the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood, posted on Ikhwan Online, 23 October 2012.
away". They asserted that Morsi wanted to tailor the constitution in the interests of his own group, and did not want to serve the country or the poor. For the Revolutionary Socialists, the Muslim Brotherhood lacked credibility because it had remained silent at the time of "massacres" committed by the military against protesters before the parliamentary elections in 2011. Referring to the constitutional declaration, the Revolutionary Socialists wrote that a president who trampled on the law had no legitimacy, even if he was elected by the majority. They saw the Muslim Brotherhood as just following in Mubarak's footsteps in their particularistic power-seeking practices.

The Muslim Brotherhood, on the other hand, emphasized that the constitution was the "beginning of Egypt's prosperous future". The year 2013 should be the year for institution building and laying the foundations for democratic rule after the end of the transformation phase. The Brotherhood pointed out that the presidential powers were restricted which in effect empowered the Parliament.

Salafyo Costa used the revolutionary aspirations as a criterion to judge the constitution draft. Their ideals revolved around deliberatively achieving a constitution that was worthy of Egypt and its history, while at the same time meeting public expectations after the revolution. In fact, they saw the constitution as a continuation of the revolution because it can incorporate its values. Salafyo Costa suggested some amendments to the text, such as the explicit separation of legislative and executive powers by banning those holding ministerial positions from running for legislative positions. Salafyo Costa also proposed abolishing the 50 per cent quota for peasants and workers, since it had lost its meaning and no longer represented the real interests of this group. They called for abolishing the Upper House (Shura Council) for having no real impact on political decision making. They demanded that 10 per cent of parliamentary seats be retained as a quota for young people aged less than 40 years, and the abolition of the appointment of members of parliament by the president. They also demanded clarification on several functions of the president, such as the power of appointment to key posts in the judiciary, including the head of the Supreme Constitutional Court, and combining the position of the high commander of the police with the presidency. To Salafyo Costa, combining the positions distorted the checks and balances in the political process.

Constitutional debates on the identity of the Egyptian state

The identity of the Egyptian state was hotly contested in the Facebook page of the social movements, reflecting the divided political views in Egypt over the role and visibility of religion in the state. In particular,

125 Revolutionary Socialists Facebook page, 15 December 2012.
127 Revolutionary Socialists Facebook page, 7 December 2012.
128 Revolutionary Socialists Facebook page, 31 December 2012.
129 Revolutionary Socialists Facebook page, 31 December 2012.
articles 2, 4 and 219 caused a stir. The 6 April movement criticized the strong focus on religion in the identity of the state. It blamed the hegemony of Islamist voices, especially the Salafists, in the constituent assemblies who over-emphasized the issue of religion and Islamic identity. The conflict was a constructed one and had no real basis, because Islam was in no real danger in Egypt. The Islamist powers were using a constructed danger to change the identity of the state. Eventually, Salafyo Costa wrote, these efforts would fail, because if the constitution did not reflect pluralist Egypt as it was, then it would not last long. Similarly, the leftist Revolutionary Socialists saw that the conflict served only the interests of the Islamists. The constitution did not even resemble the Sharia, yet narrow-minded Islamists misused religion in political rhetoric to manipulate the people. They wanted to transform Egyptian identity into a Wahhabi-inspired culture, the Revolutionary Socialists maintained.

The Muslim Brotherhood discredited the opposition that rejected the constitution, accusing it of seeking to destroy Egypt's Islamic identity, since the constitution was built on the Islamic Sharia. The Muslim Brotherhood launched a campaign called "a constitution that resembles us ". Its main argument was that the constitution's articles were in accordance with Egypt's identity and Islamic heritage. The opposition was threatening the culture and identity of Egypt, while the Muslim Brotherhood was determined to protect it. For example, the Brotherhood's Facebook page ridiculed the criticism of legal scholar and public figure Mohammed El-Baradei on the restrictions on the freedom of worship of non-monotheistic religions, by sarcastically posting that Baradei wanted an article protecting the rights of Buddhists to build temples in Egypt – knowing that Egypt has no Buddhist minority. Here the Muslim Brotherhood wanted to prove false priorities on the part of its opponents and to discredit the whole secular opposition. Exploiting anti-Israeli sentiment, the Muslim Brotherhood discourse maintained that the constitution was not for "lovers of the Zionist state".

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130 Salafyo Costa Facebook page, 29 March 2012.

131 Revolutionary Socialists Facebook page, 22 March 2012.

132 Mohammed El-Baradei is an Egyptian legal scholar and diplomat. He was Director General of the International Atomic Energy from 1997 to 2009. His role in the run-up to the 25 January Revolution began when he openly criticized Mubarak's regime and urged democratic reforms. In 2010 he co-founded the National Association for Change, a civil society initiative to collect petitions demanding the needed reforms. Cross and Snow, "Social Movements" (see FN 7). After the revolution he was a potential candidate for the presidential elections in 2012, but refused to run because of his perceived lack of credibility of the political process. In the post-revolutionary phase he acted as a public figure and political mediator, and repeatedly criticized the lack of justice and national reconciliation, as well as the Islamists' domination over the transitional process. He participated in the anti-Muslim Brotherhood coalition of 30 June 2013, and was appointed a vice-president for the interim phase from 13 July 2013 until he resigned on 14 August 2013 after the excessively violent dispersal of the pro-Morsi sit-in at Rab'a Al-Adaweya and Al-Nahda squares. Since then he has played no substantive role in Egyptian politics.

133 Ikhwan Online Facebook page, 10 October 2012.

134 Ikhwan Online Facebook page, 1 November 2012.
Because of its strong Salafist ideological roots, the role of religion was important to Salafyo Costa. Yet, diverse and independent as the movement is, it offered a unique point of view in evaluating the articles of the constitution. Mainly the movement criticized certain articles for not conforming enough to Sharia or being too vague, while Salafyo Costa offered an enlightened and modern definition of citizenship in light of religious principles, as was presented in their position on social and economic rights. The movement criticized as too vague a phrase in the constitution's preamble referring to the role of religion, which highlighted the importance of "monotheistic faith and knowledge of the Creator". Salafyo Costa demanded specific clarification as to which monotheism was meant. Worshipping one God would equally apply to Akhenaton's call to worship Aton in ancient Egypt.\(^{135}\) The movement also criticized the life-long tenure of the powerful Al-Azhar sheikh and of the body of high Azhar scholars, who could not be stripped of their posts. They argued that if the Al-Azhar sheikh decided to turn away from Islam, why should he still retain his position? For Salafyo Costa, the legal text did not abide by the Sharia.

### Online constitutional debates on the role of the military

The social movements contested the role of the military in the political arena. Their discourses criticized what some movements called the "militarization of the constitution". This referred to the privileged status for the military in the political and economic system. The 6 April movement rejected the article allowing civilians to be tried in courts martial, fearing that it could be used to impose an unjust trial on the political opposition or on journalists. The movement gave the example of the residents of Qursaya Island being court martialled for defying eviction orders issued by the military.\(^{136}\) April framed this as an injustice against civilians.\(^{137}\) The Revolutionary Socialists were by far the most critical movement about the role of the military in politics. In their discourse, the SCAF used the conflicts among the various civil society groups to maintain its own power, while it led the counter-revolution. According to the Revolutionary Socialists, the SCAF did not really care about democracy, but only about its own political power and survival.\(^{138}\) In its Facebook page, the Muslim Brotherhood denied that the constitution was being militarized. It maintained that it was the best and

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\(^{135}\) Akhenaton was a Pharaoh in the 18th dynasty of ancient Egypt, who ruled for 17 years. He was most famous for abandoning the traditional polytheistic religion and introducing the worship of Aton, who was symbolized by the sun. Akhenaton is considered to be the first Egyptian to call for a monotheistic religion.

\(^{136}\) Qursaya Island, in the Nile River near Cairo, is an agricultural area inhabited by ordinary Egyptian citizens. Because of its attractive location for real estate development, its ownership is disputed. Rumours have circulated that it will be sold to an investor in the tourism sector. On the other hand some public figures claimed the island is needed by the military for security reasons. In recent years a dispute has erupted over possession and land use of this attractive island. Events even led to violent clashes between civilians and the military police. Twelve civilians were detained and then sentenced by military tribunals to imprisonment. For further details, see Kennedy, Merrit, "A big battle over a tiny isle In the Nile", National Public Radio (2013) [http://www.npr.org/2013/03/09/173820639/a-big-battle-over-a-tiny-isle-in-the-nile](http://www.npr.org/2013/03/09/173820639/a-big-battle-over-a-tiny-isle-in-the-nile) (Accessed 16 October 2015).

\(^{137}\) The 6 April movement Facebook page, 19 November 2012.

\(^{138}\) Revolutionary Socialists Facebook page, 15 April 2012.
most civil constitution Egypt had ever seen. Finally, the Salafyo Costa movement rejected certain articles that privileged the political role of the military in public life. They said that the constitution lacked checks and balances for the military budget, allowed courts martial for civilians, and endorsed the establishment of a National Defence Council with a military majority and guardianship role, instead of control by civilian institutions.\(^{139}\)

**Constitutional debates on freedoms and liberties**

The fourth contested issue in the constitution relates to the articles on *freedoms and public liberties*. The 6 April movement, during its participation in the second constituent assembly, suggested some changes to the articles on freedom of expression. It used Quranic verses at some point to convince the public. It described the constitution as not ambitious enough. The text did not match the high aspirations of the millions of Egyptians who fought for bread, freedom, social justice and human dignity. In addition, the constitution did not incorporate pluralism.\(^{140}\) The Revolutionary Socialists argued that the constitution neglected human rights and freedoms. The document was unfair to workers, because it prohibited strikes and protests and allowed the emergency law to be imposed again.\(^{141}\)

The Muslim Brotherhood insisted that the 2012 constitution perfectly protected people’s rights. Separation of powers was guaranteed by the unprecedented independence of the judiciary. The IkhwanOnline Facebook page repeatedly argued that the paragraphs on rights and freedoms were excellent, and that it would be the best constitution in Egyptian history. They claimed that the media spread negative rumours. Women and children enjoyed protection and there were real guarantees to protect all children. The Brotherhood alleged that the opposition spread lies about the age of marriage for girls being lowered.\(^{142}\) Salafyo Costa also criticized the seemingly harmless articles that concluded with the phrase "according to law". Their page stated that "the phrase might seem merciful, but it might open the door to hell".\(^{143}\) We would never know what good or evil would lie in the laws drafted later. Salafyo Costa repeatedly maintained that women’s rights should be protected in the constitution. Their position was that empowering women neither conflicted with Sharia nor destroyed social values nor broke up families. The movement also called for a constitution that protected the people’s social rights, such as the right to proper housing, adequate healthcare and dignity. Salafyo Costa had a number of suggestions about enshrining the spirit of the 25 January Revolution in the constitution’s preamble, as well as including articles that were commitments to solve problems of education

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\(^{139}\) Salafyo Costa Facebook page, 20 November 2012.

\(^{140}\) The 6 April movement Facebook page, 2 December 2012.

\(^{141}\) Revolutionary Socialists Facebook page, 27 November 2012.

\(^{142}\) Ikhwan Online Facebook page, 19 November 2012.

\(^{143}\) Salafyo Costa Facebook page, 15 October 2012.
and scientific research, as well as protect the Nile and preserve antiquities in the service of the Egyptian state.\textsuperscript{144}

**Online constitutional debates on social and economic rights**

The final contested issue of the constitution pertains to **social and economic rights**. The 6 April movement argued that stability does not come with a constitution that neglects socio-economic rights. They criticized the restrictions imposed on protests, and regarded them as a violation of workers’ rights. The movement also criticized healthcare being made accessible only to those who were financially well-off, through the reinstatement of so-called "poverty certificates" (2012/62). The constitution was a danger to social justice, since it linked wages to production and not to the minimum wage, which was the income the workers needed, as calculated by a court ruling. The Revolutionary Socialists strongly condemned the constitution because it neglected economic rights in particular. In their view, the constitution sided with capitalists against the rights of workers to a fair wage. It did not radically change the foundations of Egypt's skewed political economy. The Muslim Brotherhood countered these arguments by maintaining that the constitution belonged to all people, alleviated social injustice and incorporated the goals of the revolution. Salafyo Costa stressed social rights in their Facebook page. They said that Egyptians, especially the underprivileged, should enjoy their rights as part of the dignity and social justice that had been promised. Salafyo Costa suggested creating a health care system for all citizens, whether residing in the country or abroad. It also called for putting in place laws that protected the rights of single women who supported their families, and recommended including the rights of people with special needs, to assure their education and rehabilitation as well as penalizing any forms of discrimination against them. Surprisingly, Salafyo Costa did not consider that the Arabization of sciences and curricula, as stated in the 2012 constitution draft, would necessarily serve Egypt's identity. In fact, they criticized the article stating that all schools and universities should comply with the official state curricula.

**The positions of the social movements on the 2012 constitution**

The third and final part of the qualitative results discusses the positions of the social movements on the 2012 constitution. Three positions were adopted by the movements: a) refusing the constitution and mobilizing for a no vote or a boycott, b) accepting it and calling for a yes vote, or c) declaring their position and leaving the decision up to the audience.

Obviously, the Muslim Brotherhood called on the public to vote for the constitution in the referendum held on 15 December 2012. In their view, the constitution was synonymous with stability and prosperity. It was

\textsuperscript{144} Salafyo Costa Facebook page, 10 December 2012.
framed as the best constitution for Egyptians; a constitution that would bring dignity, prosperity and stability to Egyptian citizens. The Brotherhood highlighted the political gains from the constitution, mainly a stability that would benefit the country's economy. It highlighted some of the articles they deemed positive, such as the restricted powers of the president and the protection of women's and children's rights. They accused the opposition of lack of alternatives and lack of political vision. Ikhwan Online described the referendum as the choice of the people, as settled by the majority. Therefore, the constitution should be supported.

The day of the referendum on the constitution was portrayed as a popular demand by the people, with Egyptian citizens standing in long queues to participate. According to the Muslim Brotherhood, this was the biggest evidence of the people's longing for democracy and political participation. After the referendum, the movement celebrated the constitution as the end of a long transitional period. It described the national consensus that led to the constitution as an achievement and success for Morsi. The Brotherhood's Facebook page repeatedly highlighted the president's efforts to open a national dialogue and make changes to the cabinet to appease the opposition. The movement used its page to call upon other state institutions, such as al-Azhar, to urge the opposition to agree to building up the homeland after the constitution was agreed. The Muslim Brotherhood embraced the welcoming reactions of countries like Turkey and Germany, while it strongly attacked the United States of America and Israel. They were, according to Ikhwan Online, partners with movements and parties that wanted to obstruct the constitution and were traitors and conspirators. By using thugs, these nations planned a conspiracy to topple Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood and to spread chaos in Egypt. The Muslim Brotherhood also discredited the "biased media" which it said published only sensational news on the constituent assembly with the intention of bringing down Morsi.

The 6 April movement and the Revolutionary Socialists clearly rejected the final draft of the constitution. They mobilized against it in the referendum. 6 April derided the constitution with many accusations that reflected its inadequacy and domination by the Islamists, including "the one faction constitution", "the deformed constitution", "the corrupt constitution" and "the Muslim Brotherhood's constitution". The constitution did not incorporate the dignity or freedoms that people aspired to after the revolution. In addition, the movement organized a number of campaigns and protests in many provinces under the slogan: "Your constitution does not represent us", to highlight deficient articles. It then launched a campaign to vote "No" in the referendum, and urged people not to boycott the referendum as this would serve the interests of the Muslim Brotherhood. After the referendum, the 6 April movement deliberated on the next political steps to resolve the conflict and to achieve a national reconciliation that would amend the constitution in a way that

145 Ikhwan Online Facebook page, 25 December 2012.
146 Ikhwan Online Facebook page, 10 December 2012.
would help Egypt's economy. In spite of their rejection of the draft constitution, 6 April's Facebook page monitored the referendum and called on the people to promptly report any falsifications, violations or complaints during the electoral process. Indeed, numerous violations were reported on the page, including the absence of stamps on some of the ballots, as well as voter manipulation by the Muslim Brotherhood directly in front of the electoral building. 6 April criticized the Brotherhood, asking why they opted to falsify results if they really were as popular as they claimed.

The Revolutionary Socialists were highly critical of the whole process and its outcome. They firmly opposed the draft constitution. They escalated their confrontational style against the Muslim Brotherhood in the days after the Ittihadeya clashes on 5 December 2012, only ten days before the referendum. In these protests, members from the Revolutionary Socialists fell victim to the violence of pro-Muslim Brotherhood mobs as well as of the police, in the violent dispersal of the anti-constitution marches and sit-ins. Rejecting the constitution was the only possible outcome for them, in order to show up Morsi's lack of credibility because of the violence used against his opposition. The Facebook page of the Revolutionary Socialists stated: "Morsi's dogs assaulted peaceful protesters. People's lives seemed to have no value; while the constitutional assembly was deliberating, people were being killed on the streets." Hence, the Revolutionary Socialists wrote a strongly worded press release to the ruling party: "To Morsi and his brotherhood and his allies, you are failures; you will only pass your constitution over our dead bodies for the blood that was shed in front of your palace. We will not let you loot our country; our answer will be in all Egyptian squares." In their posts the constitution was given many negative labels, such as "Morsi's constitution", "the Muslim Brotherhood's constitution" and "the constitution of the ruling regime of the military and businessmen". It embodied a constitution of the counter-revolution and was a return to the police state. Furthermore, it was labelled "the constitution of shame" and "the exclusionary constitution". The Revolutionary Socialists' page covered the movement's own activities and campaigns rejecting the constitution, including marches, protests, sit-ins, fairs, conferences in universities, streets and other public places. The most famous campaigns included "No to the Constitution", which advanced the reasons to reject the constitution and called the Muslim Brotherhood liars in the name of religion. Since the constitution could not achieve the goals of the revolution's goals, it was therefore void.

The discourse of Salafyo Costa was not as radically critical of the constitution as the two other non-Islamist movements. In line with its motto of co-existence, Salafyo Costa wanted to offer a pragmatic solution beyond

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147 The 6 April movement Facebook page, 27 December 2012.
148 Revolutionary Socialists Facebook page, 8 December 2012.
149 Revolutionary Socialists Facebook page, 10 December 2012. During the violent dispersal of the sit-in around Al-Ittehadeya presidential palace, activists from Revolutionary Socialists were held and tortured by Muslim Brotherhood members for hours until they were freed in the morning of 6 December 2012.
polarization and towards independent thinking. They called on their readers to reach their own conclusions, and not to use someone else's reasoning. "Go out and say what you think, but do not boycott!" the page urged. Salafyo Costa produced a short comic film showing the average citizen's confusion when trying to suggest key questions to evaluate the constitution. In order to guide the audience to an individual decision, Salafyo Costa argued that the constitution was a long-term document, and not just for the short term. "Thus the best way to judge its articles was to imagine what would happen if the worst president or the worst majority would come to power. How would the text protect the people's freedoms and rights then?" At the same time, unlike the other Islamists, Salafyo Costa defended the protests and mobilization against the draft constitution. "Criticism of the constitution made it better. If the Americans should feel grateful towards anyone for their Bill of Rights, then it should be to the critical voices, not to those who drafted it. This is because the freedoms they enjoy today, like freedom of expression, freedom of faith, the right to a lawyer were suggested by those who opposed the original Bill of Rights."151

Discussion and conclusion: What do the constitutional debates say about Egypt's post-revolutionary public sphere?

The starting point of this study was that the opening up of the public sphere in Egypt after the revolution resulted in increased access for new actors and the opportunity for intensive deliberations. The deliberative processes take place in a radical polarized political culture in post-revolutionary Egypt. Indeed, the inclusion of new actors has raised the number of players in the political process, which has made it more inclusive, but also more complex and challenging. Increased interaction did not necessarily increase the deliberative character or the quality of public discourses in terms of reciprocity. The online discourses of the social movements and their contribution to the public sphere reveal a high level of contestation directed towards procedural and content issues in the 2012 constitution, which reflected the radical polarized political culture. The complexities and entanglement of new actors, the public deliberations on a crucial issue like the constitution in the absence of a framework of minimal consensus or overlapping consensus, made the communication process more difficult. Although social learning occurs through rational argumentation to produce "democratically" legitimate outcomes, empirical results show that in the phase from 2011 till 2013, no social learning took place during the deliberations that could have resolved the clashing interests in a democratic manner and prevent an autocratic setback. The empirical results also give reason to doubt the deliberative capacity of the social media alone in the radical-polarized Egyptian setting, which questions the euphoric technological determinism put by some scholars of new media and democratization.153

150 Salafyo Costa Facebook page, 3 December 2012.
151 Salafyo Costa Facebook page, 3 December 2012.

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In the post-Mubarak Egyptian public sphere, in which the constitutional debates took place, the fundamental claim for legitimacy was contested. All social movements made strong assertions that they truly represented the Egyptian people, either by electoral victory, as the Muslim Brotherhood did, or by presenting themselves as the independent voice of the people defending their rights. The 6 April movement regards itself as a loyal and patriotic group that defends the demands of the people to obtain their full rights under the new constitution. The Revolutionary Socialists frame themselves as a patriotic movement that wants to change society, confront tyranny and injustice, as well as fight for a constitution that protects the poor, the simple people, the workers and the marginalized. The Muslim Brotherhood maintains that they keep their promises, are loyal to their people, work hard to reach consensus on the constitution and want Egypt to have a better future in light of the 2012 constitution. Salafyo Costa wants a constitution that is worthy of Egypt and Egyptians, by protecting their dignity and freedom. At the same time it holds high its ideals as a revolutionary group that seeks co-existence and opposes discrimination.

Since revolutions constitute a break with the traditional, established sources of legitimacy, a new source of legitimacy needed to be deliberated. Difficulties in deliberating a minimal consensus were the result of opposing views about legitimacy in the post-Mubarak political landscape. Two sources of legitimacy competed at this time: electoral legitimacy versus protest legitimacy. In their constitutional debates, each social movement claimed to represent the people as a part of its self-legitimizing discourse. While election results gave to the winning majority a representative power as an embodiment of the people’s will, they also lent the political process credibility and created some stability. In this sense, the Muslim Brotherhood favoured playing by legal rules in the political struggle, as was the practice under Mubarak, while at the same time framing themselves as institutional democrats. By prioritizing the electoral outcome instead of the extra-institutional opposition, the Muslim Brotherhood opted for stabilization of the political scene by following rational-legal steps. Refusing to dissolve the Muslim Brotherhood as a social movement after establishing its political organ, the Freedom and Justice party, gave those members in power a margin to manoeuvre to obtain additional political commitments from within the political institutional framework. The Muslim Brotherhood’s participation in electoral procedures lent legitimacy to the political-legal process of formulating the constitution, and stabilized the fluid political public sphere after the toppling of Mubarak.¹⁵⁴

Revolutionary legitimacy, on the other hand, relied on public protests and demonstrations to embody popular dissent. This route was favoured by the secular social movements, in particular the Revolutionary Socialists, 6 April and to a certain extent Salafyo Costa, which as a non-mobilizing heterogeneous movement had a more limited field of action. The logic of revolutionary legitimacy in its maximalist form dismisses the

credibility of the political process, since the foundations of the regime are proved to lack popular support and justice, and are perceived as reliant on manipulation and overweening power. In essence, this contesting view does not reflect the conflict over conventional or non-conventional approaches to popular political participation. Rather, it reflects the conflict over the radical revolutionary approach vis-à-vis the moderate reform process as a means of changing the political system. Participation in the electoral and legal procedures without a fundamental change in the governing rules of power and distribution of resources is counter-productive to the unconventional protest culture. The contest over the sources of legitimacy gave rise to a new contest over the embodiment of the people's will: the constitutional debates revolve around the question which social movement or which political actor is entitled to claim that they represent the people's will? The results in this study show that the Muslim Brotherhood displayed a sense of entitlement to speak on behalf of the people based on their clear electoral majority, while the secular social movements claimed the same right based on diversity and pluralism. The failure of the civilian actors to resolve this question through deliberation led to much turbulence and numerous setbacks in the period of democratic transformation, which eventually resulted in the abrupt end of the post-revolutionary bargaining processes in mid-2013, when the military intervened, using the rising popular discontent.

The constitutional debates show that the form of discursive argumentation changes in accordance with the relationship of the social movement to power. Because there was a shift in the power position of the Muslim Brotherhood from an oppositional social movement to an established and even elected party, dominating the parliament and the presidency, it can no longer be regarded as a challenging social movement. The Muslim Brotherhood's discourses changed accordingly, shifting from a challenging discourse in early 2011 to a justifying discourse of incumbents by mid-2012. In this case, the Muslim Brotherhood was no longer power neutral. Its position within the political system was higher than the other three social movements, which remained in the political public sphere as oppositional movements. This explains why the Muslim Brotherhood regarded electoral legitimacy as the most important form of legitimacy, as it was its source of political power. After it became part of the political system and assumed power over the highest executive institution, the Muslim Brotherhood did not seek compromises with the extra-institutional opposition – the other social movements – which affected its discursive practices. Nor did it challenge the core of the regime any more – the military nexus. At this point the Muslim Brotherhood assumed discourses that focused on stabilizing the political system instead of disrupting it: economic performance, patriotism and rallying around the president were techniques well known from the National Democratic Party under Mubarak. These techniques also addressed the public fear of destabilization and disintegration of the state in the post-revolutionary months. In addition to identifying itself with the popular will, the Muslim Brotherhood also used specific religious argumentation that delegitimized the other participants in the public sphere, limiting their right to speak or even in some cases to exist. Power, then, is a central category for understanding the online discourses on the constitutional debates.
A second category that explains the constitutional debates is the **discursive opportunity structure**, which is understood as the cultural access points that discursively give the movement's frames a certain cultural power. Two major characteristics mark Egypt's radical polarized political culture, as explained earlier: first, the uncontested high level of national pride; and second, the divided identity over the role and visibility of religion in the public sphere. All the social movements addressed national pride in their online discourses in one way or another. For the proponents of the constitution, it was worthy of the Egyptians, the best constitution in its long history, the constitution of dignity, reflecting the great revolution that the Egyptians had achieved. Opponents of the constitution claimed that it was not worthy of the aspirations of the Egyptians, did not reflect the sacrifices of Tahrir Square and did not guarantee a prosperous future for Egyptians; it reflected only those who wrote it, and not the pluralism in Egyptian society. The construction of the Egyptian people in the political discourse appealed to the high national pride.

When it comes to the role of religion in Egypt's political culture, the analysis becomes multi-layered. The role of religion and its visibility in the public sphere is connected to an old and classic debate on religion and secularism in the Arab world. Religion played a role in shaping the discourses of social movements. The Muslim Brotherhood used a double-sided argumentation; they utilized a religious discourse for their own constituencies, focussing on a dichotomous world-view, purity and a claim to the universal truth, which mixed binary theological concepts with more pluralistic citizenship arguments. For those who were not followers of the Muslim Brotherhood, they turned to democratic discourses, focussing in particular on procedural democratic arguments, such as electoral legitimacy, majority rule and representative democracy. Basically, then, the Muslim Brotherhood made two claims that covered both the general and particular; a general claim to represent the popular will through elections and a particularistic claim to represent ultimate truth as pious Muslims serving God. Combining these two claims might have seemed a good tactic to appeal to diverse groups, but it also contained conflicting world-views that eventually led to the Brotherhood's decline in popularity. The style in which religious arguments were used at times made consensus-building communication more difficult due to exclusionary logic. Additionally, when claiming to have the full truth revealed by a higher authority it is difficult to compromise one's position without losing some credibility.

The use of religion to enhance argumentative power was approached differently by other social movements. The 6 April movement used mainstream religious discourses, such as referring to the Prophet's actions in the early history of establishing the Muslim community, or using Quranic verses and Hadith to strengthen the credibility of a political argument. Salafyo Costa took elements from religious discourse as guiding principles for universal human and moral values. The publishing policy of Salafyo Costa strictly forbids highlighting...
religious rituals or comparing religions. Religion was seen as a source of inspiration to guide communication by a set of ethics, for example avoiding unverified news reports and incitement to hatred. The secular Revolutionary Socialists incorporated no religious discourse at all in their discourse. On the contrary, they discredited the use of religious discourses in political issues, claiming that those who did so wanted to alter Egypt's identity into a Wahhabi-style Islamism.

The evolution of the online discourses points to the tension between the particularistic and the universal claims of the social movements. The radical polarized political culture in Egypt did not prevent a moment of unity in Tahrir Square. The success of combined mobilization, however, did not guarantee political success in the bargaining process over power. Building consensus in a new political system by using social media was tougher than estimated in 2011. The euphoric idea of reaching consensus through rationalized deliberation processes in an online public sphere did not sufficiently correspond to the actual empirical findings on the constitutional debates. Lacking a clear set of communicative norms makes the public deliberations more difficult. Throughout the transitional period a particularistic agenda dominated the foreground, allowing no room for a more universal argumentation to create a degree of overlapping consensus through public reason. At the same time, empirical results show the possibility of social learning when responsiveness takes place, because it leads to a reconciling dialogue between the different actors. The deliberation processes show a limited episodic and short-term learning achieved through communicative discussions, where attempts to form a broad consensus are evident especially when the first constituent assembly was annulled by the judiciary and the second constituent assembly was formed. The social movements varied in their degree of pragmatism and responsiveness, two values central to forging compromises.

Changing one's position enables negotiating or sharing a minimal consensus, which is capable of balancing the particular claims of a social movement with the universal shared goals of the larger society. Evolving positions and discourses are not necessarily a sign of weakness, but signal openness, adaptation and learning processes. Yet, reaching consensus was not managed by all movements equally. The positions and discourses of 6 April and Salafyo Costa throughout the constitutional debates show a higher degree of reconciliation and openness compared to those of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Revolutionary Socialists. Any change of position by 6 April was dictated by their relationship to the Muslim Brotherhood and the military. When 6 April was critical of the first constituent assembly and questioned its formation, the annulment of the assembly and the formation of a second assembly were reasons for the movement to remain hopeful and join the new assembly. Yet, with increasing Islamist domination over the constitutional drafting process, the 6 April movement withdrew from the second constituent assembly and strongly delegitimized it. Salafyo Costa took a different stance. Its discourse evolved in three stages: the first was
marked by active participation seeking the common good and national consensus, as well as making calls for reaching agreement and co-existence. The second stage was marked by a growing criticism to various articles in the constitution draft, and by engagement in the hearing sessions to offer feedback. Finally, the third stage showed more criticism and sarcasm. The movement called for opposing the draft constitution. At the same time it did not condemn those who supported it. Mainly, it called for individual thinking and critical judgment, and not following the herd.

It became clear that the radical polarized actors in the Egyptian political culture do respond to deliberation processes at times of inclusion. When the more powerful actors initiate inclusion mechanisms, the opposition follows a less confrontational argumentation. Social movements worked on forming a consensus when they adopted less antagonistic argumentation in their online discourses towards the Muslim Brotherhood, after the latter came to power. This was the case when the second constituent assembly was formed in the summer of 2012. 6 April, the Revolutionary Socialists and Salafyo Costa were optimistic about the second constituent assembly and initially participated in the hearings. But they withdrew one after the other because of what they perceived as an exclusionary deliberative style, and the ignoring of their inputs into the draft constitution. Coercive or unilateral power in communication processes undermines the egalitarian character of deliberation and hinders consensus by exclusion, marginalization and delegitimization of the other. In addition, discrediting political actors for their binary religious discourses, or ridiculing their mobilization capacities or ideological world-views, had the effect of radicalizing the discourses. In a nutshell, the contestation over the legitimacy of the constituent assembly changed over time according to the political position of the particular social movement on its participation. The pattern shows that exclusion of political competitors radicalizes the opposition. The more stakeholders and political actors are involved and are responded to, the less conflictual their position and their argumentation will be. Inclusion of challengers into the decision-making process moderates their position and communicative tone. Changes of discourse can be facilitated or hindered by the relationship of the social movement to the administrative power and to other social movements.

Furthermore, there seems to be a pattern that affects the internal deliberation processes in the social movements studied. It is self-evident that building a collective identity for diverse cross-ideological groups is more challenging than for homogeneous social movements. The heterogeneous social movements show a higher degree of internal deliberative processes, which are intended to convince their own followers and members through argumentation and transparency processes. Empirical results show that the type of argumentation differs with the type of social movement. While 6 April and Salafyo Costa movement are "deliberative democrats", their consensus-building process is more important than the ends at which they are aiming.\textsuperscript{156} Their discourses encouraged members to participate and contribute their inputs. The Revolutionary

\textsuperscript{156} Dahlberg, Lincoln, "The Habermasian Public Sphere: Taking Difference Seriously?" in Theory and Society 34/2
Socialists and Muslim Brotherhood, on the other hand, adopt similar organizational models; the Socialists incorporate democratic centralism into their decision-making,¹⁵⁷ while the Muslim Brotherhood applies centralized democracy.¹⁵⁸ Both use Facebook pages as an online platform to deliberate or negotiate their decisions, since the deliberations have already taken place inside the movement's ideological organization. Both explain that although members have freedom to express their opinions, decisions are taken by majority vote. Members are expected to comply with the decisions. Members who fail to do so, or who publicly criticize a decision, are expelled from the movement.

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All social movements within the scope of this study regard consensus as an important normative criterion for the public sphere. As mentioned, they attempt to identify themselves with the Egyptian people in order to legitimize their demands and discourses. They use this claim of representativeness as a major argument to convince the followers and the general public. All the social movements expressed discontent with the status quo in their claim-making processes, and engaged in intensive contestation and emotional mobilization. Consensus building over the constitution was pushed into the background by the emphasis on the mutual exclusivity of various claims, while at the same time the exclusion from the decision-making process was lamented by the oppositional social movements. In short, the maximalist position of the political actors and social movements sabotaged the potential bargaining process and jeopardized its outcome.

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This analysis of the post-revolutionary constitutional debates raises questions about the dynamics of the deliberative processes within the radical polarized political culture that shapes the discourses and boundaries of the public sphere. The results show that central concepts such as power and legitimacy are contested. Because consensus was important to all players, no clear agreement on the procedural steps took place. Thus the phase between 2011 and 2013 showed alternating mechanisms of polarization and consensus, depending on the political position and degree of pragmatism of each social movement. At the same time it was also dependent on its relationship to the other actors and to the power centre in the political landscape. The social movements might have learnt the lesson that building a new political system can only take place by joining forces against authoritarianism, not only within the regime, but also among the non-ruling political actors.

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As the course of events showed, toppling Mubarak as the head of the ruling regime brought about a "change of regime without a regime change".¹⁵⁹ While scholars initially tried to adapt existing transformation studies

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Tallima (see FN 42).
¹⁵⁸ El-Houdaiby, "Muslim Brotherhood" (see FN 57), 7.
¹⁵⁹ Wickham, The Muslim Brotherhood, (see FN 23), 154.
when the Arab Spring's fourth wave of democratization took place, the evolving regional dynamics overtook the hypothesis of transition towards democracy, replacing it with a relaunched authoritarianism exhibiting a growing resilience and adaptability. The result was a mere transfer of power and a change in the political elite, yet with the same mechanisms of marginalization and repression dictating the political game. While the Egyptian case did not deteriorate into the civil war that Syria is experiencing, because of the strong power centre around the Egyptian military, it is this very core that limits the development of a free civil society.

Key social movements are tightly controlled and monitored in order to hinder a possible renewed networking. Lack of trust and fear of betrayal weakens any basis for cross-partisan work, which was the basis for the pre-Tahrir mobilizations. At the same time, the state institutions are getting weaker in responding to citizens’ needs and will face rising socio-economic difficulties in providing for the growing population. At the present time, a renewed public mobilization by the classic social movements in the short term seems unlikely, due to a massive crackdown on the public sphere, as well as the circulation of conspiracy theories delegitimizing the revolutionaries and independent intellectuals. Additionally, on the meso-level, the main challengers are facing an organizational crisis that is reformulating their respective collective identities. Unless exceptional events or a massive socio-economic crisis take place that presents a renewed political opportunity structure, the opposition would need some time to re-organize and mobilize such large numbers as it successfully did before. However, events in Egypt have always taken unpredictable turns, and structural reasons for the imbalances remain. Socio-economic grievances, the increasing youth bulge, a plethora of new civil society organizations working below the radar on developmental and cultural issues, as well as the rapid, decentralized diffusion of information via the Internet, in addition to internal conflicts within the regime loyalists all offer reasons not to dismiss a second popular uprising in the medium to long term. Yet, even in the case of a successful mobilization, the question will always remain about how the political actors will forge a new consensual social contract amid a persisting radical polarized political culture. In this regard, the present study hopes to have offered some insights on the mechanisms of polarization and consensus in Egypt's public sphere, which will serve as lessons for the political actors in the future.

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