A feminine Spring Cleaning?
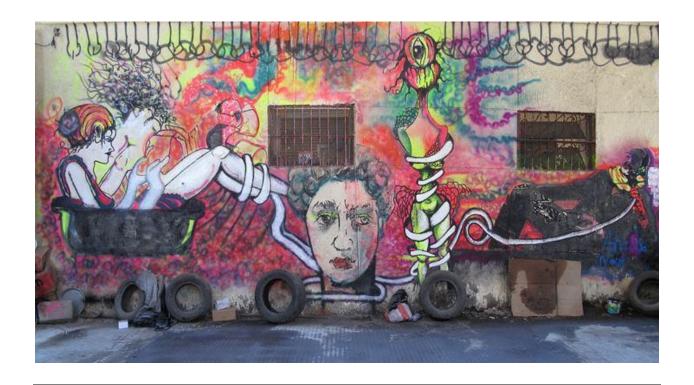## Women's organizations in MENA after the Arab Spring

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Contents

Introduction

The 2011 Arab Uprisings surprised many both within and outside the Arab world. While the political transitional processes are unfinished and the results remain to be seen, all analysts agree upon one major change: Arabic people have regained their voice. Together with eliminating the mantel of authoritarian dictatorship, people have lost their fear of speaking out and calling for their rights. Inspired by the examples of others in the region, many citizens have initiated grassroots or civil society organizations to achieve the change they want to see in their community. Since 2011 there has been an enormous growth across the region in civil society organisation of one form or the other; activists collectives, rights groups, grassroots movements, media initiatives, development organisation, lobby and advocacy initiatives, networks, bloggers, youth groups, women's groups - all have flourished under the new space for civil society[1].

Before the Arab Spring, civil society in the Arab world did exist, albeit in different forms than in other regions of the world and with limited space to challenge the political regime. As Rishmawi and Morris put it: "Civil society in the Arab World has been shaped and constrained by a history of foreign intervention and stringent controls imposed by authoritarian and paternalistic regimes"[2]. Now, new grassroots movements are growing in number, scope and diversity and both these groups and individual activists are increasingly capable to voice their concerns and successful in achieving the sought after change.

This thesis will look into how the landscape of civil society has changed since 2011, thus analyzing this flourishing of new organizations and actors in the context of civil society as a whole and what their development has brought in terms of changes. As the scope of this thesis is limited, I will focus on women's rights organisations. Women's organisations are especially

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[1] Wulf, 2011
[2] Rishmawi and Morris, 2007, p. 5

interesting here because of the specific position they have in civil society; in some countries they are seen as a-political and therefor at an advantage, whereas in other countries their discourse become linked to discussions on religion and cultural traditions which often marginalizes their position in civil society and puts them at a distinct disadvantage[3].

Research question:

How has the landscape of women's civil society in the MENA region changed since 2011?

Methodology

This research will use secondary resources and literature study (desk research), combined with interviews with women activists or civil society actors. In total, I have 10 in depth interviews with 10 different civil society actors from five different countries in the region.

Finding and contacting enough participants for valid data proved to be very challenging. I used several different strategies to find and contact prospective participants. Firstly, I asked five experts on the region in the Netherlands and MENA region to put me in contact with their partners in the MENA region. This proved a very successful strategy. Secondly, I tried to find organizations and people that were mentioned in other scholarly' work or more journalistic articles and contacted them. Finally, I tried contacting several organizations and individuals directly through simple webresearch on 'women's organizations in country X'. The last strategy turned out to be very unsuccessful as most of the contacts I found online were no longer working (I received approximately 150 failed delivery emails) or did not respond.

　　　Thus in the end, the snowball or network effect helped me most. However, it still was a very time-consuming and challenging process to find enough participants. To accommodate for this, I decided to only use data from the countries where I had at least two participants: Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan, Libya. Secondly, I decided to have a review process with my participants. To compensate for the low number of participants, I wanted to ensure high quality of their input by having them review my piece and commenting on the way I used their input. This way they could check the way I interpreted their answers to my questions, and elaborate

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[3] Obermeyer, 1992

more on points where they felt it was needed. Technically of course, a research can be solely based on existing literature, but I chose to include participant interviews to increase the depth and scope of the research and to additionally back up research/literary theories.

<u>Structure</u>

The answer to the research question will be provided in the following pages structured in 5 chapters. The first chapter will provide the theoretical framework of civil society and existing academic literature on the subject. The second chapter will build on this by providing an overview of civil society in the Arab World specifically, and even more specifically on women's organizations in the Arab World. The three following chapters then each deal with an aspect of civil society in which change could occur: the number and type of actors, the work fields and types of activities and finally the connection between the separate actors on different levels. Thus, the third chapter will discuss changes in number and type of women's organisations in Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Jordan. The fourth chapter will discuss if and how the areas of work and the types of activities employed by the individual activists and organisations focused on women's issues. The fifth and final chapter will then go into the different levels of interaction that exist between civil society actors from an international to local perspective.

With this thesis I aim to contribute to both the existing academic literature as well as to current policy and civil society initiatives by giving a perspective on what has been happening in these five countries and where possible pointing to gaps and opportunities to improve policy towards civil society.

Civil society

This chapter will provide the theoretical background and context of the research topic of this thesis. Firstly, the recent developments of the so-called Arab Spring, Awakening or Uprising will be discussed[4]. The second part of this chapter will focus on the concept and theory of civil society. The next chapter will then discuss the state of civil society in the Arab World before 2011 and then zoom in on women's organisations as part of civil society in the Arab World. Together these parts will lay the foundation for a discussion of the changes in civil society in the Arab World since 2011.

§1: Arab Spring

On December 17th, 2010, Tunisian fruit stall holder Mohammed Bouazzizi chose to self-immolate after reportedly being slapped by a police woman looking for a bribe. Frustrated and offended after his wares had been confiscated, Mohammed Bouazzizi went to the police station of his local police station, drenched himself in paint thinner and lit a match. His self-immolation was the start of protests in Tunisia that eventually led to the toppling of 60 year dictator Ben Ali. Soon, the protests sprung to other countries in the region and demonstrations started to take place regularly in almost every Arab country. Protesters in Sana'a, Cairo, Tunis, Damascus, Beirut, Algiers, Tripoli, Amman and many other cities and towns took to the streets to join the now regional demonstrations and sit-ins. The two slogans of the Arab Spring "Bread, freedom and dignity" and "The people demand the fall/change of the order" were seen on banners, social media and street art across the region[5].

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[4] The term Arab Spring has been the topic of intense debate in academic and policy circles because of it's alleged orientalist connotations. The discussion over the exact name to give the period of popular demonstrations that took place across the Arab region at the end of 2010 and beginning of 2011, and their fall-out until now is ongoing. I am aware of this discussion but do not wish to participate in it, this thesis will use the thus terms Arab Spring, Awakening and Uprising interchangeably.

[5] Özhan, 2011, p.57

Many scholars have pointed to the historical roots of these demands, both within the region and in other revolutionary movements[6]. Lynch for example clearly states that the demands are indeed nothing new: "while the Arab uprisings generated a marvelous range of innovative tactics (uploading mobile-camera videos to social media like Facebook and Twitter, seizing and holding public squares), they did not introduce any particularly new ideas. The relentless critique of the status quo, the generational desire for political change, the yearning for democratic freedoms, the intense pan-Arab identification -- these had all been in circulation for more than a decade"[7].

Many both inside and outside the region were taken by surprise and followed closely and with increasing curiosity what this would mean for the region's countries[8]. Firstly, discussions and debates in media, policy and academic circles addressed the causes of the demonstrations - why and why now? Hussain and Howard[9] address these questions and find six main factors that influenced the start of this period of uprisings: average in country income, wealth distribution, unemployment levels, population measures, digital connectivity, rentier status and censorship. Moghadam asserts that it was a complex combination of exogenous and endogenous factors that culminated in the uprising of an entire region. They include

> "the rise of an educated middle class and a 'youth bulge'; grievances over widespread corruption, unemployment, and the high cost of living (attributed by many to the effects of government policies of privatization and liberalization), along with human rights violations; a citizenry, including the large population of young people, outraged over the above but with access to the Internet for purposes of information-sharing and coordination of protest activity. Exogenous factors include the effects of the global neoliberal policy framework; transnational links via social media networks to such groups as the Serbian youth protest group Otpor and the writings of Gene Sharp (especially relevant to Egypt's youth protestors); the WikiLeaks revelations (which included information on the corruption of Tunisia's first family); and the global diffusion of the democracy frame through social networks and international funding agencies."[10]

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[6]See for example Anduiza et al (2014) or Papa and Milioni (2013).
[7] Lynch, 2011, p. 2-3
[8] Gause, 2011
[9] Hussain and Howard, 2012, p.6-8
[10] Moghadam, 2013, p. 398

Secondly, questions arose around the consequences and long term outcomes of these popular uprisings. Would it be the final and definitive end to authoritarian dictatorships, would democracy truly come to the MENA region? In 2014, the third year after the self-immolation of Mohammed Bouazzizi, the results of the following uprisings are still enveloping. Tunisia is arguably in a transitional process, others countries such as Egypt saw continued or resumed protests because new leaders did not bring the demanded change. Countries like Bahrain and Libya saw the intervention of international forces, others like Syria are in escalating civil war, again others experience increased authoritarianism (also Bahrain and Egypt). Alternatively, he Gulf Countries did see protests and government (usually financial) responses, but did not experience the major uprisings, demonstrations or calls for reform that other countries in the region did.

The Middle East and North African Region or the Arab World is often considered as one region because of its cultural, linguistic, political, economic and historical similarity, yet the course of events of the Arab Spring was very different in each country. The different trajectories of the political regimes in these countries is not the topic of this research, but one needs to bear in mind that there is great variety in both the degree and form in which the Arab Spring affected these countries.

But although the degree varies, every country has experienced changes in the social and civil field - Arab people have lost their fear and regained their voice. As Gerges puts it in her book *The New Middle East*:

> "Despite important differences and specificities of the various uprisings, a unifying thread runs through all of them: a call for dignity, empowerment, political citizenship, social justice, and taking back the state from presidents-for-life, as well as from their families and crony capitalists who hijacked it. This has been a call for representative government and social equity and justice. From Tunisia to Egypt, from Libya to Yemen, Bahrain and Syria, the slogans, songs and street art of protesters testify to their collective psychology and worldview, one anchored in freedom from want and oppression and desire for equality."[11]

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[11] Gerges, 2014

Mark Lynch, a well-known scholar and political advisor on the region has also mentioned this aspect frequently. The individual countries may have had very different experiences in the Arab Spring, but the calls and demands were the same everywhere, and so is the result: "But whatever the ultimate goal, most would agree with Syrian intellectual Burhan Ghalyoun, who eloquently argued in March that the Arab world was witnessing "an awakening of the people who have been crushed by despotic regimes."[12]. Three years after the start of the revolutions, the changes for individual Arabs and for Arab politics as a whole are still enveloping, but one thing is certain: Arab people have lost their fear and regained their voice. As Lynch puts it: "What changed with the fall of Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia was the recognition that even the worst tyrants could be toppled. It shattered the wall of fear"[13]. This is beautifully illustrated by the well-chosen title of Egyptian activist Wael Ghonim in the title of his memoir *Revolution 2.0: The Power of the People is greater than the People in Power[14]*. A few years after all these analysis, the picture is a bit more grim, especially in Egypt. Large scale human rights violations and an escalation of violence by forces from all sides in Egypt are happening today[15]. In Egypt, fear may have returned.

As the causes or results of the Arab Spring are not the topic of this thesis and this part is only meant to provide a general background, no detailed discussion of the above-mentioned factors or results will be provided - others have written extensively on these topics[16].

One point that needs mentioning here with reference to the specific research topic of this thesis is the involvement of a much broader part of Arab citizens in the protests. Younger generations and women were at the forefront of the demonstrations. Many commentators have stressed the significance of this change in participation, Hussain and Howard for example stress that "participants were unusual: they were not the urban poor, unionized labor, existing opposition party members, radical Islamists or minorities with grievances. They were middle

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[12] Lynch, 2011, p. 2
[13] Ibid, p. 3
[14] Ghonim, 2012
[15] Abaza, 2014 and Interview with Participant A, 16-05-2015, 1h 48mins
[16] See for example Lynch, Putnam, Moghadam, Ghonim, etc.

class, educated, and underemployed, relatively leaderless, and technology savvy youth. The gender balance also surprised many Western observers"[17]. Younger generations and women participated in the demonstrations across the region, and notably in all stages; in physical participation on the streets, in online-activism activities, in smaller gatherings and in the organizational management (as far as that existed) of the different activities.

As Pace and Cavatorta, discuss, it was not the traditional groups and organizations that organized the protests: "traditional opposition parties and civil movements, including Islamists, have not been at the forefront of the uprisings"[18] although they have been part of them in later stages. Rather, "protests were generally leaderless and the spark was ignited by a loose coalition of individual dissidents who built both horizontal organizations of protest and interpersonal trust relations away from political parties and formal groups espousing clear ideological projects"[19].

Pace and Cavatorta go on to argue that it is important to study these new kinds of actors, their origins, vision and organization as they have earned a place in the social and political domains of their countries and will play a role in the future of their countries from now on.

This is why this thesis will focus on these new actors and look into how they organize themselves to secure their place in and impact on their societies. But first, we must take a step back and look to generic academic theories of civil society and the status of civil society in the MENA region before 2011.

§2: Civil society

The concept of civil society is not new in the academic or political world, and has been subject to intense debates over the past decades[20]. Different scholars have used different definitions

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[17] Hussain and Howard, 2012, p. 2
[18] Pace and Cavatorta, 2012, p. 134
[19] Ibid
[20] For a complete and extensive historical overview of the concept of civil society, see for example Abdelrahman, 2004, from p. 18 onwards.

and both conceptual and empirical differing approaches. The concept finds its origin in the West, but can arguably be applied to non-Western contexts as well[21]. Indeed, "the ongoing globalization of the concept spreads civil society's ideas, language and institutions to different parts of the world"[22], amongst which also, with regards to this thesis, the MENA region.

Below, a short overview of most used definitions and usages of the concept of civil society will be given. A more extensive overview of the history, definitions, applications of the concept civil society can be found in the works cited here and in note 3. Before discussing the concept itself, it is necessary to make two preliminary remarks. Firstly, as put forward by for example Abdelrahman [23] and Kanie[24], civil society should not be seen as something inherently and always good. This normative judgement on civil society clouds the discussion of the concept in both theory and practice, and disables the scholar from providing a critical study of reality. It is necessary to study civil society as a phenomenon, not as a project or goal.

Secondly, linked to more abstract structure-agency debates, Abdelrahman[25] importantly notes the necessity to keep in mind that civil society organisations operate in a social, economic and political environment and that they operate "in relation to the state (i.e. affect and are affected by the state" and that they are the product "of the relations of power and social class in which they exist"[26]. Civil society is not an entity outside the sphere of politics or outside the society, and can thus not be studied as a phenomenon independent of its historical and contemporary context.

One of the most used definitions of civil society is that of the space between the family and the State. Kanie for example uses a variant of this definition in his article on Saudi Arabian civil society, arguing that civil society is the "the zone of voluntary associational life beyond

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[21] Kanie, 2012, p.37
[22] Keane, 2003 in Kanie, 2012, p. 37
[23] Abdelrahman, 2004
[24] Kanie, 2012
[25] Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 3
[26] Ibid, p. 4

family ties but separate from the state"[27]. Where Kanie uses the word 'voluntary' to exclude more business or for-profit type of associations, others add 'The Market' to the definition, thus conceptualising civil society as the space between the State, the Market and the Family[28]. CIVICUS, an important actor and research facilitating organisation on global civil societies employs a similar definition, with a minor addition on the goals of civil society. According to CIVICUS, civil society is "the arena outside of the family, the state and the market, which is created by individual and collective actions, organisations and institutions to advance shared interests"[29].

Bayat studies civil society from a perspective of activism, thus focussing on both the activities that actors undertake and their goals, rather than a description of the phenomenon. "As a generic term, "activism" refers to any kind of human activity-individual or collective, institutional or informal-that aims to engender change in people's lives [...] "activism" includes many types of activities, ranging from survival strategies and resistance to more sustained forms of collective action and social movements"[30]. Themudo also employs the concept from a more action-oriented perspective, focussing on the individual instead and saying that "civil society refers to the ability of individuals to, for example, associate, participate in protests, practice their faith, and express their views publicly"[31].

State-society relations

Apart from these different perspectives on the concept, much discussion focuses on the relationship between civil society (organizations) and the State. Liberal conceptions of civil society, stemming from the works of Tocqueville and Montesquieu describe civil society as a counterbalancing force to the government or state[32]. In theory, as seen in the abovementioned definitions, these are two separate spheres, but in practice the boundaries between both state

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[27] Kanie, 2012, p. 37
[28] Altan-Olcay and Icduygu, 2012, p. 161
[29] CIVICUS, 2013, p. 10
[30] Bayat, 2002, p. 3
[31] Themudo, 2011, p. 67
[32] Pratt, 2007, p. 123

and civil society, and between these spheres and the private sector ('the market') are blurred[33]. Altan-Olcay and Icduygu also discuss this issue, stating that "the boundary between state and civil society is not clear-cut"[34]. They see that "more than various degrees of state intervention in civil society work; states are integral to the shaping of what comes to be known as civil society. In fact, CSOs often cannot measure up to expectations for triggering gradual political liberalisation because of their embeddedness in local and international networks of power relations"[35]. This discussion closely links to the preliminary remark made above by Abdelrahman that civil society and civil organisations are part of a broader social environment. Civil society does not exist or operate in a vacuum, but is rather produced by it's environment while also simultaneously affecting it.

More concretely, Kanie discusses a framework put forward by Chambers and Kopstein that conceptualizes the relationship between state and civil society in six different ways: civil society as apart from, against, in support of, in dialogue with, in partnership with and beyond the state[36]. These conceptualizations are not mutually exclusive, but provide guidelines to analyse the different relationships between a country's civil society and State, and also enables for comparisons across countries. This is very relevant for the MENA region, as there especially the relationship between state and civil society is complex and boundaries are blurred. This will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

What does civil society consist of?
Following the definitions discussed above, scholars describe a broad and varied number of organizations or semi-organised entities that make up civil society. Themudo for example says that "civil society is populated by not-for-profit, nongovernmental groups such as churches, sports, philanthropic, and advocacy organizations"[37]. Others discuss the "wide variety of

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[33] Bebbington, Hickey, & Mitlin, 2008; Foley & Edwards, 1996; Kopecky & Mudde, 2003; Putnam, 1995; Salamon, 1994 in Appe 2013, p. 64
[34] Altan-Olcay and Icduygu, 2012, p.158
[35] Ibid
[36] Kanie, 2012, p. 39
[37] Themudo, 2011, p.67

associations, such as advocacy NGOs, service-oriented NGOs, labour unions, professional associations, ethnic associations, student groups, cultural organisations ('from choral societies to bird-watching clubs'), sporting clubs and informal community groups (including coffeehouses)[38]. Another scholar[39] studies NGOs, business associations, advocacy groups, and community development associations as formal and organized associations of civil society. In his study of Saudi civil society, Kanie divides civil society in three types: political, semi-political and nonpolitical forms of civil society[40].

Appe[41] analyzes the role of civil society organizations as formal and organized entities within civil society, arguing that "while civil society organizations do not represent the entire concept of civil society, they have proliferated and are "where public and private concerns meet and where individual and social efforts are united"[42]. More concretely, "civil society organizations are self-governing entities that do not distribute the excess of their revenues over expenditures to stakeholders and are assumed to have a purpose for the public benefit that is agreed upon by associates of the organization"[43].

Nicola Pratt's analyzes these different conceptualizations of civil society in the context of the Arab world and summarizes them broadly into two conceptions[44] The first is 'formal/associative' and sees civil society as "the collection of civic associations between state and family, for example professional associations, political parties, human rights groups, and community development associations"[45]. The second conception rejects this first conception because it reflects a Western conceptualization that would only allow the conclusion that civil society is weak in the Arab World as it excludes large numbers of organizations in the Arab

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[38] Hivos, 2010 in Kanie, 2012, p. 37
[39] Abdelrahman, 2004, p.7-8
[40] Kanie, 2012
[41] Appe, 2013, p. 64
[42] Frumkin, 2005, chap. 1
[43] Boris, 2006; Vakil, 1997 in Appe, 2013, p. 64
[44] Pratt, 2007, p.125
[45] Ibid, p.126

World that are linked to State or religion. According to this conception, followed by both Arab and Western scholars like Ghalyun and Singerman[46], civil society includes informal organizations (based on family, kin, tribe and other affective solidarities). Pratt thus names this conception of civil society 'informal/affective'[47].

Tasks/goals

While being cautious about making normative judgements, what can be said about the roles of the three different spheres (state, market, civil society)? Civil society is often said to be the advocate for the people's needs, wants and desires. It is its task to voice and claim the rights of citizens of a country, their right to participate in the social and political domains. Civil society is often said to be an independent watchdog for the state's actions, although as discussed, the independence is problematic. Themudo explains the relevance of the independent watchdog as an entity that "contributes to a system of "checks and balances," which increases public sector transparency and holds government and donor officials accountable for the proper use of public office"[48]. Civil society's responsibility is to "to monitor and mobilize public support against corruption"[49] or for other social values. Together with (independent) media civil society can hold state and state officials accountable for their actions and policies, and together they are crucial to "creating and maintaining an atmosphere in public life that discourages fraud and corruption. Indeed, they are arguably the two most important factors in eliminating systemic corruption in public institutions"[50].

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[46] In Pratt, 2007, p. 126
[47] Ibid, p. 125
[48] Thuemudo, 2011, p. 67
[49] Ibid, p. 78
[50] World Bank, 1997, 44 in Themudo, 2011, p. 66

In a very clear matter, Moghadam describes civil society as a means for citizens to participate in their society[51]. She uses the concept as part of a broad definition of democracy that thus includes participation by citizens in different spheres, of which civil society is one, next to the formal political process. She does so from a more normative perspective and analysis of how democracy development can be successful, but the principle of civil society as a means for citizens to participate in a society is useful nonetheless.

Throughout this thesis I will employ a broad definition of civil society as mentioned above by Pratt[52], Moghadam[53] and Kanie[54]. I feel that for the countries discussed in this thesis more specific definitions of civil society are too limiting and prejudiced towards Western and liberal normative perspectives of civil society. This thesis will thus conceptualize civil society as the space between State, Family and Market, including both formal and informal forms of organization that may exist between or partially within these actors. This thus includes organisations that are partially governmental or not completely independent from State, Family or Market - as put forward by Kanie in his typology of different civil society actors[55].

Conclusion

The Arab Spring has had highly varying, and still enveloping effects on political and social environments in the MENA region. A short overview above has argued that the one thing that was observed in almost all countries was the people's loss of fear and the regaining of their political voice. This thesis aims to discern what the effect is of this on women's civil society. In order to do this, the theoretical concept of civil society was discussed in more detail. Different conceptualizations of civil society have been topic of scholarly debate within and outside the Arab world, from very narrow (Tocqueville) to more broad (Moghadam, Kanie). This thesis will

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[51] Moghadam, 2013, p.394
[52] Pratt, 2007
[53] Moghadam, 2013
[54] Kanie, 2012
[55] Kanie, 2012

adhere to the latter stream of definitions to allow for a broader perspective on Arab civil societies and to enable inclusion of informal groups.

The next chapter will discuss the state of civil society organizations in the MENA region in general, and the specific countries that this thesis focuses on specifically. It will zoom into the state of women's organizations, focusing on how they are organized and how different actors establish and develop a network to strengthen their position and impact. As such, the next chapter will lay the foundations for the discussion of the post-2011 changes in the organization of civil society in the following chapters.

Chapter 2
Civil society in the Arab World

In order to analyze to what extent and how the Arab Spring has changed civil society, it is necessary to analyzes the state of civil society before the uprisings and demonstrations. This section will thus analyze the state of civil society before the Arab Spring based on earlier scholarly work and policy reports. This will be done in two ways. Firstly, by mapping the landscape of civil society in terms of the kind of organizations and organizational forms that exist. Secondly by reviewing the different policies and practices of the State in the different countries in order to determine the type of environment those organizations were operating in. After this, we will zoom into women's organizations as a specific part of civil society.

§1: Civil society landscape

Different scholars have studied civil society landscapes in different countries across the globe, but only limited academic study has been done so far on the Middle East. However, considerable policy studies exist on the state of civil society, which will be an important source of information for this thesis. It is important to study the landscape of civil society in different contexts because they are very diverse and context specific. In the research on the Colombian civil society landscape, Appe argues that "the essential nature of civil society organizations is that they are diverse in structure, function, and definition"[56].

Altan-Olcay and Icduygu argue that this is especially true for the Middle East, because there "successful mobilisation for more social inclusion, more rights and demands from the state have come not necessarily from legally organised civil society. Instead, ordinary citizens in their everyday life have been practising creative strategies to defend and improve their life chances against rising inequalities"[57]. It is thus important to not only look at formal civil society and formal organizations and institutions, but also to the huge variety of other less institutionalized

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[56] Appe, 2013, p. 63
[57] Altan-Olcay and Icduygu, 2012, p. 162

or formalized types of organizations. While the abovementioned definitions do include these more informal types of civil society activities, nonetheless studies of civil society have in practice focused on the most formalized varieties. This thesis aims to indeed really look at the full spectrum of civil society activity.

It is often said that civil society in the Arab region has historically been very weak and under developed compared to other regions in the world[58]. Some scholars even go as far as calling the Arab region the "black space" in the global map of community action[59]. Bayat explains that civil society in MENA region has existed, in several forms and for decades already, but indeed not as much as in other countries[60]. He ascribes this to the different relationship citizens have with their states, arguing that the social contract in both Arab monarchies and republics is highly different from the social contract in West or Eastern Europe or Latin America. The Arab states as rentier states lean heavily on subsidies and placate citizens while limiting freedoms.

According to Bayat, civil society did exist but only limited and only "few such activities [civil society activities] became a pattern for sustained social mobilization and institutionalization in normal situations"[61]. While his analysis seems correct and in line with other scholar's analysis, here again one can see the somewhat narrow definition of civil society organizations, as Bayat does not include local leaders (kibar, shaykhs, Friday prayer leaders) in his study of civil society[62].

Pace and Cavatorta agree with Bayat, saying that civil society is often underestimated because only the 'official groups' are considered: "lobby groups and NGO's - only the secular organisations that were in touch with western donors. The immense public participation and use of social media indicates a broader social awareness that outsiders did not see"[63]. In fact Pace argues that "the use of social media and technology coupled with wide popular

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[58] Appe, 2013
[59] Bayat, 2002, p. 9
[60] Bayat, 2002, p. 8 and in Bayat, 2010
[61] Ibid
[62] Ibid, p. 9
[63] Pace and Cavatorto, 2012, p. 132

participation indicate a level of knowledge and social awareness that many outsiders suspected did not exist in the Arab world because they were overwhelmingly focused on civil society movements that were secular in nature, official and comparable to western entities in terms of beliefs and behaviour"[64].

Under the broader definition of civil society employed in this thesis, following Moghadam, Kanie and Pratt, all civic or non-kinship cooperation fall under civil society, thus also these local leaders. A more consistent application of the full width of the concept would perhaps allow for a more optimistic view on Arab civil society.

When studying (formal, organized) NGOs in the region Bayat finds that there are generally four types in terms of their vision or rationale behind their activities: religious (both Islamic and Christian) organisations, classical welfare organisations, professional NGOs and state-sponsored NGOs[65]. Together, these NGOs are active in very diverse fields, from human rights and women's issues to welfare, culture, development and business. As said, many scholars have focused on these types of organizations, as have international donors and policy makers. These organizations have been receiving a vast amount of funding and other support as they are seen as crucial in providing social services where the State fails to do so[66].

In his study, Bayat does attempt to go beyond the usual formalized and institutionalized NGOs, discussing six types of activism in total: urban mass protests, trade unionism, community activism, social Islamism, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and quiet encroachment[67]. These six different types will be discussed in more detail in later chapters. One important conclusion of Bayat deserves mentioning here, in the context of the state of civil society in the Arab World. He finds that "grassroots activism in the region is characterized less by demand-making movements than by direct actions, be they individual, informal, or institutional. Hence,

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[64] Pace, 2009
[65] Bayat, 2002, p. 15-16
[66] Ibid
[67] Ibid, p. 3

largely because of the inefficient and authoritarian nature of states, people are less inclined to get together to demand housing, than to acquire that housing directly"[68].

In his later work *Life as Politics*[69] Bayat further develops this notion into what he calls "social non-movements". These are groups of people that link passively and spontaneously, without stringent forms of organization or long term fixed cooperation. These non-movements are "action-oriented, rather than ideologically driven", focused on practise more than protest and focusing on ordinary everyday life and big numbers[70]. As will be shown below and in the following chapters, this concept fits with both the Arab Spring demonstrations and the new organizations established after it, which is quite impressive considering Bayat wrote his book in 2009-2010.

§2: Environment
The social and political environment in which civil society in the MENA region exists has naturally been instrumental in shaping the state of civil society as a whole. Historically, authoritarian dictators and monarchs alike have employed various strategies to manage (that is, minimize) the influence and power of civil society actors[71]. These include "divide-and-rule strategies, random and discretionary application of civil society or associations laws (cracking down on both legal and illegal organizations), limiting or refusing funding of civil society organizations (CSOs), and, less frequently, harsher acts of repression (such as arresting civil society actors)"[72]. Lawson shows that these state policies have demobilized social forces in the region, including private landholders and the bourgeoisie"[73]. Thus, these different strategies have all resulted in an existing, but very weak, fractured and split civil society in almost all MENA countries. Bayat also ascribed to this conclusion, saying that "the prevalence of authoritarian states and the legacy of populism, together with the strength of family and

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[68] Ibid, p 20
[69] Bayat, 2010
[70] Ibid, p. 19-20
[71] Yerkes, 2012
[72] Ibid
[73] Lawson, 2012, p.13

kinship ties in this region, render primary solidarities more pertinent than secondary associations and social movements"[74]

Pre-2011 political and legal environment in the MENA region was very hostile towards civil society organizations. This includes for example, NGO laws as well as laws governing group gatherings, international funding, freedom of speech and any other framework related to civil activity and people having a voice in their future. The space for civil society has always been very small in this region, which if for example also reflected in the very low assessments of the Freedom House[75] and CIVICUS study by Tiwana and Netsanet[76]. Freedom House assesses the state of freedoms embodied in human rights according to a certain set of indicators across the world. Looking at both the individual numbers and the regional report accumulating those numbers over the past years, paints a very grim picture for civil society: the Arab world is constantly below world average as a region and as individual countries.

The same holds for the CIVICUS analysis of civil society. CIVICUS publishes as civil society index, based on four different aspects (structure, environment, values, impact) of civil society, each backed by a number of indicators. CIVICUS country reports are done by local organizations and span several years, thus allowing for a thorough and in depth study of civil society. CIVICUS does not have reports of the Arab civil societies for every year, but only for Morocco in 2007, Egypt in 2005, Jordan in 2010 and Lebanon in 2009[77]. Throughout these reports and while analyzing the vast amount of data presented in them, one cannot but have again a very grim image of civil society in the Arab world. In his paper, *Upgrading authoritarianism*[78] Heydemann also notes this grim picture and argues that it is the result of what he calls 'upgraded authoritarianism', meaning the new methods and strategies that autocrats in the region have employed to adjust to changing external and internal demands for change and democratization. He outlines how autocrats in the region have adapted their methods since the 1980s beyond

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[74] Bayat, 2012, p 13
[75] Freedom House, 2014
[76] Tiwana and Netsanet, 2010
[77] Civicus, 2011
[78] Heydemann, 2007

simple coercion. He describes five features of this upgraded authoritarianism: "Appropriating and containing civil societies; Managing political contestation; Capturing the benefits of selective economic reforms; Controlling new communications technologies; Diversifying international linkages"[79]. These different strategies have together led to a very limited space for official civil society, which again underlines the importance of employing a more broad definition of civil society to be able to fully see civic activity in the region.

§3: Women's organizations in the MENA region

This section will discuss the state of women's organizations in the MENA region, looking into how civil society is organized and how different actors establish and develop a network to strengthen their position and impact.

Moghadam positions women's rights movements in the broader civil society arena as part of more broader discourses of rights, equality and democratization:

> "women's rights movements are not 'identity movements' but rather democratic and democratizing movements. Women's organizing tends to be inclusive, and women's movement activism often involves the explicit practice of democracy (Barron, 2002; Beckwith, 2010; Eschle, 2000; Ferree and Mueller, 2004; Moghadam, 2004; Vargas, 2009). This is especially the case with women's rights or feminist movements, which often practice democracy internally as well as ally themselves with other democratic movements, organizations, or parties. Women's movement activism and advocacy – whether in the form of social movements, transnational networks, or professional organizations – contribute to the making of vibrant civil societies and public spheres, which are themselves critical to sustaining and deepening democracy"[80].

CSOs can generally take on two prevailing roles: Creating dialogue, and/or providing services[81] where the first involves for example acting as lobbyists, watchdogs against corruption, or educators of citizens' rights. Combined with Bayat's assertion mentioned above, one would predict that most of the civil society organizations in the pre-2011 world, focus on providing services. The lack of space for organization, the lack of space to voice your opinion leads to the

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[79] Ibid, p.5
[80] Moghadam, 2013, p. 386
[81] Silverida, 2015, p. 21

prevalence of service providing CSO's and individual attainment of certain needs. From what my participants and experts have told me, this assumption is definitely true for civil society in general[82].

However, when zooming in to women's organizations and activists, the picture is a bit different. Pre-2011, women's civil society had a considerable amount of organizations and individuals with a focus on creating dialogue. Egyptian organizations like New Women Foundation or CEWLA have existed for decades[83], as have organizations in other countries like SIGI in Jordan[84], Union de l'Action Feminine in Morocco[85]. Several of my participants have been in civil society for decades working on creating that dialogue and opening up the space for civil society. These organizations have been working on topics like family laws, inheritance, violence against women, women's economic empowerment etc[86]. They were lobbying with national and international governments, trying to change public opinions through media campaigns and facilitating capacity building of women to economically empower them. The interesting thing here is, and this will be discussed in much more detail in following chapters, that post-2011-established women's organizations actually show a focus on service delivery and working on the ground, rather than focusing on policy and dialogue.

Pre-2011 was not the focus of this thesis, so I chose not to go in depth with my participants about why women's organizations have this somewhat different position in civil society. One could hypothesize that it is due to the more somewhat neutral stance towards gender issues in certain countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, and Jordan where the Monarchy's royal women were often very much involved in gender discussions - up to a point where they were accused of being too westernized. It may also be due to the fact that women's equality was not always perceived as a direct threat to authority, whereas human rights and freedoms were - leading to

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[82] Interview by author with Participant B, 30-04-3015, 43 mins
[83] Interview by author with Participant C, 12-05-2015, 1hr 17mins
[84] Interview by author with Participant D, 18-02-2015, 56 mins
[85] Interview by author with Participant E, 23-05-2015, 50 mins
[86] Interview by author with Participant C, 12-05-2015, 1hr 17mins

a more severe clamp down on organizations and activists working in those areas. Further research into why the space for women's organizations was so different from regular civil society space is beyond the scope of this thesis, but can definitely be identified as an area that needs further academic research.

The following sections will discuss the specific pre-2011 women's civil societies that are the topic of this thesis: Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Jordan. The following overview is fragmented and incomplete, as no prior extensive research across the region has been done in the past years. In fact, only the Moroccan and Egyptian women's civil society have been thoroughly analyzed as a landscape. The section below gathers information from different case studies and a few cross-country analyses, but there surely is much more space for further cross-country analysis and comparison.

Morocco

Morocco has historically been one of the front-runners in women's equality in the region. In 2007, Khrouz' analysis of the Moroccan civil society with its then 40,000 NGOS as "one of the freest and most dynamic civil society sectors in the broader Middle East"[87]. Sadiqi describes how "the beginning of the Moroccan feminist movement goes back to 1946, the year in which the Akhawat Al-Safaa (Sisters of Purity) Association (part of the Istiqlal, or Independence, Party) issued a document with a number of legal demands, including the abolition of polygamy and more visibility in the public sphere"[88]. Soon after this first publicized document of the Moroccan feminist movement and the first official women's organizations were formed: the Democratic Women's Association of Morocco and the Women's Action Union[89]. Soon these organizations were followed by many more women's organizations and in 1999 the first network of Moroccan women's organization was established, including more than 200 organizations[90].

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[87] Khrouz, 2008, p. 43
[88] Sadiqi, 2006, p. 95
[89] Khrouz, 2008, p. 43-44
[90] Sadiqi, 2006, p. 98 and Cavatorta, 2006, p 211

In the first decades these groups focused mostly on themes like equal opportunities in education and equal working conditions, against domestic violence etc[91]. In the last decades the discourse has started to include more sensitive issues such as female participation in politics, family law and citizenship rights[92]. Human Rights Organizations[93] assess that there is still a large gap between legal frameworks and practice in Morocco, but at least in official terms, women have gained a lot of ground in the past century.

Tunisia

In her paper on the feminist movement in Tunisia, Moghadam assesses that "Tunisian feminists and women's NGOs have been somewhat more successful than women activists elsewhere in working with government agencies"[94]. This is not meant to suggest that Tunisian women's organizations work more with government agencies and are less independent, but rather that they have been more successful in their achieving their goals through their advocacy and lobby work with government officials.

Contrary to most other feminist movements, Tunisian women's organizations were actively involved in challenging political authorities. As Regan puts it:

> "In Tunisia, the creation of two key independent women's rights groups directly challenged a political regime, hostile to the creation of associations that were not directly in its control (other than those created by the state). The l'Association des Femmes Tunisiennes pour la Recherche en Développement and the l'Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates played a pivotal political role beyond women's issues and rights alone. The women's movement became a forceful voice of opposition to the government's continued attacks on freedom of association and expression. In this way, women's NGOs in Tunisia have worked on two fronts - promoting women's rights (particularly in combating violence against women and discrimination against women in inheritance laws) and in promoting democracy and human rights"[95]

This is a unique feature of Tunisian women's organizations which may be due to historical differences and/or possible proximity to Western ideas of women's rights.

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[91] Khrouz, 2008, 43-44
[92] Ibid
[93] Human Rights Watch, 2011
[94] Moghadam, 2003, p. 73
[95] Regn, 2012, p. 240

Combining this with her knowledge of the Moroccan feminist movement, Moghadam mentions that "more so than in other Arab or Middle Eastern countries, Moroccan and Tunisian feminists have developed a kind of social feminism, one which emphasizes not only the modernization of family laws, but also the rights of women workers. This may be due to the different history and political culture of Morocco and Tunisia, which includes a stronger tradition of trade unionism and socialist and social-democratic parties, as well as higher female labor-force participation"[96].

Libya

Out of all countries in this thesis, obtaining civil society data from Libya proved to be the hardest. Rishmawi and Morris find that "there are no truly independent organisations in Libya. Workers may join the National Trade Unions' Federation, which was created in 1972 and is administered by the General People's Committees. The government also created the Libyan Arab Human Rights Association in 1998 and the Gaddafi Development Foundation which has several subsidiary bodies. Arrest of critics and reformists continue, and efforts for association are often suppressed"[97]. This only quote points to a huge gap in research, and possibly also to the non-existence of pre-2011 civil organizations. It also highlights that it is impossible to make valid claims without valid data. Even though because of this we cannot make many assertions on pre-2011 women's civil society in Libya, together with the information from my interview with Participant F[98] this does suggest a lack of vibrant or free women's organizations.

Egypt

Regan and Jad each mention the long history of feminism in Egypt[99]. Regan describes that "the women's rights movement in Egypt has a long history and is among one of the oldest in the Arab world. In the 1920s the Egyptian movement inaugurated an era of open and organised

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[96] Moghadam, 2003, p.74
[97] Rishmawi and Morris, 2007, p. 17
[98] Interview by author with Participant F, 15-05-2015, 53 min
[99] Regan, 2012, p.240 and Jad, 2004, p.4

feminism that was locally rooted, crossed class lines and was independent"[100]. Jad discusses how these organizations were locally rooted, but steadily linked to international women's movements as well. During liberation times, "Arab women's movements at that time were not isolated from the emerging international women's movements. Egyptian women, for example, were closely involved in the International Women's Suffrage Alliance, and the Egyptian Feminist Union (EFU) produced a journal in French, L'Egyptienne, aimed in part at altering the national image of Egypt abroad"[101].

After independence however, the new Egyptian regime was much more hostile towards independent women's organizations, leading to their ban in Egypt[102]. Egyptian feminists not only clashed with government but also with conservatives and islamists[103]. Because of this, feminists focused first and foremost on women's right to education and reform laws that discriminate against women. Only in the last decade, other topics like Personal Status Codes and political participation were addressed.

In Egypt, the State has historically played a big role in feminism. Not only by banning independent feminist organizations in the 60s, but also by becoming involved in the feminist movement itself. Heydemann[104] assesses the widely discussed topic of Arab royal wife's involvement in women's organizations. He positions is as part of the upgrading authoritarian strategies of Arab autocrats. The involvement of royal women in women's organizations serves multiple purposes. They provide meaningful services while also attracting local and international attention to valid issues (while distracting them from more regime threatening ones), attracting funding and through the sponsorship or guardianship of their royal patron, these organizations can act much more freely than independent women's organizations. They can however never serve an autonomous political role as a watchdog, but rather 'give posture' to the regime through women's rights. A clear example of this is Suzanne Mubarak, the wife of Egypt's now former president. She "has long been active as a sponsor and supporter of NGOs

[100] Regan, 2012, p. 240-241
[101] Jad, 2004, p. 2
[102] Ibid, p. 3
[103] Regan, 2012, p.241
[104] Heydemann, 2007, p. 8

and a vocal advocate of Egypt's civil society in international forums, whether as president of Egypt's National Council of Women, founder and chair of the Heliopolis Services Development Society, patron of the Egyptian co-production of Sesame Street, or founder of the Egyptian Society For Childhood and Development, among other high-profile NGO affiliations"[105].

Jordan

In Jordan, the feminist movement started during the struggle for independence in the region. the women's rights movement benefited from the liberalized atmosphere of the 1950s and in 1954 established the Arab Women's Federation. The Federation called for improvements in the status of women and for the right to vote. However, the termination of the democratization process in 1957 with a ban on all political parties, led to the dissolution of the Federation and an end to the early period of women's public activism. During the 1960s and 1970s, while the country was under martial law, state-sponsored women's organizations dominated the agenda and essentially acted as the voice of government policy. This restricted the development of the movement which only began to recover in the 1990s. Despite this, the Jordanian women's rights movement has since highlighted equality and gender-based violence issues."[106]. Jad also mentions that independent women's organisations were effectively banned during the '60s in Jordan[107].

As in many other Arab countries, the royal women are highly involved in feminist organizations. Heydemann discusses this as one of the tactics of upgrading authoritarianism in the region: "Queen Rania of Jordan established the Jordan River Foundation, which is active in the areas of microfinance, cultural conservation, education, women's empowerment, tourism, and the environment"[108]. As her colleague-royal wives in other countries, Queen Rania thus helps in containing civil society by acting as civil society.

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[105] Ibid, p. 8
[106] Regan, 2012, p. 241-242
[107] Jad, 2004, p. 3
[108] Heydemann, 2007, p.8

<u>Conclusion</u>

This chapter has shown how the theoretical concept of civil society applies in the Arab region. A short historical overview of what the landscape of civil society has looked like in this region in the past decades was outlined. Although only a quick glance was given, a somewhat grim picture was painted. Civil society in the MENA region has historically had very limited space to exist and operate, leading to more informal organizations and more fluid forms of organizations working with, for or alongside state authorities rather than as a counterbalancing force against the state. Women's organizations are case and point here, as many of the few existing women's civil society organizations were supported, promoted, sponsored or established by regime actors. As a relatively safe area (that is, not necessarily threatening to regime power) women's issues have however seen quite a lot of civil organisation.

Now that we have a generic image of what the women's civil society landscape looked like before 2011, we can start the analysis of what has or has not changed since then. The following chapters will thus discuss what has changed in: the type of actors involved, the roles they play, the issues they work on, the methods they employ, the relationships they have and the way they are navigating the network of civil society. This analysis forms the basis in order to answer the research question of **how the landscape of women's civil society in the MENA region has changed since 2011.**

Increasing civic participation and new organizations

As mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis, the results of the uprisings in 2011 have been very diverse across the region, but one outcome holds for each of them: the walls of fear have been shattered and people have regained their voice. Given the state of civil society in general and women's organizations in particular in the region, what effect did this loss of fear and regaining of voice have on civil society?

Considering the demand for change, to what extent has the Arab Spring actually resulted in more involvement of individuals in organizations propagating for change? The following chapters will try to answer these questions, starting first with the wave of new civil society organizations since 2011.

<u>Space for civic activism</u>

As mentioned in the previous chapters, the pre-2011 civil society landscape was very different across the region. The prevailing image though is one of repression and violence against civil society actors that went anything beyond simple charity work. Legal and political frameworks were strongly impeding any form of non-state organizations to exist, let alone to implement projects. As an example, Egyptian activist Participant A describes how authorities constantly impeded any student activism in his and other universities in Cairo:

> 'Elections for student unions were constantly cancelled to prevent new, non-regime students from becoming part of them. We were monitored and harassed a lot. During our protests, which would then only consist of 50 to 100 people, we were always greatly outnumbers by the police. In 2010 I became president of a student organization working with underprivileged kids in old Cairo. We went to the municipality to ask for permission for this project, which they would only give us if we would say the project was sponsored by Susan Mubarak [wife of former President Hosni Mubarak]'[109]

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[109] Interview by author with Participant A, 16-05-2015, 1hr 48 mins

Until 2011 this legal and social environment had kept many people away from organizing themselves to pursue certain demands or acclaim certain rights. Not everyone, as there were civil society actors, activists and local or national NGOs that did work on social and political issues in every country, but their numbers and impact was often low. However, most of my participants describe that many of these pre-2011 organizations were merely image-boosting activities for regimes and monarchy. Participant B describes that in Tunisia, before 2011, on paper a lot of women's organizations existed, but they were often linked to the Ben Ali party and their activities were 'fake'. 'They were not really targeting to promote Human Rights, but just saying that Ben Ali was a good person. They had no intention of changing the situation, only to boost Ben Ali's image, thanking him for doing such good things etc'[110]. These rather strong statements obviously do not hold for all organisations at all times, but they do provide context to Heydemann's[111] arguments of upgrading authoritarianism. As with the role of first ladies, discussed in the previous chapters, the Ben Ali regime had a lot of State sponsored or founded rights organizations. These semi-official government organizations internalized human rights discourse and used it to boost the authorities' image and fend off demand for change (Ibid, p.9). Independent women's or general human rights organizations did exist, as mentioned in the previous chapter, but they faced a lot more difficulty in operating than these semi-state organizations.

Political participation

This all changed in 2011. Millions went onto the streets to join the protests, or followed their fellow countrymen via online or offline media platforms. Four years later, this initial wave of protests has altered the civil society landscape. The hope and optimism of those first months led many young people to become more actively involved in their societies. They all wanted to join this change movement and have an impact on their future society. This increasing participation in society is very visible in popular and especially youth participation in elections such as the 2012 Libyan Parliamentary elections and 2012 Parliamentary elections, as well as the Presidential Elections in Egypt in 2012[112]. After the 2011 and 2013 elections, Sarah Dickson interviewed many young Tunisians about their views on society: "The interviews she conducted

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[110] Interview by author with Participant B, 30-04-3015, 43 mins
[111] Heydemann, 2007
[112] Silveira, 2015

reveal a wide array of political opinions, but one unifying trend: although most young people were uninvolved in politics before the revolution, they have now become extremely interested in political developments"[113]. Manfreda describes this as a regional trend in political participation in the Middle East:

> "The Middle East has witnessed an explosion of political activity, particularly in the countries where the revolts successfully removed the long-serving leaders. Hundreds of political parties, civil society groups, newspapers, TV stations and online media have been launched, as Arabs scramble to reclaim their country from ossified ruling elites. In Libya, where all political parties were banned for decades under Col. Muammar al-Qaddafi's regime, no less than 374 party lists contested the 2012 parliamentary elections. The result is a very colorful but also fragmented and fluid political landscape, ranging from far-left organizations to liberals and hard-line Islamists (Salafis)"[114]

The situation anno 2015 in Egypt however asks for a more nuanced version of this optimistic picture. As mentioned in the introduction, the new Egyptian regime is clamping down on any civic and political activism through large scale violence and human rights violations[115]. More and more people have left the political and civil arena, either leaving the country or keeping a lower profile. This very negative developments in Egypt give a bad aftertaste to the initial optimism of the Arab Spring.

New civil society organizations

The increased interest in participating in society goes beyond voting or participation in political parties. Especially for younger generations, as Sloam[116] argues, who are less likely to participate in traditional elections comparing election data across the globe, but much more diverse in their ways of political participation. A great example of this is the immense growth of civil society organizations in the Arab world during and after the Arab Spring.

Hundred and thousands of young people simultaneously established new NGOs and CSOs. As Participant F, a Libyan activist, states: "In the fall of 2011 everyone wanted to found an organisation. Over 8000 organizations were founded in those days, mostly by young people,

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[113] Silveira, 2015, p. 19
[114] Manfreda, 2009
[115] CIVICUS, 2011, as well as Interview by author with Participant C, 12-05-2015, 1hr 17mins and Interview by author with Participant A, 16-05-2015, 1hr 48 mins
[116] Sloam, 2013

students like myself"[117]. Peter Clottey also sees this growth of civil society groups in Libya in an analysis of pre-election period in 2011[118]. Interviewing several analysts, including Libyan economist Sami Zaptia, Clottey describes an upsurge of civic action in seminars, forums, radio, television, newspaper publications and public education campaigns in the months and weeks before the elections - all of them including both men, women, young and old[119].

Although official valid data about numbers of civil society organizations in the region are not available, this trend can be seen across the region. According to Silveira Tunisia has seen a similar "sudden wave of new youth-led civil society organizations (CSOs) since the Revolution, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), faith based organizations and more"[120]. This interest in starting new organisations comes, according to Silveira, from the frustration with institutionalized political participation, and the growing feeling among youth that to really achieve change in their societies "the best course of action is to work with civil society rather than to engage in traditional politics"[121]. Participant B describes this trend in Tunisia, seeing many new organizations being established in the months and years after Ben Ali's flight. "Especially many humanitarian NGOs, and NGOs specializing in work on specific rights" as a new CSO law made it much more simple to create an NGO[122]. Participant A also saw this in Cairo: "Groups of youth started organizing themselves in groups, calling themselves 'Coalition of Neighbourhood X and Y'. It was very special. They really organized, even started talking about budget, local elections, painting the walls of their neighbourhoods, cleaning the streets etc. Everybody just had too much energy"[123]. According to Salah[124] this growth in civil society organizations does not only entail more informal and generic groups, but also involves many specific women's organizations and movements fighting for gender equality. Other activists

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[117] Interview by author with Participant F, 15-05-2015, 53 min
[118] Clottey, 2011
[119] Ibid
[120] Silveira, 2015, p. 21
[121] Ibid
[122] Interview by author with Participant B, 30-04-3015, 43 mins
[123] Interview by author with Participant A, 16-05-2015, 1hr 48 mins
[124] Salah, 2013

interviewed for this thesis in Jordan and Morocco have also described this great surge of energy of individuals to organize themselves in civil associations[125]. This new wave of organizations clearly shows a new atmosphere where people are willing to take matters into their own hands and incite change through civic organization and action.

What happened to all these new organizations? Participant F, Libyan activist, describes that only approximately 200 organizations of the initial 8000 that were established in 2011 are still active today[126]. When asked about what has happened to the other 7800 organizations, Participant F explains that most people went back to their normal or pre-2011 studies or work. The 200 that are still active have all gone through the 'ups-and-downs' of establishing new organizations in a previously empty civil society landscape. Participant A paints an even more grim picture in Egypt, saying that there's only one new organisation that really still has an impact today, the 6th of April movement[127]. Others have lost the interest of their founders as momentum in Egypt passed, and funding, networking and implementation proved to need more long-term commitment. With the current political and security situation, Participant A describes, many young Egyptians have decided to "lay low for a while, get out of public life and back to studies or work" both inside, and for those who can afford it, outside Egypt. Participant A himself mentioned that he is taking some time off from the intensity of the past years in Egypt, currently doing research abroad and looking to finish his studies somewhere in Europe[128]. Participant C, another Egyptian women's rights activist, paints the same picture: 'those who were protesting on Jan 25th are either in jail, have left the country or are disappointed with the results and got back to normal life and work. Some are still working low profile in civil society but no longer pursuing the revolution's demands"[129]. According to Warkotsch, this failure to institutionalize into sustainable civil organizations is testament to the

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[125] For example Interview by author with Participant G, 21-05-2015, 50 mins, Interview by author with Participant D, 18-02-2015, 56 mins, Interview by author with Participant H, 23-05-2015.
[126] Interview by author with Participant F, 15-05-2015, 53 min
[127] Interview by author with Participant A, 16-05-2015, 1hr 48 mins
[128] Ibid
[129] Interview by author with Participant C, 12-05-2015, 1hr 17mins

lack of more developed managerial skills amongst youth groups: "[they] often lacked cohesive structures that could be transformed into organized political forces. While the revolution itself was a phase when the mobilization potential and stamina of these youth groups drove developments, the period afterwards called for different sets of political skills, leading to the rise of more entrenched and traditional political actors like parties and long-time politicians, pushing aside the youth groups"[130].

For those organizations that did survive after the initial wave, Participant F tells that the different steps from being just a group of people wanting to do something on a certain issue, to an established organization, have been a long process that all of these organizations went through simultaneously as they are all of the same age. "We really had to find our way ourselves in the beginning, finding our way to funding and really forming organizations with an office, employees and projects etc"[131]. Initially, these organizations were self-funding, but after a few months the international donor community started coming to Libya and providing funds to new local organizations. According to Participant F, this search was a two-way street: "they were looking for us as much as we were looking for them. We were looking for international partners to get funding, they were discussing local partners to provide funding to"[132]. This all required a lot of networking at first, but as soon as you were known to one person or organization a certain snowball effect started to happen. International organizations would meet internally every week to discuss possible partners. They would also discuss local organisations with other international organizations and share your name. In the beginning, this overflow of opportunities from international donors started creating competition amongst locals for the contacts of international organizations. The best networkers go the best funds. Another problem for new organizations were the donor policies against core funding in favour of small (max 20.000$) project funding. This meant that these local organizations had to finance their human resources and back office themselves as funds could only be used for project

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[130] Warkotsch 2012, p. 27-28
[131] Interview by author with Participant F, 15-05-2015, 53 min
[132] Ibid

activities. Right now, most donors do accept human resources and other resources to be funded from the project itself. This increases the possibilities for these organizations, but still leaves them very fragile because these resources only hold until the end of the project[133]. What this competition for resources entails for cooperation between civil society organizations will be discussed in chapter 5.

After the first year, many international organizations started to leave Libya because of security considerations. Together with the increased complexity of political and legal structures of the past two years, this has made establishing new CSOs very difficult again. Even the 200 organizations that have established relationships with international donors are facing great difficulties with the security status, often having to cancel or replan entire projects because of changes in the situation on the ground[134].

Participant C[135] describes the same deteriorating situation for new civil society organizations in Egypt. Official registration of new civil society organizations is heavily impeded by national CSO laws and regulations, coupled with a complete ban of receiving foreign funding for any type of organisation not linked to the government (i.e. registered). Next to this, the current regime is stopping all demonstrations, either by cancelling permits or by using severe army and police violence on demonstrators. Under the motto of re-establishing order in society, the current government has begun a large scale campaign justifying any means used against civil society actors[136]. Many international actors have thus decided to close or move their offices due to safety regulations, again making it more difficult for local organizations to raise funds and connect to international networks. According to Participant A[137] the current security situation has "broken the spirit" of civil society actors. The window of opportunity for civic activism or activity has now closed in these two countries.

Passive political participation

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[133] Ibid
[134] Ibid
[135] Interview by author with Participant C, 12-05-2015, 1hr 17mins
[136] Ibid
[137] Interview by author with Participant A, 16-05-2015, 1hr 48 mins

Beyond political participation and establishing an organization, young people also started and continued using social networking sites and social media to engage with their political and social environment. The use of social media during the Arab Spring has been analyzed and discussed frequently[138], but beyond that social networking sites have continued to be platforms for news, information sharing, discussions on political and social issues and a medium to share one's opinions freely.

According to Silveira,

> "social networking websites (SNS) are indeed a major forum through which the youth can be politically involved. A study conducted by Dickson shows that many young people feel they are able to keep politically informed through Facebook: 'When asked how they are involved in politics, many reported that they post political statuses on Facebook to express their opinions. Furthermore, according to her study, the youth seemed 'excited and proud to be able to keep up with politics and share their opinions with others [online]. Another study by Breuer and Groshek showed similarly positive findings. They claim that SNS are perceived by young people as a reliable source of political information and a safe forum for exchanging opinions"[139]

Until today, both individuals and organizations have successfully used social networking sites and social media to set up campaigns, raise awareness for social and political themes etc. This has important connotations for the methods civil society actors use to implement their projects and advocacy campaigns. This will be discussed in more detail in chapter four.

Conclusion

Overall the picture painted in this chapter is two-sided. On the one hand, the Arab Spring created a huge momentum for civic engagement, which is illustrated by an increase in political participation, and a high number of new NGOs across the countries, specifically by young men and women who used to not be part of civil society.

On the other hand, in both Libya and most Egypt, this space for civil society has closed again. In Egypt, civic engagement is lower than before the Arab Spring, as actors have recluded themselves from civil and public domains, scared of the regime's actions against any form of civic or political activism. The 'broken spirit' mentioned by one of my participant illustrates with

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[138] See for exampe Castells, 2011 and Ghonim, 2012
[139] Silveira, 2015, p. 22

depressing beauty how the happy optimism of the Arab Spring demonstrations has now shifted the space for civil society in an opposite direction. In Libya, newly established organizations have remained active, but are facing severe problems in operation because of the deteriorating safety situation. This analysis is clearly very limited by the limited attained or available data, but the image is clear - although the Arab Spring has similar features across the region, and thus its effects to some extent also - in the end there is also a high degree of variation across the region.

Roles and activities

After having looked at the organizational landscape changes in civil society, the fourth chapter of this thesis will focus on the changes in activities of women's civil society organizations compared to pre-2011 civil society activities. Firstly, I will discuss the kind of topics and themes addressed by women's organisations. In the second part of this chapter I will look into the methods used by these organisations to implement their strategies for these issues.

Roles

As discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, CSOs generally take one of two roles: creating dialogue, and/or providing services[140]. Historically, the work of most civil society organizations in the MENA region have focused on providing services, as working on social-political issues was often prohibited by law[141]. On the other hand, the smaller minority of work done by established women's organizations has focused more on creating dialogue, trying to open up discussions about family law, harassment, the economic empowerment of women etc. In civil society in general, the Arab Spring has created a huge opening for civil society to focus more on their role in creating dialogue. Many of the new civil society organizations have been able to tackle new topics such as political participation, civil and political rights. The new generation of feminists on the other hand, have mostly moved away from the established role of women's organizations as watchdogs for female participation. Participant E, who has been working in a Moroccan women's NGO since 1987, explains that this new generation of feminists, or women protesters, are using different slogans: "They are fighting for things for the whole society like social justice and democratization, rather than principles of gender equality specifically"[142]. According to her, this new generation of women activists in civil society has detached gender equality of socio-economic concerns, criticizing the established feminist organizations for not

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[140] Silveira, 2015, p. 21
[141] Interview by author with Participant C, 12-05-2015, 1hr 17mins
[142] Interview by author with Participant E, 23-05-2015, 50 mins

speaking about the monarchy and the King and only about women's rights to this and that".
However previously established Moroccan feminist organizations have kept their principled
focus on gender equality, but for them the Arab Spring has opened up a whole new range of
topics that previously could not be touched. Participant E describes how her organization is
now doing work on abortion, marital rape, child marriage, violence against women, women
political participation etc[143]. Participant B describes this same broadening of topics in women's
organizations in Tunisia, where work on a law prohibiting violence against women has started in
the past year[144]. Participant A describes the same trend in Egypt where he says "the Women's
Right movement was boosted by the revolution, adopting a much more radical discourse than
before"[145]. Before, women's organizations always framed their discourse in relation to Shari'a
law, now they do not relate to that anymore. Participant G contrasts this trend to Jordan by
saying that it is not so much different topics that are addressed by Jordanian feminists in the
past 4 years, but that the demands within these topics have risen significantly since the Arab
Spring[146]. He gives an example: "In the elections of 2010, advocacy of Jordanian feminists
carried demands for a women parliamentary quota of up to 12% depending on the
organization. In the 2012 parliamentary elections advocacy for women parliamentary quota
varied from 25-30% between different women's organisations"[147]. A significant increase in
demands, with popular support, has been facilitated by the changes since the Arab Spring.

In Egypt on the other hand, the activists I interviewed describe a completely different trend.
Established Egyptian women's organizations have historically done a lot of work on legal and
political frameworks and institutions, thus functioning mostly in the role of creating dialogue.
New women's organizations on the other hand are not so much creating dialogue, as they are
focusing on providing services to women. Two great examples of this are Harassmap and
OpAntiSexHarassment, two young organizations established during the demonstrations in 2011

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[143] Ibid

[144] Interview by author with Participant B, 30-04-3015, 43 mins

[145] Interview by author with Participant A, 16-05-2015, 1hr 48 mins

[146] Interview by author with Participant G, 21-05-2015, 50 mins

[147] Ibid

to protect women against sexual harassment and enable them to safely participate in the demonstrations. Langohr[148] also describes this in her articles about civil society and politics in Egypt, analyzing that where old organizations focused on laws and lawsuits, new organisations focus on street intervention. A very telling illustration of this is the tweet that Soraya Baghat sent out when she went out to protest in Tahrir Square on November 27th 2011 saying that "if the government can't protect us, we can protect ourselves". This message became the start of her organization Operation Anti SExual Harassment, or OpAntiSH[149].

Strategies

Before 2011, women's organizations in the MENA region have generally focused on influencing legal and political frameworks[150]. Their advocacy focused on setting or changing legal frameworks, changing political and judiciary systems and institutionalizing principles of human rights. Examples of these include campaigns for electoral laws, family law, civil laws, quota for women's political participation etc. The new organisations that have been founded since the Arab Spring, are much more focused on creating change on the ground. They implement projects to protect women against harassment during protests (Harassmap and OpAntiSH in Egypt) or building capacity of municipal counselors (Al Hayat Centre in Jordan). They focus less on challenging regulatory frameworks, than on changes in daily life and on the street. This is very clearly illustrated if you set of the above mentioned examples of new anti-harassment organisations against pre-2011 efforts, as Langohr does in her 2015 article:

> "The activities of these groups differ significantly from Mubarak-era efforts against
> harassment. In 2008, the teen magazine Kilmitna initiated a campaign that included
> a concert at Ain Shams University during which famous pop singers denounced harassment.
> Volunteers engaged shop owners and bus drivers about harassment and posted
> anti harassment stickers in their stores and buses. This focus on changing popular attitudes
> resembles some post-2011 activism, but Kilmitna soon moved on to other issues. By contrast,
> the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR) worked on the issue for several
> years, producing the first large-scale survey of harassment in 2008. But ECWR's efforts
> focused largely on developing new laws and encouraging greater police presence at

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[148] Langohr, 2013
[149] Ibid, p. 20
[150] Ibid

major events—a sharp contrast from the direct street intervention of today's movements."[151]

Methods

These changing roles and strategies call for different methods. Traditional advocacy of working with officials and international institutions to generate or facilitate policy changes does not provide immediate response to harassment on the street. The effects of these strategies and methods are much too indirect and long term for the generation of protesters that has entered civil society during and after the Arab Spring. These actors search for quicker and more flexible ways to achieve their objectives, not so much working with or against existing governmental structures as they are working around them. The tweet of Egyptian Harassmap's founder Soraya Baghat mentioned above is but one example. These new organizations employ rapid methods like on the ground mobilization and physical presence and protection. This generation is engaging in civil society with actions, more than with discussions and debates.

Another example of this can be found in the activities of the General Foundation of Jordanian Women. This women's organisation has historically always works on changing the legal framework of laws governing women's rights. Since 2011, they have started also doing capacity building trainings for female municipal council members, training them for their work activities in general, and for being a woman in these male environments[152]. They seem to be working outside the state rather than with or against it. The interesting thing is than that they do not focus on education the men as well or working together. These measures are all post facto and reactive rather than attempting to change the status quo.

Participant G balances this argument by stating that it differs to what level of work you are looking at. In regional and national women's organizations, work on legal frameworks, elections etc. has continued, but as civil society has been upscaled, work can now also focus more on capacity building and women's issues on the ground[153].

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[151] Langohr, 2015, p. 132
[152] Interview by author with Participant G, 21-05-2015, 50 mins
[153] Interview by author with Participant G, 21-05-2015, 50 mins

Social media

Parallel to this is of course the growth of social media and other media channels as a method and channel of social activism. In the previous chapter, social media and social networking sites were already discussed as a means of information gathering and political engagement. But social media is used for much more than that, and has significantly changed the face and pace of activism and civic activity. During the 2011 protests, social media were widely used tools for mobilization and information sharing about events and locations. Mobile phones and internet enabled people to coordinate activities and respond to changes in for example roadblocks or police presence much faster than before[154]. Social media technologies thus function as a mobilizing mechanism connecting people with a similar purpose or demand, while also enabling them to regionalize and then globalize their outreach[155].

After that, Facebook and Twitter have stayed as powerful tools of mobilization. Activists and organizations use social media both for physical and intellectual mobilization - either rallying people to come to a certain place for an event or rallying people behind a certain cause (which may even go hand in hand). Social media are platforms to share stories, experiences, gather people, create discussion fora and interactive billboards for awareness campaigns. Everything on the ground is complimented online. A very telling example of such a connection between online and offline activism comes from a completely different part of the region, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Women2Drive, a 2011-founded organization advocating for the right to drive, also did not do this via traditional advocacy channels like conferences, meetings with political or policy figures, press releases and reports. Instead, these women got in their cars and started driving. They filmed themselves and uploaded these videos on Youtube[156].

During the Arab Spring, a lot was said about the role of new social media, also including blogs. Riegert[157] has done an extensive study about blogging in the Arab world before 2011, and her analysis shows the great role of blogging as a an alternative form of voicing one's opinion

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[154] Lim, 2012, p. 236
[155] Ibid, p. 244
[156] Friedland, 2014
[157] Riegert, 2015

(especially one of dissent or activism) in the pre-2011 years. However, as social media like Facebook have grown, blogs have lost ground. Several activist interviewed for this thesis mentioned that blogs were used in the beginning, but nowadays everyone turns to Facebook to share information and opinions[158]. Both of them also assessed blogs as being a somewhat elite medium for existing journalists and civil society activists, rather than a more easily accessible and broader public media like Facebook and Twitter.

TV & Radio

Another method that has come to the front since the Arab Spring is the use of more traditional media such as TV and radio. Not that these media were never used by civil society actors before, but after the Arab Spring much more channels were (less heavily) controlled by the State. Through satellite TV everyone could now watch shows from media all over the region bringing diverse forces to living rooms. Hosts of TV shows are pop stars that have a huge fan base and audience, and therefore a great platform and audience for sharing certain messages. Many young civil society actors seek cooperation with these types of media, working with popular TV hosts and appearing on shows and discussion panels. This cooperation between "old" and "new" media is what Chadwick[159] called the hybrid media environment. From the traditional media's side, TV hosts and presenters also feel a lot more freedom in creating content and fulfilling their journalistic duties with dignity. Egyptian and Moroccan TV channels and TV hosts created ample opportunity for young civil activists to share their opinions and portrayed them very positively[160]. This huge support for young activism has worked as a multiplier for their activities in the first year after the Arab Spring. "The amplification of anti-harassment activists' engagement with the media may also strengthen women's rights by "normalizing" the image of those who seek them. The work of these activists is covered very positively"; as Bassem Youssef framed his discussion with anti-assault activists, "we want to

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[158] Interview by author with Participant B, 30-04-3015, 43 mins and Interview by author with Participant F, 15-05-2015, 53 min.
[159] Chadwick, 2011 in Riegert, 2015, p. 458
[160] Langohr, 2015

have a dialogue with people who are really making a difference in society"[161]. Egyptian TV Presenter Bassem Youssef is said to have had significant influence on Morsi's declining popularity in the last months of his reign. Bassem Youssef started a satire YouTube channel during the protests in 2011, which eventually led to him having a satire TV show on Egyptian satellite station ONTv[162]. In this TV show he criticized all kinds of Egyptian public figures, from singers to religious leaders, and also then President Morsi.

Importantly, TV and radio are able to reach out to audiences that social media or internet does not reach. Internet usage is growing, but remains a very young and elite platform. TV and radio on the other hand also reach out to older generations, or poorer or illiterate families[163]. Participant A describes how in the current Egypt, this generational gap disables the younger anti-military voices to gain ground[164]. The young anti-military voices can only spread their ideas via social media, as TV and radio are again under the control of State military forces. The older generation who is not on social media only sees the State controlled TV channels and thus only sees one side of the picture.

Graffiti

The sentiment of working on the ground to change the situation and raise awareness for certain issues can also be seen in the increase of graffiti as a means of campaigning. Both Libyan and Egyptian street artists and feminists have used this method to advocate for their beliefs and raise awareness of social issues[165]. The image on the front of this thesis is one of the paintings done by feminist street artists from Women on Walls, a young and new Egyptian organisation that aims to advocate for gender equality through graffiti. Again combining different media in one campaign, Women on Walls has cooperated in creating a short

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[161] Both in Langohr, 2015, p. 12
[162] Marx, 2012
[163] Choudhury, 2009
[164] Interview by author with Participant A, 16-05-2015, 1hr 48 mins
[165] Al Ageli, 2014

documentary about their organization that is currently screening at many important film festivals[166].

Participant C[167] notes that this is not only because activists are more creative, but in Egypt also because culture and art are one of the few remaining spheres where it is relatively safe to voice your opinions. Street art, documentary film and underground music have flourished. At present in Egypt, creativity is definitely necessary to continue working in civil society. Another example brought forward by Participant C is a project implemented by the Swedish Institute aimed at facilitating space for dialogue. The project consists of hosting so-called cultural cafe's where people can come together and discuss social issues [168].

Underground bands and independent cinema
Several interviews and scholars have also discussed the growing importance of underground music and independent cinema. Participant A directed a few documentaries himself in the past five years, feeling that this would provide a greater platform both inside and outside Egypt for women's and human rights[169]. Several underground bands have flourished over the past years, but the current crack down on Egyptian civil society is slowly getting to these more art related forms of activism. In early May 2015, two concerts by one of these underground bands were banned by General Al-Sisi[170].

Another great example of new methods that young and new organizations employ, is that of the Organisation Against Military Trials of Civilians. This organization started out being an independent initiative with a Wiki that was counting bodies, removing duplications, going through ID cards etc. They called their Wiki Thowra - which means revolution in Arabic. Now,

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[166] Documentary *Women on Walls*, 2015, 25 mins
[167] Interview by author with Participant C, 12-05-2015, 1hr 17mins
[168] Ibid
[169] Interview by author with Participant A, 16-05-2015, 1hr 48 mins
[170] Ibid

this Wiki has grown into a full-fledged CSO working on advocacy against military trials of civilians, based on the data from their Wiki[171].

Established women's civil society

The above mentioned examples of changing methods of women's civil society actors involved mostly new actors in this field. What about the established women's organizations? Did they change anything in their methods? In all countries and organizations part of this thesis, established organizations did and do their best to connect to the world of online social media within both their advocacy work and projects. They have succeeded in doing so in varying degrees[172].

In previous sections of this chapter changes in roles and strategies were already discussed. With regards to other new methods however, most established organizations have not changed as much. Older registered organizations like the Egyptian ANHRI changed their methods a bit, but could have adapted more and faster. As Participant A puts it: "the movement on the street was going so fast, they could not live up to that level"[173].

<u>Conclusion</u>

Building on the previous chapter, this chapter has discussed the changes in the roles and activities of women's civil society organizations. Roles of women's organizations have increased in diversity, to all the ends of theoretical conceptions of civil society. From more political feminism to service provision, the diversity in women's organizations has increased drastically in the countries discussed in this thesis. With the continuing changes in political and social environments, these new organizations have sometimes had to be very creative and innovative in their methods to achieve their goals.

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[171] Ibid

[172] Interview by author with Participant F, 15-05-2015, 53 min, Interview by author with Participant A, 16-05-2015, 1hr 48 mins, Interview by author with Participant G, 21-05-2015, 50 mins, Interview by author with Participant H, 23-05-2015,

[173] Interview by author with Participant A, 16-05-2015, 1hr 48 mins

Combining the past two chapters would inevitably lead to the conclusion that there is a growing gap between two generations of actors in civil society, with fast and volatile young organizations and activists on the one hand, and experienced, established and sustainable organizations and activists on the other. Both have their advantages and disadvantages, which would ultimately compliment each other in a networked civil society. The next chapter will go into this final part of women's civil society landscape: the network.

Networked civil society

This chapter will go into the final part of women's civil society landscape: the network. Previous chapters have discussed changes in individual actors and their methods. We will now look into the relationship between these actors. Starting again from the protests in 2011, this chapter will go into the changes that can be seen in how different women's organizations and activists interact and cooperate.

Need to network

From the nature of civil society itself, networking is a necessary activity for its actors. Civil society by definition does not consist of independent and unconnected individuals or organizations - it is a *society*, implicating relationships between the different actors. On a more pragmatic level, one could also say that networking or relationships with other actors are inherent in civil society's work because it aims at shaping and changing the world around it. You cannot shape a community on your own, interaction with other stakeholders is necessary. For civil society actors like the women's organizations discussed in this thesis, this means that they have to interact with other actors to reach the goals they have set. They have to interact with government officials to achieve the envisioned policy changes and they have to interact with others in their communities to change their attitudes and behaviors. In this sense, networking or having relationships of one kind or another is inherent in the functioning of women's civil society.

Castells' theories of a networked society also can be used to examine civil society specifically. In his famous 2012 article he assesses the connectedness of civil society organizations saying that they are highly connected to other actors. He says, "they are networked in multiple forms. The use of Internet and mobile communication networks is essential, but the networking form is multimodal. It includes social networks online and offline, as well as pre-existing social networks, and networks formed during the actions of the movement. Networks are within the

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movement, with other movements around the world, with the Internet blogosphere, with the media and with society at large"[174]

This chapter will focus on the less inherent features of a networked civil society, which are cooperation between different civil society actors or a regional and national level, and networking with donors to receive funding. Both of these two ways of networking are not absolutely inherently necessary activities of civil society actors, this chapter will show however that they are indeed highly necessary for a successful civil society.

Arab Spring

Several scholars have analyzed how networking amongst civil society actors happened during and after the Arab Spring[175]. They of course mention the huge impact of online networks like Facebook and twitter in bringing together everyone during these protests. Next to this, several scholars also mention the cooperation between different movements during the protests as instrumental for the size of the demonstrations[176]. The special circumstances of the momentum of the Arab Spring led several organizations from different political or social backgrounds to work together and call people to these gatherings. This gathering led to an unprecedented combination of people in the streets from all walks of life and diverse political and socio-economic backgrounds. The cooperation between these organizations was unprecedented and short-term, uniting behind the goal of regime change and regaining a voice, not necessarily behind a specific religion or political discourse. As Kawa Hassan puts it: **"**What makes these revolutions unique is the type of loose networking that brought about the ad hoc alliances, which at times joined forces for common actions, and at other times departed"[177]. Activists have mentioned that during these months of protests in Egypt, key proponents of protest movements like Kefaya and the April 6 Movement were cooperating on an ad hoc basis on one

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[174] Castells, 2012, p. 221
[175] For example Lynch, 2011, Langohr, 2015, Friedman, 2014
[176] Bayat, 2013, Lynch, 2011
[177] Hassan, 2012, p. 234

or more of the aforementioned common goals at certain points in time, then this cooperation came to an end, in order to start all over again[178].

One could think that this ad hoc cooperation and lack of unity behind one certain discourse would be detrimental to a movement's success. Although of course the results or consequences of the demonstrations vary highly across the region and one can debate whether they have been successful, at least in terms of gathering large numbers of the population they have had an impact. As Hassan mentions, "contrary to conventional wisdom and against all odds, this proved to be a blessing in disguise for the revolution. When the revolution erupted, there were simply too many key actors to identify one single leader and repress or co-opt the movement accordingly"[179].

In the end, offline and online "networking technologies are meaningful because they provide the platform for this continuing, expansive networking practice that evolves with the changing shape of the movement"[180]. These movements gather their support through online and offline networks. As said, it makes these movements very flat and diverse in their structure allowing for a great diversity of people to join them. Or as Castells puts it: "They do not need a formal leadership, command and control center, or a vertical organization to distribute information or instructions. This decentered structure maximizes chances of participation in the movement, given that these are open-ended networks without defined boundaries"[181]. As Hassan mentioned, this flat open-ended structure worked extremely well during the protests in 2011, but is it sustainable beyond protests and demonstrations?

Different levels of cooperation
As Hassan assessed, the cooperation during the protests in 2011 was mostly ad hoc and short-term. However, the women's organizations operation in civil society, also engaged in more

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[178] Egyptian activists Bassem Fathy and Israa Abdelfattah in Hassan, 2012, p.234

[179] Hassan, 2012, p. 234
[180] Castells, 2012, p. 221
[181] Ibid, p. 221-222

long- term cooperation with other actors. Advantages of this strategy are,multiple, such as to gain strength vis-a-vis political or policy actors for certain envisioned changes; to gain geographical or demographical outreach by working with actors working in different regions or with different markets; to share knowledge and experience etc.

As Laura Wulf assesses in her very useful thesis on networking in civil society in Egyptian women's organizations: "Networking" is on the lips of nearly every activist I have spoken with, understood as a necessary component of achieving women's rights. Whether it is a domestic network connecting Egyptian NGOs, or a regional network linking groups in the MENA region or further abroad, networking is considered an integral function for women's organizations"[182].

To what extent is this networking new or did it change after 2011? In their article on networked civil societies, Kent and Sikkik argue that although some kind of networking among women's groups has always existed, however only in the late 90s could these networks truly be called 'transnational"[183]. With globalization, or at least with the internationalization of development aid and policy work, linkages between organizations in different areas of the world have grown substantially in the past few decades.

Studying New Women Foundation, one of the biggest established women's organizations in Egypt, Wulf assesses that networking is integral to their functioning as an organization and it exists at varying levels: "there are many layers of network participation, from transnational bodies like the UN to the local cooperation of young students and professions in its community seminars. In its emphasis on intellectual collaboration and engagement with feminist teachings, networking on some level is in fact core to NWF's mission"[184]. When describing their activities, my participants also very often referred to different forms of networking and working with other organizations either locally, nationally, regionally or internationally. Participant F for

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[182] Wulf, 2011, p. 39
[183] Kent and Sikkik in Wulf, 2011, p. 39
[184] Wulf, 2011, p. 69

example[185] gives a telling example of doing a project with 22 different local women's organizations which will be discussed below. Participant E[186] describes going to conferences with other local and national organizations or giving and receiving trainings to other organizations and actors. Participant D[187] mentions different projects her organization is doing with international organizations like USAID and connecting them to smaller local organizations by providing trainings and other capacity building activities. Even during this research I noticed how networked these organizations were as I very often got in touch with new participants via existing participants or contacts in different parts of the world.

Women's organizations are thus navigating different levels of networks throughout their activities. Each of these networks has different ways of working and requires different input and investment: "each set of networks has its own set of potential advantages and restrictions which are considered and navigated by its participants"[188]. Transnational advocacy networks for example link up local organizations with foundations, media, and governmental institutions abroad[189].

Not only do organizations navigate the different levels independently, they also navigate between the different levels. Navigating the different levels of networks and using a combination of levels to reach a certain envisioned change is what Kent and Sikkink[190] refer to as the "boomerang effect" and what Zippel[191] calls the "ping-pong" effect. Going between the different levels from transnational to local, organizations gain leverage on state not by pressuring it directly but by applying different pressures from different sides. This is necessary especially in environments where the State is very hostile towards civil society. Zippel adds that this "ping-pong"-ing between different levels also enables a view that is not solely focused on

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185 Interview by author with Participant F, 15-05-2015, 53 min
186 Interview by author with Participant E, 23-05-2015, 50 mins
187 Interview by author with Participant D, 18-02-2015, 56 mins
188 Wulf, 2011, p. 62
189 Ibid
190 Kent and Sikkink, 1999 in Wulf, 2011, p. 60
191 Zippel, 2004

the State and for example a specific law's creation, but it allows for a wider approach including for example a law's creation, implementation, enforcement and also building popular support or attitudes to support the values behind the specific desired law[192].

One of the themes that came up in the previous chapters was the huge influx of new civil society organizations in the MENA region after 2011. In the context of this chapter's focus, the network of civil society, I asked my participants about the relationships between these new organizations and more established civil society organizations. The differences between these generations were extensively discussed in the previous chapters and many of my participants mentioned that these generations are highly complementary.

Participant A also mentions how these generations could compliment each other, but in reality there's a "big gap" between them[193]. They are working together. Participant A for example mentions how the more established Egyptian human rights organization ANHRI supports young activists if they are arrested with lawyers or brings them into contact with international support from for example the EU. He argues that these organizations don't necessarily talk to each other to discuss their work together, but in the end they do support each other's work. However, more long-term team work between organizations of these different generations is difficult.

Participant A mentions how this holds especially for women's organizations as there is a somewhat negative atmosphere between them: "the older generation feels that the younger generation is too young, too bold and radical, whereas the younger generation feels the older generation is too slow and too compromising"[194]. I also saw this with participants from more established organizations or who have been working in civil society for a longer period of time. For example Participant E explains this by using the example of equal inheritance for men and women: "feminists [i.e. the older generation] would tackle it from the rights of women and the right of a father to leave his testament, and through that paving the way for debate. The

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[192] Ibid
[193] Interview by author with Participant A, 16-05-2015, 1hr 48 mins
[194] Ibid

younger generation would just go for equal inheritance directly"[195]. She mentions agreeing with the more broad range of topics these young activists are advocating for, but not with the lack of more principled feminist slogans, working together with "extremists and islamists" and the violence she sees happening during demonstrations of younger generations.

Participant D[196] tells how international donors in Jordan focused on new civil society organizations, thereby greatly frustrating more established organizations who saw that many of the interventions planned by their young activists were very much shaped to donor policies, rather than having a historical build and context. She explains this with the example of the family protection law. In advocacy around this issue, established organizations were seeking for regulation of implementers and raising awareness of the existing law that was relatively good in terms of wording of gender equality but just lacked implementation. The younger generation on the other hand, saw a lack of implementation and called for a new law. Participant D thus argues that the younger generation does not build on existing frameworks, but wants to starts from scratch. She says "there's too much duplication, no coordination between related themes and interventions by younger organizations are not build on the country's needs" and "they have no respect for older organizations"[197].

This somewhat attitude towards each other greatly impedes working together and complementing each other's projects and advocacy. Participant D does indeed mention how her organization is working together with younger activists and giving workshops and capacity building trainings to younger organizations, but again long-term collaboration is virtually non-existent[198]. She suggests that there can be a role for international donors here in facilitating dialogue between the different generations of organizations to help find a common ground instead of competition. This latter part will be even more evident in the next section.

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[195] Interview by author with Participant E, 23-05-2015, 50 mins
[196] Interview by author with **Participant D**, 18-02-2015, 56 mins
[197] Interview by author with **Participant D**, 18-02-2015, 56 mins
[198] Interview by author with **Participant D**, 18-02-2015, 56 mins

Networking for funds

Another way of networking that many of my participants mentioned is the networking these activists or organizations did or had to do to get access to international funds. Every single one of my participants at some point mentioned working together with international NGOs or governments like USAID, Oxfam, MEPI, Anna Lindt Foundation etc[199].

Participant F mentions how new organizations established in 2011 were looking for funding opportunities while at the same time international donors came to Libya trying to seize the momentum of the Arab Spring: "The reaching out process was two ways. International organizations were looking for us to implement projects on the ground, while us locals were looking for international organizations for funding. They would have a meeting every Wednesday for example to discuss the new organizations, your name could be mentioned there and that's how you would get known"[200]. With this, Participant F describes how local organizations were networking to get their name known with international organizations. As soon as your name was known by one organization, that often started a snowball effect through which you would soon be in contact with other donors as the donor community practised a lot of sharing of contacts. Participant F describes that finding funding was relatively difficult at first, but soon it became much easier as her relationship with international donors developed. Her organization did not only receive funds, but also trainings, guidelines, HR management support, contacts etc.

The need to obtain funds from international donors inevitably leads advocacy and implementation to be shaped around their ideas and agendas[201]. Participant G for example explains how EU donors are stricter on having a gender balance in target groups and implementers of the USAID tend to be more culturally sensitive[202]. This leads organizations to

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[199] For example Interview by author with Participant D, 18-02-2015, 56 mins, Interview by author with Participant E, 23-05-2015, 50 mins, Interview by author with Participant G, 21-05-2015, 50 mins
[200] Interview by author with Participant F, 15-05-2015, 53 min
[201] Interview by author with Participant G, 21-05-2015, 50 mins
[202] Ibid

either go to one or the other for specific projects, or to have to adjust a project's implementation or objectives to the international donors addressed. AbouAssi describes this process as well when he assesses local NGO's involvement in the decision-making process of the donor: "Constructing strong, yet balanced, ties with the donor contributes to active involvement in the policy process and cooperation with government. Otherwise, the NGO's role is marginalized. Abandoning donor funding furthers change in the nature of NGO work, leaning more towards activism and generating confrontation with the government"[203]. However, he assesses that this is a clear choice that can be made by local NGOs, to not aim for international funding so as not to have to spend time on networking, or to not have to compromise on certain advocacy issues: "Donor funding, therefore, is neither a necessary condition for nor a universal effect on NGOs' potential engagement in public policy processes"[204].

With this background of competing for international funds, local or national cooperation has become very difficult. Participant F describes working on a project with 22 organizations that is partly funded by the Dutch embassy: "the project's basic aim is to have a network of women's organizations' has proven very challenging. We faced many challenges regarding commitment and ownership of individual organizations. Our strategy was to brand these umbrella organizations as independent from our own and give credit to the network itself instead of to our founding organization. So far this strategy has been successful, but we need to remain cautious and sensitive to having a good atmosphere"[205]. This image of long-term cooperation being very difficult is visible across the region. Ad hoc cooperation between organizations is frequent, but long-term alliances are highly difficult. As mentioned above, the ad hoc cooperation between organizations during the protests was fruitful at that time, but as we see now the huge diversity of organization's working on women's issues makes it highly difficult to find common ground for longer term cooperation.

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[203] Abouassi, 2014
[204] Ibid, abstract
[205] Interview by author with Participant F, 15-05-2015, 53 min

Conclusion

Out of all chapters this chapter contains the theme that is probably most similar in each of the countries. Each of the countries experienced a change in actors and methods, and thus a change in the landscape and change in relationship between old and new actors. The relationship between different women's organizations as described by my participants is not one of fruitful cooperation and joining forces against an outer force such as the State. On the contrary, organizations are competing for resources and funds, working together only on specific projects. I would theorize that this is partly to do also with the fact that these organizations are often not aiming at specifically counterbalancing the state, thus there is no need to work together and gain strength against a shared 'enemy'. Rather, these organizations are either focused on a specific issue where they would like to work with the government. Another possibility especially for the young and new organizations is that they were established in a positive momentum of either change within or during the regime, thus also not necessarily wanting to change or attack the new regime. Another hypothesis can come from any fledgling new organization who has to vie for resources, which could be tackled by theories on organizational management theories and entrepreneurship. But, these are all just hypotheses and need to be researched further to be able to give a valid answer as to why cooperation between different women's groups is often so difficult.

A second question raised by the discussions in this chapter is the relationship these organizations have with the State. To what extent these new organizations are and will continue to be autonomous and independent goes beyond the scope of this thesis. From what I have seen, the degree of government or political involvement in these organizations varies highly within and between countries and is certainly not always visible. Only one Skype interview mentioned this. A more in depth study of these new organizations in the region with longe- term observation and more critical analysis would be able to provide interesting insights into the post-Arab Spring state of Heydemanns arguments of 'upgrading authoritarianism'. This was neither the topic nor the scope of this research but is nonetheless very interesting.

Conclusion

This thesis started off from the generally accepted assumption that despite different political outcomes in individual countries, the Arab Spring did one thing for everyone: break down the walls of fear and gave the people a voice again. Leaving from this point enables a cross country analysis of change in civil society - the domain by definition where people use that voice to develop and express their opinions to interact with others and have an impact on society as a whole.

As civil society as a whole in the Arab World is rather large, I decided to only focus on women's organizations as a specific part of civil society. Secondly, to ensure quality and validity of data, I focused only on the countries where I could find participants to back up the secondary data with a primary account. These countries were Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Jordan. Whether by luck or as a logical consequence these countries (with the exception of Jordan) had a similar size and feeling during the Arab Spring: consisting of large demonstrations and change of or within the regime. This strengthens the primary assumption of one shared factor even further for this thesis. One could argue that the regaining of voice does not hold for countries like Lebanon, Saudi Arabia or the Gulf States, where the Arab Spring never really happened as such, but the countries the primary premises definitely holds for the countries in this thesis. Even for Morocco and Jordan the premise holds true, where no change *of* the regime took place, but clearly change *in* the regime as both monarchs have had to change their policies and politics to accommodate civil demands.

Applying these two restrictions to the broader research topic, this research has aimed to answer the following research question:

"*How has the landscape of women's civil society in the MENA region changed since 2011?*"

Evidence for the answer of this question was collected through reading over 80 books and articles (of which around 50 are cited here), online research in databases of 5 international civil society institutions like CIVICUS and the Freedom House combined with primary data collection through in depth interviews with 10 participants.

After an overview of existing literature on civil society and the state of civil society pre-2011 in these countries, the analysis of this data has led to a series of interesting conclusions.
The first change that each country has experienced is a vast influx of new civil society actors and organizations directly after the demonstrations in 2011. More and more diverse people than ever before participated in the protests and became involved in civil society in that sense, but more importantly many of them continued their participation through establishing some form of organization. The momentum of the Arab Spring created this space for people to involve in civil society and become organized. In most of the countries, this momentum did not hold long and many of the organizations founded in the months during or after the demonstrations have slowly died down - either by losing the interest and focus of their founders, not being able to keep up in the vast competition for resources following this influx, or because the space for civil society has decreased again through new regimes or re-installed policies.

Several organizations did survive however, and individuals in them have been part of this thesis. What these organizations brought to women's civil society are young women that wanted to be active in civil society and now used the momentum to act upon that wish and capitalize on the opportunities given by for example also the influx of international funds with the momentum of the Arab Spring. These young women participate in civil society in a different way than more established women activists. First of all, they rarely hold more principled generic feminist slogans. The new generation does not focus on gender equality or other big feminist slogans. This captures two trends on both the service delivery and creating dialogue sides of the role of civil society. On the service delivery side, this thesis has given a number of examples of organizations working on one specific women's issue and providing services on the ground to

generate change - like for example the intervention teams of Harassmap in Egypt. These young organizations do not hold big feminist slogans of gender equality as a whole, but rather focus on one issue that impacts women's daily lives. Historically, most women organizations focused on creating dialogue and awareness, so the establishment of these organizations in itself is a trend that can be seen since 2011.

On the creating dialogue side, we can see that those women that joined civil society since 2011 and aim to create a space for discussion and policy change, do so by linking women's issues to more generic issues of social justice and equality. Instead of linking to feminist ideas, these women discuss gender equality as part of economic empowerment of the entire population rather than discussing women economic empowerment as part of gender equality.

The second visible change in women's civil society since 2011 can be seen in the types of activities employed by all actors, but especially these new actors. Social media has started to play a much bigger role in both old and new organizations, but especially new organizations have employed more diverse and innovative activities than before. Examples mentioned in the previous chapters are the intervention teams, graffiti, civic journalism through social media, wiki-pages of HR violations, underground music, documentaries etc. These activities are not all new, but have been employed on a much larger scale than before. The change in these types of activities flows logically from the change in types of actors and role they wish to play in civil society. Working more on the ground needs more on the ground visible activities compared to the policy and advocacy work of more established organizations which needs more activities behind the scenes: analysis, reports, meetings, and conferences.

The third and final theme of change in women's civil society discussed in this thesis is the network of civil society. Per definition civil society actors need to build relationships with different actors. In the past decades, with internationalization of policy and funding, this has grown to a situation where civil society actors have to employ various strategies on various different levels. With their focus on on the ground activity, young civil society actors are often less focused and capable in employing these different strategies and relationships to initiate

policy changes. The relationship between more established and young generations is not very friendly or strong, resulting in a situation where they do not compliment each other and where a considerable space for collaboration and an opportunity to have a bigger impact remains. The young and dynamic on the ground activities could greatly compliment the more principled advocacy by more established organizations to institutionalize the change created on the ground, and vice versa. Perhaps international donors or larger national NGOs could play a role in this by providing a platform for collaboration between different societal actors.

The cover image of this thesis brings it all together. It was created by a new organization led by young female Egyptians, Women on Walls. Women on Walls aims to raise awareness of women's rights issues through street art and graffiti. This image is one of their paintings in downtown Cairo, which was one of the main protest sites during the 2011 protest. This image shows the opportunities the Arab Spring has brought, the innovative and creative new ways that new organizations like Women on Walls have found to advocate for their beliefs within the context of a young and hopeful active civil society landscape. The current lock-down on civil society is less than hopeful and nuances this initial optimism greatly.

This thesis does not want to paint a rosy picture of the social and political situations in the different Arab countries, as they differ highly and are mostly very worrying. The safety and security situation in most countries is very different from what it was before and during 2011. Without neglecting these differences and the impact they have on civil society, this thesis has merely aimed to show the changes that can be seen in the civil society landscape of women's organizations. The new organizations, different roles and strategies, use of social media etc. This is not to say that these are in anyway better or worse, nor that they have a bigger or smaller impact on the societies they wish to influence. I purposefully did not include any arguments about the State of Women or the status of Women's Rights in the region, as this is not the topic of this thesis. This thesis was not meant to assess the impact and activities civil organizations are having, but rather how the landscape of organizations changed. In answering the research question, this thesis will will be useful for policy organizations in how to deal with

current civil society landscape. In addition, this thesis has provided useful academic insights that point to several areas in which academic research is still lacking.

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