

Living, Remembering, and Enduring Revolutionary Times:

Insights from the Mediterranean

Sarah ElMasry, *Faculty of Political and Social Sciences, Scuola Normale Superiore, Florence, Italy*

Maria Nicola Stragapede, *Faculty of Political and Social Sciences, Scuola Normale Superiore, Florence, Italy*

Donatella della Porta, *Faculty of Political and Social Sciences, Scuola Normale Superiore, Florence, Italy*

Correspondence: sarah.elmasry@sns.it

Received: 15 January 2024

Introduction

‘COVID...was a year of reflection on everything in life. I started interrogating my relationship with the revolution, maybe I would talk about it with friends every now and then, but these were truly sad conversations and [they] would end up with bitterness and defeat...we are broken,’ says 31-year-old Alexandrian Sama as she changes the disposable filter of her vape. She laments, ‘Everyone left, everyone travelled, none of our friends stayed behind and those who left did so because they had to do it immediately. We realized that no one sane would plan to stay here for long. I don’t want to be triggered or get an anxiety attack every time I see him [ElSisi] giving a speech.’¹

Sama’s reflections on her life over the past years come to echo the melancholic sentiments felt by many former revolutionary participants, not just in Egypt, but in the different countries and spaces that witnessed revolutions and mobilizations during the last

¹ Sama is a pseudonym. She is a former participant in the Egyptian revolution of 2011 and the mobilizations that followed. Interviewed by Sarah ElMasry on 23 December 2021, in Cairo.

fourteen years in the Mediterranean Southwest Asia and North Africa region (SWANA). It is no surprise that the circulation of such sentiments has given rise to a new intellectual and cultural production in the region, prompting reflections on revolutionary disenchantment, nostalgia, defeat, and political mourning. Building on this emerging literature - and speaking from a personal, political and academic need of addressing these spaces of loss - the contributors of this collection have engaged in bridging together works on affects and emotions during and after revolutionary times. The aim is, however, not to limit the reflection on defeat, but rather to expand the discussion to the divided memories, ambivalent emotions, and different forms of revolutionary resistance that cohabit with the sense of loss.

Over the past fourteen years, revolutions and uprisings in the Mediterranean Arab world and their divergent aftermaths have been studied with an utmost attention to structural factors and explanations. Despite the burgeoning interest in studying politics from below in the region, only sparse literature has looked at the micro mobilization dynamics as well as their respective political, social and cultural consequences on the lives of individuals and communities (more prominently the work of Allam 2018; 2020; Bayat 2017; 2021; El Chazli 2020; Hafez 2019; Volpi and Jasper 2018). Within the micro-level approaches, there has been nascent research interest in exploring the emotional and affective legacies that these revolutions have left, giving voice to the lives of participants with varying levels of commitment, be them revolutionaries, activists or rank and file participants.

Through this special issue, we aim to contribute to a developing literature on emotions and affects in the region by showcasing that their study does not only entail a reversal of perspective from the macro to the micro, but also inevitably calls into question core assumptions underlying the very meanings of revolutions, political action and political subjectivities. Through the contributions of this special issue, we challenge the classical interpretations of revolutions that have led to constructing dichotomies (Selbin 1997;

Wickham-Crowley 1997), assessing a revolutionary moment in terms of success or failure and essentializing the definition of revolutionaries. To do so, we propose to look at the interplay among emotions, memories, temporalities, and space. Such interactions allow us to reflect on how revolutionary moments survive beyond the apparent ‘failures’ or ‘successes’ they bring with them. Showing how emotions of loss, disenchantment, nostalgia, resentment and fear co-exist with those related with resistance, joy, enthusiasm, society-building, these contributions give a nuanced image of how revolutionary moments endure through the transformation of political subjectivities and communities, and how all these emotions can, in turn, shape the meanings and potentials of political action.

While the contributions of this collection focus on cases within the Arab world in the Mediterranean SWANA, we remind ourselves and our readers that this geographic focus is not meant to reinforce nation-centric and ethnically dominant notions of ‘Arabness’ of the region; rather we aim to bring to the fore the (dis)continuities between the Arab uprisings in 2010-2011 and those in 2018-2019 as significant cases of mobilization. In doing so, we contend that the uprisings have socio-political and cultural implications for the wider region, especially in light of the genocidal war on Gaza and the war on Lebanon, the civil war in Sudan and the fall of Assad and eventual triumph of the Syrian revolution.

To engage with this research agenda not only in theoretical terms, but also addressing its epistemological, methodological and ethical implications, in November 2022, we organized at the Scuola Normale Superiore (Florence, Italy) the conference ‘SWANA from Below: Living, Enduring and Remembering its Revolutions.’ The conference aimed to address the personal, subjective, affective and mnemonic dimensions of these eventful moments and bring them to the fore of discussions in social movements and contentious politics studies in the region. Alongside the traditional conference format, we co-organized three participatory workshops with the ‘Drafting and Enacting the Revolutions in the Arab

Mediterranean' (DREAM) project to have a space for sharing, discussing, and thinking together around the methodological and ethical questions arising from the work on affects and emotions.

This special issue continues the conversation sparked by the conference 'SWANA from Below' - one that feels more urgent than ever amid the ongoing genocide in Gaza and the enduring mobilizations for Palestine that have long resonated across Arab populations.² We seek to critically re-examine the region's revolutionary times centering our attention on their emotional histories, affective legacies and memories. In doing so, we broach key questions: What do emotions and affects do before, during and after revolutionary moments? Where are they located? How do they interact with or eventually transform memories, subjectivities and political action? And finally, how do they shape our present? Additionally, we bring forth the discussions on ethical and methodological practices in research. By bridging ethnographic and biographical materials with interviews, digital data, protest event data, media texts, and document analysis, the contributions in this special issue, illustrate how the study of affects and emotions can benefit from the combination of different methods of analysis. In parallel, we engage in a process of self-reflexivity on our own research practices and the ethical questions they raise, and we invite our readers to join us in this process as they move through the collection.

² Whereas a final legal judgement regarding Israeli crimes in Gaza including acts of 'genocide' is still undergoing, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), on January 26th, 2024 delivered an interim judgement that obliges Israel to 'take steps to prevent genocide' from occurring in Gaza (Casciani 2024). Recognizing that the term 'genocide' remains legally contested, our choice of it arises not from a legal stance, but from a deep awareness of the historical plight of the Palestinians, our unwavering commitment to decolonization and the rejection of their forced displacement, and our ethical obligation to speak out against the severe suffering and widespread loss of life inflicted on them (as documented by leading human rights organisations such as Amnesty International in their report in 2024).

Researching revolutions, affects and emotions in the Mediterranean SWANA

The literature on social movements and revolutions witnessed a cultural turn that has increasingly recognized the cognitive transformations occurring during and after the peak of collective action, whether through framing theories or through the analysis of movements' cultural products and activists' narratives (Benford and Snow 2000; Polletta 2006). However, much of the culturally sensitive analysis has been geared towards structural phenomena and critical conjunctions (Giugni 2008), with less attention to the study of the micro-foundations of collective action at the individual level and from a cultural perspective. This is particularly the case in the SWANA region and the Mediterranean Arab countries within it, where research on how micro-foundations become interpreted, experienced, and embodied in the daily life of protest participants, remains in a nascent phase (with some exceptions, see Al-Khalili et al. 2023; El Chazli 2020; Hasso and Salime 2016; Musallam 2016). Furthermore, there is little understanding about how such interactions affect the lives of participants in post-revolutionary times or at the end of a cycle of mobilization. To address these gaps, we propose to analyse emotions and affects as a possible entry point to illuminate the chains of interaction the micro, meso, and the macro levels and the liminal and 'hidden' spaces among them.

Emotions and affects in Social Movements Studies

While studying emotions has long been at the heart of debates in disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, and neuroscience, a sociology of emotions and affects became established only in the 1980s (Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2001; Jasper 2011). In the following decades, emotions and affects gained traction in the studies of collective action, social movements, and revolutions. Scholars sought to move beyond traditional dualisms and hierarchies that placed emotion in opposition to reason— often giving precedence to rationality over emotionality and associating the latter with marginalized groups, women or nature

(Aminzade et al. 2001; Ahmed 2004). Cultural constructivist approaches to emotions have in fact critiqued rationalist models that portray protestors' collective action as irrational and primitive crowd behaviour, and instead have privileged the role of culture and cognition in shaping emotions and affects (Eyerman and Jamison 1991; Jasper 2011). Research also looked at the interplay between emotion and cognition, emphasising their interaction rather than treating them as opposing forces (Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2001). Challenging the traditional dichotomy between emotion and cognition, social movement scholars have instead looked at their interactions, arguing that feeling is part of thinking (Gould 2004). This cultural turn suggested in fact a cognitivist model that tied emotions to both bodily sensations and forms of cognition; a reading that views emotions as 'judgments about objects' be them material or non-material (Ahmed 2004, 5; Jasper 1998). The culturalist approaches recognized emotions and affects as a process of 'meaning construction and identity formation' (Aminzade et al. 2001: 22). Yet, many silences remained, particularly as emotions and affects were often relegated to pure cognitive processes.

Over the past two decades, scholars of social movements and revolutions have broadened our knowledge by examining an array of emotions and affects that came to shape the actions and behaviours of bystanders, participants, and activists and the threats and opportunities they face during moments of mobilization. It became acknowledged that 'anger, fear, envy, guilt, pity, shame, awe, passion, and other feelings play a part either in the formation of social movements, in their relations with their targets... and in the life of potential recruits and members' (Kemper 2001: 58). With the development of research on emotions in movements, typologies of emotions have distinguished short-term versus long term emotions, or reciprocal versus shared ones (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2001). Looking at different moments in the mobilization process, emotions such as anger, outrage or fears can be particularly relevant in recruitment; indignation, resentment, pleasure, pride can

enforce commitment (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2001). Comparative research on emotions in social movements has embedded emotions in the different contexts (including different times and spaces), in which social rules define the proper emotions to feel and the proper way to express them (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2001). Particularly relevant in post-revolutionary moments, emotions of trauma (grief, shame, helplessness, and anger) emerged as having different effects on collective action when compared with emotions of resistance (pride, happiness, love, safety, confidence, and righteous anger) (Whittier 2001: 239).

Since emotions are shaped by context and cognition, social movements are prone to transform emotions or to intensify them (Collins 2001: 29). Western conceptions of modernity, which tend to stigmatize emotion, privileging interest over passions, have also influenced social movements' tendency to portray themselves as reasonable and rational actors. In fact, social movements have, however, recognized the role of emotions, reducing the impact of negative ones and enhancing positive ones instead. Participation in transformative protest events produces pride and pleasure, through the creation of arenas where collective experiences take shape as part of the interactions of individual and collectives (Wood 2001; della Porta 2020). Intimate ties in safe spaces and networks help manage fear through the development of collective effervescence (Goodwin and Pfaff 2001). Successful movement rituals produce group solidarity, strengthening the emotional energy among participants (Gould 2001). Research addressed the specific emotional repertoires within social movement organizations and protest cycles (della Porta 2017), noting that specific groups, individuals or environments nurture emotional repertoires, defining appropriate emotions. Activists also tend to recognize the different emotional cultures dominant in the environments they participate in, exerting emotional labour oriented to control some emotions and stimulate others (Whittier 2001).

Generally, however, research on emotions within social movements studies tends to focus on successful mobilizations and growing movements, with far less attention given to movements in decline and the emotional legacies they leave in the lives of their participants (with some exceptions, such as Gould 2001, Owens 2010 and Fillieule et al., 2022). As such, toolkits to study emotions and affects, especially in the way in which they interact at the micro, meso and macro levels, need to be better developed and adapted to different contexts. For the purposes of this collection, we adopt broad conceptualizations of a) emotions as temporary responses to events and information, thus encompassing ‘cognitive, temporal, and somatic dimensions,’ and b) affects as the ‘more enduring,’ and ‘embodied, unformed and less conscious dimension of human feeling’ (Jasper 1998 in Aminezade et al. 2001:20; Thompson and Hoggett 2012). The different contributions of this special issue, with their diverse approaches of looking at affects and emotions, show indeed how these concepts are being redefined and conceptualized in relation to political structures and actors. In this sense, the contributions highlight the need to consider the ways in which cultural frames and political settings impact how emotions are governed, take shape and contour the conditions of actions and behaviours in intense moments of mobilizations.

‘Politics from below’ in the Mediterranean SWANA: Locating emotions and affects

An emotional and affective turn is also visible in more recent studies on the Mediterranean SWANA. The 2010-2011 revolutions and 2018-2019 mobilizations marked a watershed. Before the Arab revolutions, emotions and affects were sparsely accounted for in international relations literature except in the analysis of emotions such as humiliation and betrayal in the ‘war on terror’ in the greater ‘Middle East’ (Fattah and Fierke 2009). Here, emotions were often looked at within a longstanding orientalist narrative about the ‘emotionalism’ of the region (Fattah and Fierke 2009). It was only in the 2010s that studies of street politics, social movements and revolutions proliferated, pointing scholarly attention to

the role of emotions and affects within these mobilizations. At first, the literature on the revolutions of 2010-2011 alluded to the role of emotions as a drive for building not only a ‘culture of fear,’ but also a ‘culture of solidarity,’ as developed through ‘identity formation’ across formal networks (Sika 2017). Later, in their analyses of the micro-foundations of political contention and the micro-cultural mechanisms of social movements and politics from below, scholars in the region have started to study the role of transformative events, aesthetics, space and emotions (Weitzel 2019). The works of Bayat (2017; 2021), Armbrust (2019) and Jasper and Volpi (2018) have contributed to this literature, providing vital discussions on the conceptualization of revolutions, but leaving some questions open on the mechanisms underlying their micro foundations.

The work by Bayat we consider as particularly relevant to conceptualize the interactions between capitalist developments and the formation of dissenting networks and subjectivities. Bayat (2017) conceptualizes *refolutions* as ‘neither revolutions in the sense of the twentieth-century experiences (i.e., rapid and radical transformation of the state pushed by popular movements from below) nor simply reform (i.e., gradual and managed change carried out often from above and within the existing structural arrangements) but a complex and contradictory mix of both,’ (pp.17-18). In particular, he explains how neoliberal policies in pre-revolutionary settings transformed informal networks, forcing certain constraints on inhabitants while offering them numerous ‘opportunities for networking, forging subjectivities and voicing their dissent’ (p.113). As *refolutions* unfolded, they were still bound by the long-standing neoliberal structures and ended up seeking to reform parts of these structures instead of dismantling them. Building on Bayat’s insightful analysis of the interactions among events, space and networks, we aim to contribute to studying the

mechanisms which connect people's ordinary experiences of revolts, and the lived impact of such experiences on participants' subjectivities.³

To do this, we turn to Armbrust's (2019) reflections on revolution in the Egyptian context, through the concepts of liminality and liminal crisis to understand the 'spatial dimensions of performance' of revolutions and their 'articulation between the political and social, artistic, or cultural spheres' (p. 3). In challenging the classical interpretations of revolutions (as in Paige 2003) that often define revolutions' beginnings and ends through the dichotomous view of defeat versus victory, Armbrust points at the indeterminacy of revolutions, where a new 'normal' and a new future are envisioned while memories and old practices still permeate society. Even though his focus is on the revolution, rather than the 'revolutionaries' themselves, we strive to grasp how liminality comes to be experienced and transmitted in the creation of new political structures, societal rituals and collective imaginations.

The micro-dimension is addressed by Jasper and Volpi (2018), who apply a 'cultural-strategic - and interactive - framework' centred around the concepts of players and arenas to study the 2010-2011 Arab uprisings. Departing from structural paradigms that assumes static and fixed characteristics of institutions and players, they give equal weight to players and arenas and how they constantly change and are co-constructed through 'long chains of interactions,' that occur at kitchen tables, in neighbourhoods, in the streets and finally the 'central sites' of contention such as Tahrir (p.30). The authors argue how 'a great deal of the cultural turn in social-movement studies has aimed to show how players form' (Jasper and Volpi 2018: 21), bringing a focus on classical theories (as in Melucci 1996) or more recent research (as in Allal and Pierret 2013) on the construction of identities. In this collection, we

³ In his recent work *Revolutionary Life* (2021), Bayat examines subjectivities more closely, yet without much discussion of the emotional and affective dimensions after moments of mobilization.

want to further advance this premise through a deeper focus on affects and emotions that illuminate players' agency, choices and mechanisms of micro-interaction.

With Bayat's attention on space and networks, Armbrust's discussion of revolutionary temporality, and Jasper and Volpi's focus on micro-interactions, we seek to contribute further insights from the works of other scholars who studied the emotional and affective dimension in the Mediterranean Arab world. Among them, Pearlman (2013) who looked at how contingent events gain transformative power and 'causal impact' given their ability to produce new knowledge, but also trigger certain emotions that in their turn affect individuals. In this perspective, she analyses the emotional micro-foundations of the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings in 2010 and 2011 as two cases in which historic events shaped the emotional climates that were conducive to collective action. Other scholars examined aesthetic objects - be them visual or auditory - to look at how emotions are created in 'affective fields.'⁴ These 'affective fields' attract individuals, connect them to others, lead them to develop 'emotional repertoires,' and eventually orient and structure their actions (Kuruoğlu and Ger 2015: 229). An example of the creation of emotional climates and solidifying communal imaginaries can be found within the Kurdish resistance movement in Turkey from the 1970s until the 1990s and its circulation of banned Kurdish music cassette tapes as means of enacting resistance (Kuruoğlu and Ger 2015).

Drawing on these diverse insights, this collection aspires to analyse the interplay of emotions and affects with temporal, spatial, and embodied dimensions individuals experienced during the Arab revolutions and uprisings, and how these emotions continue to echo in their present realities or shape the conditions and (im)possibilities of their future political actions. In this way, it intends to bring together different theoretical and

⁴ 'Webs of emotionally evocative relationships among objects, things, and places' (Kuruoğlu and Ger 2015: 215).

methodological approaches to the study of emotions, affects and revolutions within and beyond the Mediterranean Arab world.

Why does an emotional and affective approach to post-revolutionary contexts matter now?

Without dismissing the role of resource mobilization (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996) and political process (Tilly and Tarrow 2015), this collection privileges an understudied or even neglected aspect of political participation in phases of mobilization, disengagement, and abeyance: the emotional and affective side of the engagement equation. Given its hidden, intersubjective and interpretivist nature, the study of emotional and affective dynamics of revolutionary and post-revolutionary times is only fledgling in the Mediterranean Arab world. At a time of authoritarian resurgence and consolidation when mobilizations in the region have been deemed a ‘failure,’ this collection suggests that an emotional and affective approach is timelier than ever to understand the resilient effects of revolutionary moments (della Porta 2017). To this purpose, we examine affects and emotions, by looking at the interplay between 1) temporalities; 2) memories, mnemonic practices and representations; and 3) spaces.

To do so, the contributions build on the abovementioned notion of liminality to critically discuss the temporalities of revolutions and transformative events as processes with emotional legacies, and hence to improve our comprehension of the interaction between revolutionary times and individuals’ intimate and personal temporalities. This implies tracing the emotional impact of events and the ways in which they endure and change, given their transformative capacities.

Concomitantly, we look at memories of ‘exceptional’ times to bring to the fore the broader historical trajectory of past mobilizations in relation to present ones.⁵ Capturing such interplay allows us to access the ‘affective archive’ created by transformative revolutionary times (Ayata and Harders 2019: 285). As Ayata and Harders (2019) argue, Midan moments, another term for transformative events, are powerful in their capacity to impact the inter-subjective experiences of their participants through rituals, symbols and political practices. They mark both individual and collective memory for a long time after their passage.

Additionally, our focus on the micro-level enables us to reflect on the role of space. Emotions and affects are closely intertwined with spaces and places, incessantly shaping, producing and reproducing one another (Hasso and Salime 2016; Ahmed 2004). In fact, ‘space refers to arrangements and interactions (e.g., between human bodies, animals, nature, sound, the visual, the digital, built environments) at multiple scales, not all of them material’ (Hasso and Salime 2016: 6). Looking at the spatial dimension allows us to consider one’s own affective and emotional relationship to territories and places, be them squares, streets, home, local party branch or political organization, looking at how all these spaces co-exist and interact.

As the contributions in this special issue shall show, an emotional and affective lens is indispensable to unearth micro - macro linkages and illuminate how the concatenations of temporalities, spaces, bodies, and memories come to shape subjectivities and political action. In this direction, the collection is framed around the following core guiding questions: What emotions and affects emerge and circulate in post-revolutionary contexts in the Mediterranean Arab world? In which temporal and spatial dimensions are they to be found and captured?

⁵ Social movements and their participants often take inspiration, base their revolutionary performances on past repertoires of action and build their frames on memories of former mobilizations with which the publics can relate.

How do they inform us about the impact and consequences of revolutions and mobilization, not only at the micro level, but also at the meso and macro levels?

Addressing these questions by examining emotions and affects can be an arduous task as it requires the combination of diverse theoretical perspectives as well as methodologies. As emotions cannot be always recalled, if not with great ambivalence and ambiguity, researching them requires a complex toolkit to help individuals recover memories without forcing or leading elicitation. Such toolkit includes visual descriptions, biographical diaries, life history calendars (with dates and intervals that help individuals locate their memories and associated emotions). Being aware of this challenge, in this special issue we attempt to study emotions and affects by employing a methodologically pluralist approach (della Porta and Keating 2008). The case studies we present are based on multiple data sources and methods that allow us to produce empirically grounded knowledge that is both temporally and spatially sensitive. The contributions that form part of this collection cover a diversity of methods, including biographical methodologies such as life histories and in-depth narrative interviews, media textual analysis, visual analysis of prompts from artistic physical production, and event data analysis. These methods enable tracing histories of emotions and affects, their legacies and their current state. They, however, come with their own set of limitations, including recall biases and the challenges of separating the emotional state of researchers from the emotions they are studying (Larzillière and Grajales 2021). As the authors of different contributions suggest, utilising such methods means engaging in a process of reflexivity and employing supplementary sources of data that could help probe and triangulate.

Outline of the collection

The contributions in this special issue look at the emotional and affective histories and legacies, cultural aesthetics, and everyday interactions that continue to shape the meanings of revolution. In the exploration of nostalgia, hope, despair, apathy, silence, resilience,

resentment and mnemonic legacies, the collection narrates the Arab uprisings and revolutions through the lived and embodied experiences of revolutionary participants and opens further discussions on how revolutionary times can be conceptualized. Our aim is not oriented to providing definitive answers to the aforementioned questions, but rather to problematize such discussions and launch a dialogue among the different approaches that address affects and emotions in revolutionary and post-revolutionary times. In framing the different contributions, we have been asking ourselves, as we ask the readers, to envision not only the meanings of ‘emotions’ and ‘affects’, but also to imagine the forms and spaces in which they lie or hide; the times where they can be voiced out or silenced; and finally, how they can inform us about the afterlives of revolutions. We hope these contributions can start a conversation not only among scholars on revolutions in the Mediterranean SWANA, but also among all those interested in addressing emotions and affects in the study of subjectivity transformation during critical events beyond the region.

By focusing on spatiality and temporality in Lebanon, Jannis Grimm’s contribution provides an account of how macrostructural conditions and lived experiences come to define the temporalities of burnout and demobilization in post-revolutionary times. Through an event catalogue and in-depth narrative interviews, he is able to address differences in protest organising ranging from the 2019 Lebanese *thawra* to 2023 across different locations and temporalities that were marked by transformative events - such as the pandemic and the Beirut explosion. Connecting macro-explanations to actors’ cognitive and affective experiences, this contribution offers novel explanations to post-revolutionary demobilization in the Mediterranean SWANA. In particular, following Zeller’s approach (2021), Grimm underlines how mobilization processes do not simply ‘mirror’ those leading to demobilization, and shows instead how the interplay of adaptation, disengagement, and abeyance mechanisms contributes to explaining revolutionary burnout. In doing so, he

recentres the focus on participants' lived experiences of demobilization and burnout, revealing the multifaceted ways in which elite actions intersect with and influence their experiences.

Reflecting on memories and revolutionary temporalities, Maria Nicola Stragapede's work challenges the literature that looks at silence as an indication for political detachment, apathy or even complicity. Instead, she examines how 'silence' emerged as a force of political socialization that shaped the political biographies of Tunisian leftist activists under Ben Ali's Tunisia. Whereas personal narratives are normally probed for the verbalized and expressed memories and emotions, Stragapede turns her attention to the dimensions of the 'unsaid' and 'hidden memories', looking at how these contribute to forming political subjectivities, from Ben Ali's time to the revolutionary transformations that followed. Through extensive ethnographic and biographical material collected mainly in France, with parts in Tunisia, Italy and Germany, she sheds light on the subversive meanings and practices that silence fosters, and how these are negotiated and transformed through revolutionary times.

Continuing this reflection, Chaymaa Hassabo and Laura Ruiz de Elvira explore the interplay among temporalities, spaces, and memories through the lens of the 'emotional legacies' of activism. To this purpose, they analytically distinguish the emotions that (former) revolutionaries associate with the revolutionary moments themselves and those tied to their present affective state during the interviews, showing how past and present dimensions coexist in participants' political subjectivities. Drawing on digital social networks, internet archives, and extensive biographical material collected in Lebanon, Turkey, and Egypt, the study spans a wide temporal arc, from the pre-revolutionary period to recent years. The authors reveal how memories and their ambivalent persistence over time shed light on the conflicted emotions that continue to shape and redefine activists' daily lives. In this way, they are able to challenge notions of 'defeat' and 'end' of revolutionary movements, reframing

them as a multifaceted experience intertwined with the joy, solidarity, pride, and hope that many revolutionaries experienced during the uprisings of 2011. Finally, the study underscores how ‘ambivalent emotions’ have the potential to shape activism over time, offering new insights on the survival of movements.

In the narration of the emotional and mnemonic legacies of revolutions, scholarly attention has recently shifted away from the focus on the joyful and exciting sentiments that often characterise early politicization and political engagement, to examine states of loss and disenchantment that the ‘revolutionary defeat’ brings. Through extensive life history interviews conducted with former revolutionary participants in Egypt, Sarah ElMasry’s contribution explores how resentment arises in the absence of a collective reckoning with revolutionary defeat. Her examination of post-defeat resentments reflects deeper frustrations with classism, generational and geographic hierarchies, and gendered violence witnessed within the revolutionary movement and its surrounding arenas. These feelings are particularly acute among participants from peripheral governorates, whose marginal positions intensify their experience of injustice. However, resentment does not signify political closure. Rather than condemning the revolution or reinforcing defeatist narratives, engaging with these “negative” emotions offers a necessary lens for understanding the emotional and political aftermath of revolt. It becomes a vital means of reflecting on failure, recovery, and the enduring legacies of collective action. Studying resentment can help us understand predispositions towards political action or inaction including the general abstinence from politics, and the rising scepticism about the efficacy of contentious collective action. This resentment currently in place in Egypt post-revolutionary defeat, puts to question the long-lasting impact of 2011, its assessments and legacies as these are being actively and inactively, directly or indirectly erased by the state from the memory of those who bore witness to it.

While these contributions primarily explore subjective transformations in relation to structural perspectives, Yasmeeen Mekawy places greater emphasis on the role of affects and emotions in post-revolutionary representations and cultural production, particularly in the context of the 2011 Egyptian revolution. Through media-analysis and digital ethnography, Mekawy constructs an affective typology of various portrayals of the revolution in popular media (music videos, television series, novels, social media, and film) and compares them with the state's narrative of the revolution. She further enriches the analysis through interviews, delving into protestors' memories and experiences of nostalgia. By weaving together these dimensions, her contribution interlaces multiple temporalities, from the heydays of the uprising when participants were experiencing 'revolutionary time', to the present day, where the revolution seems to have faded into the past. In her study, nostalgia is predicated on juxtaposing the past in the present moment by interrogating how the revolutionary memory in public spheres has been constructed and contested, and how this might affect the future trajectory of collective action. In this way, she shows the 'ambivalent attachments' that resist the state's attempts of erasure, and how even the romanticized, utopian or re-written narrations of 2011 contribute to keep alive its memory and legacy.

Concluding Remarks

To conclude, these contributions highlight the silent mechanisms and forgotten legacies underlying revolutionary processes, by presenting fieldwork material that has formerly been invisible and missing from the recent literature on the region. The challenging contexts of authoritarian states, war and migration realities coupled with the difficulty of conducting research, accessing national archives, producing knowledge under the auspices of colonial institutions and colonial archives inside and outside the region, have all pushed contributors to adopt an engaged research agenda that centres actors from the studied contexts and

amplifies their voices, experiences, memories and emotions. The methodologies employed in the special issue become, in this way, a core part of the authors' epistemological stances, and contribute to a more encompassing understanding of revolutions 'from below'. Considering this agenda, the collection follows an affective and emotional lens in studying post-revolutionary contexts through an analysis of how temporalities, spaces, and memories shape and transform affective fields and emotional climates which in their own turn orient and structure the actions of actors. As the authors will show empirically, this approach will bring three major theoretical contributions to the literature on revolutionary and post-revolutionary processes.

Firstly, these contributions illuminate the interplay between the micro-level processes of political participation and engagement, disengagement and reconversion of political commitments in revolutionary and post-revolutionary times and how these processes reflect on macro level changes. The special issue seeks to inform our understanding of macro-structural changes by implacing emotions and affects in the analysis of the rapid political transformations taking place in revolutionary and post-revolutionary times as they are experienced at the micro level of actors. In other words, the collection elaborates how emotions and affects imbuing temporalities, memories and spaces end up orienting actors' actions and interactions with macro level structures including the state.

Secondly, the contributions adopt an affective and emotional lens to the study of memories, mnemonic practices and micro production of collective imaginations during revolutionary times. Building on both previously unexplored materials and pluralist methodologies, the contributions are able to detect silent mnemonic legacies and trace how 'contested memories' have been built in the subjective experiences of revolutionaries and help us reason out how such memories come to constitute collective ones. Here, the processes of transmissions - or 'obstruction' - of memories are indeed negotiated both on the subjective

level of participation as well as in the different spaces where such memories were constructed. This takes place not just in official narratives, as former participants have built memories of revolutionary experiences - and continue to do so in their intimate lives - in their family homes, friendships' circles, political organizations - as well as subvert those more 'visible' memories.

Lastly, the special issue contributes to understanding the connections between mobilization, political practices and revolutionary times across political and intimate spaces. Not only does it bring together contributions that adopt emotional and affective approaches to the study of recent Arab revolutions, thereby enriching context-specific knowledge, but more importantly, it demonstrates how spaces shape both subjective experiences of revolutionary temporalities and the formation of intimate and collective memories. In this approach, 'space' is not only a variable of analysis, but it becomes a lens through which memories and temporalities are interconnected. Finally, as mentioned, 'space' is addressed not only in geographical terms but as a constructive element of life spheres and social sites including home, school, friendships' circles, houses of worship, streets etc. Ultimately, by interlinking the emotional, mnemonic, temporal, spatial and embodied dimensions of revolutionary experiences, this collection offers a framework that challenges conventional paradigms and deepens our understanding of revolutionary experiences and their enduring emotional legacies, offering valuable insights for engaging with the region's ongoing mobilizations and struggles.

References

References

Ahmed, Sara. 2004. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.

- Al-Khalili, Charlotte, Kaya Uzel, Myriam Lamrani, and Narges Ansari, eds. 2023. *Revolution beyond the Event: The Afterlives of Radical Politics*. S.l.: UCL Press.
- Allal, Amin, and Thomas Pierret, eds. 2013. *Au Coeur des Révolutions Arabes: Devenir Révolutionnaires*. Paris: Armand Colin.
- Allam, Nermin. 2018. “Activism Amid Disappointment: Women’s Groups and the Politics of Hope in Egypt.” *Middle East Law and Governance* 10 (3): 291–316.
- . 2020. “Affective Encounters: Women, Hope, and Activism in Egypt.” In *Arab Spring: Modernity Identity and change*, edited by Eid Mohamed and Dalia Fahmy, 135–55. Springer Nature.
- Aminzade, Ronald R., Jack A. Goldstone, Doug McAdam, Elizabeth J. Perry, William H. Sewell, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilley. 2001. *Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics*. Cambridge Studies in Contentious Politics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Amnesty International. 2024. “Amnesty International Concludes Israel Is Committing Genocide against Palestinians in Gaza.” *Amnesty International*. Retrieved May 9, 2025 (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/12/amnesty-international-concludes-israel-is-committing-genocide-against-palestinians-in-gaza/>).
- Armbrust, Walter. 2019. *Martyrs and Tricksters: An Ethnography of the Egyptian Revolution*. Princeton University Press.
- Ayata, Bilgin, and Cilja Harders. n.d. “Midan Moments.” In *Affective Societies*, edited by Jan Slaby and Christian von Scheve. London: Routledge.
- Bayat, Asef. 2017. *Revolution without Revolutionaries: Making Sense of the Arab Spring*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- . 2021. *Revolutionary Life. The Everyday of the Arab Spring*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Benford, Robert D., and David A. Snow. 2000. “Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (1): 611–39.
- Casciani, Dominic. 2024. *Israel-Gaza: What did the ICJ ruling really say?* BBC. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c3g9g63jl17o>
- Collins, Randall. 2001. Social Movements and the Focus of Emotional Attention, In Jeffrey Goodwin, James J. Jasper and Francesca Polletta (eds), *Passionate Politics. Emotions and Social Movements*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 27-44.

- Dakhli, Leyla, and Amin Allal. 2020. *L'esprit de La Révolte: Archives et Actualité des Révolutions Arabes*. France: Éditions Du Seuil.
- Della Porta, Donatella. 2017. *Where did the Revolution Go?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2020. "Protests as critical junctures: some reflections towards a momentous approach to social movements." *Social Movement Studies*, 19 (5-6): 556-575.
- Della Porta, Donatella and Michael Keating. 2008. *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge University Press.
- El Chazli, Youssef. 2020. "Revolution as a Life-Altering Experience: The Case of Egypt." Crown Center for Middle East Studies.
- Eyerman, Ron, and Andrew Jamison. 1991. *Social Movements: A Cognitive Approach*. Cambridge Polity Press.
- Fattah, Khaled, and K.M. Fierke. 2009. "A Clash of Emotions: The Politics of Humiliation and Political Violence in the Middle East." *European Journal of International Relations* 15 (1): 67–93.
- Filleule, Olivier, Catherine Leclercq, and Rémi Lefebvre. 2022. *Le Malheur Militant*. De Boeck Supérieur.
- Giugni, Marco. 2008. "Political, Biographical, and Cultural Consequences of Social Movements." *Sociology Compass* 2: 1582-1600.
- Goodwin, Jeffrey, and Steven Pfaff. 2001. "Emotion Work in High-Risk Social Movements: Managing Fear in the U.S. and East German Civil Rights Movements." In *Passionate Politics. Emotions and Social Movements*, edited by J. Goodwin, J.J. Jasper, and F. Polletta, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 282–302.
- Goodwin, Jeffrey, James J. Jasper and Francesca Polletta. 2001. "Introduction: Why Emotions Matter." In *Passionate Politics. Emotions and Social Movements*, edited by J. Goodwin, J.J. Jasper, and F. Polletta, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1-25.
- Gould, Deborah. 2001. "Rock the boat, don't Rock the Boat, Baby: Ambivalence and the Emergence of Militant AIDS Activism", in Jeffrey Goodwin, James J. Jasper and Francesca Polletta (eds), *Passionate Politics. Emotions and Social Movements*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 135-157.
- . 2004. "Passionate Political Processes: Bringing Emotions Back into the Study of Social Movements", in Jeff Goodwin and James J. Jaspers (eds.) *Rethinking social movements*, Rowman and Littlefield:155- 175.

- Hafez, Sherine. 2019. *Women of the Midan: The Untold Stories of Egypt's Revolutionaries*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Hasso, Frances S, and Zakia Salime. 2016. *Freedom without Permission*. Duke University Press Books.
- Jasper, James M. 2011. "Emotions and Social Movements: Twenty Years of Theory and Research." *Annual Review of Sociology* 37 (1): 285–303.
- Kuruoğlu Alev P., and Güliz Ger. 2015. "An emotional economy of mundane objects," *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 18 (3): 209-238.
- Kemper, Theodore, A Structural Approach to Social Movement Emotions, In Jeffrey Goodwin, James J. Jasper and Francesca Polletta (eds), *Passionate Politics. Emotions and Social Movements*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 58-73.
- Larzillière, Pénélope, and Jacobo Grajales, eds. 2021. "Political Emotions of Combatants, between War and Peace." *Critique Internationale* 91.
- McAdam, Doug, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald. 1996. "Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings." Cambridge Core. Cambridge University Press.
- Melucci, Alberto. 1996. "Youth, Time and Social Movements." *YOUNG* 4 (2): 3–14.
- Musallam, Fuad. 2016. "Failure and the Politically Possible: Space, Time and Emotion among Independent Activists in Beirut, Lebanon." London School of Economics and Political Science.
- Owens, Lynn. 2010. *Cracking under Pressure: Narrating the Decline of the Amsterdam Squatters' Movement*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Paige, Jeffery. 2003. "Finding the Revolutionary in the Revolution: Social Science Concepts and the Future of Revolution." In John Foran, ed., *The Future of Revolutions: Rethinking Radical Change in the Age of Globalization*. London: Zed Books, 19–29.
- Polletta, Francesca. 2006. *It was like a fever: storytelling in protest and politics*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Sika, Nadine. 2017. *Youth Activism and Contentious Politics in Egypt: Dynamics of Continuity and Change*. Cambridge, United Kingdom; New York, Ny: Cambridge University Press.
- Tilly, Charles, Sidney Tarrow. 2015. *Contentious Politics*. Second Edition, Second Edition. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

- Volpi, Frederic, and James M Jasper. 2018. *Microfoundations of the Arab Uprisings Mapping Interactions between Regimes and Protesters*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Weitzel, Michelle D. 2019. "Engineering: Affect Street Politics and Microfoundations of Governance." *Middle East Law and Governance* 11: 203–43.
- Whittier, Nancy, Emotional Strategies: The Collective Reconstruction and Display of Oppositional Emotions in the Movement against Child Sexual Abuse, in Jeffrey Goodwin, James J. Jasper and Francesca Polletta (eds), *Passionate Politics. Emotions and Social Movements*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 233-250.
- Wickham-Crowley, Timothy. 1997. "Structural Theories of Revolution." In John Foran, ed., *Theorizing Revolutions*. London: Routledge, 36–70.
- Wood, Elisabeth Jean. 2001. The Emotional Benefits of Insurgency in El Salvador, in Jeffrey Goodwin, James J. Jasper and Francesca Polletta (eds), *Passionate Politics. Emotions and Social Movements*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 267-282.