Shifting spaces of contention

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Introduction

1   The emergence of contentious collective action since the early 2000s[1], and especially in the aftermath of the 2011 popular uprisings has contributed to the transformation of public space in Egypt, revealing a wide range of political and social actors. The development of contentious actions, as well as the use of the street as a powerful political tool encouraged the emergence of new spaces of protest, but also the development of new strategies of opposition. During and after the events of 2011, Tahrir Square – and by extension the "street", understood as the space allowing for the expression of public opinion – became a symbol of unity, hope, and empowerment, all the while allowing new actors to appear on the political and social scenes. The investment in public space has led to an examination of the different ways of thinking, organizing and staging collective action. Egyptian football supporters in particular, are known to make use of public space within the framework of their activities, by utilizing the stadium, the walls and the "territory" surrounding the stadium and their meeting points. Early in the uprisings, they notably played a central role during the clashes with the security forces, helping to "bring down the wall of fear".[2] Their experience in street fights, their turbulent spirit, their frequent use of violence,[3] their audio-visual tools (flags, songs, banners and graffiti), as well as their practices of public space investment have contributed to the development and redefinition of collective action in revolutionary and post-revolutionary Egypt.

2   Beyond the physical investment of Tahrir, it is interesting to look at the occupation of other spaces by the Ultras groups, particularly their occupation of the different walls surrounding the stadiums and Tahrir Square. This article aims to examine the mobilization of the Cairo Ultras groups by looking into their use of space, first within stadium grounds, and particularly through their use of graffiti art. This choice is essentially motivated by the fact that their main space of mobilization, the stadium, was off-limits to them after the events of Port Said,[4] which will be discussed below. Through

an analysis primarily centred on their graffiti, we wish to account for the evolution in their mobilization, as well as understand the development and transformation of their messages. On the one hand, the article will focus on the use of physical space by the Ultras and the messages conveyed within the stadium. On the other hand, it will address the issue of the rapport with figures of authority, especially with the police force, and discuss the assimilation of the concept of martyrdom by the Ultras groups, as well as its evolution.

3   With regard to the structure of the paper, it will be divided into three main parts. The first part aims at discussing the making of contentious collective action and theorizing public space within the scope of collective action. How do we define public space and street politics within authoritarian contexts? The second section focuses on the stadium as the Ultras' earliest space of mobilization. Particular attention will be paid to Port Said and its significance in altering the Ultras groups' utilization of space. The third part is based on a thorough analysis of graffiti art as a means of occupying space and resistance. We will start by focusing on the relationship between the Ultras and the figures of authority with a special emphasis on the police. Finally, we will discuss the concept of martyrdom and its use by the Ultras within the framework of their activities.

4   An examination of the Egyptian case, and particularly the study of a bottom-up case focusing on traditionally non-political groups (Bayat 2009: 22) such as the Ultras, opens up new analytical perspectives for the study of contentious politics in the Middle East. These daily dynamics of resistance are reshaping these societies in a way that is seldom explored by Western scholars, and discredited by the holders of authoritarian power in the region (Bayat 209: 23). By recognizing the power of local actors such as the Ultras, and examining their activities, these "citizen (non)movements"[5] highlight the new ways by which ordinary individuals can limit state control, and stimulate change within their respective communities. Moreover, the sports arena and by extension the Ultras groups can reveal certain social complexities and struggles, particularly in contexts where the dominant power exerts pressure on its population.

5   Indeed, regimes such as the Mubarak regime in Egypt are characterized by weak opportunities for the development of opposition movements and collective mobilization (Bennan-Chraïbi and Filleule 2003; Benin and Vairel 2013; Allal; Cooper 2012), as well as by the quasi-systematic repression of collective mobilization (Abdelrahman 2013). The lack of political opportunities can therefore lead to the development of "new spaces of contention", as a "part of the social world built on at the same time against and in reference to the political field and its formal institutions" (Beinin; Vairel 2013: 33). The stadium and its surroundings, as well as the art of graffiti can be understood as one of these spaces of freedom and autonomy where the frustrations of humiliation and abuse could be channelled.

6   The majority of the data was gathered around Tahrir Square and Mohammed Mahmoud Street, as well as around the Ahly and Zamalek stadiums during a series of field trips conducted between 2012 and the beginning of 2015. Graffiti are of particular interest in the Egyptian case, most notably because they allow for the expression of a specific social and/or political reality using precise graphic and discursive rules. We also rely on a series of interviews conducted between 2013 and 2015, with Ultras of the two main football clubs in Cairo, namely Ahly and Zamalek. The use of interviews has proven to be an important tool and asset for making sense of political phenomena, particularly when discussing Port Said and the shift in mobilization observed among the Ultras groups.

Contentious collective action and the making of public space

7   The Egyptian Revolution has impacted on the dynamics of political participation. Formal political participation in Egypt was predominantly restricted to regime-affiliated party activity, co-opted civil society participation, and/or voting in non-transparent and fraudulent elections (Khatib 2013: 315). This compelled the development of "underground movements" and alternative spaces of freedom (Bromberger *et al.* 2002; Bayat 2009; Atef 2014). The stadium and the football arena as a whole became one of those spaces, allowing for free expression of opinions and catalysing social tensions and frustrations, ultimately becoming a space of political socialization, a space where individuals familiarized themselves with politics and social issues.[6] These spaces defied the coercive measures put in place by the government – such as the law on political parties[7] – to avoid any political opposition and limit the influence of social movements and opposition forces (Khatib 2013: 322).

8   The concept of space is often debated in the social science literature, showing how it has shaped political mobilization as well as contentious politics (Moore 1998; Castells 2009; Miller 2000; Martin; Miller 2003). Spatiality is to be understood as multiple and equally significant, though certain spatialities might be of greater significance in the articulation of a specific process (Miller 2013). According to Miller, space matters because it is a "medium through which all social relations are made or broken – and making and breaking relationships is at the core of collective action" (2013:286). Henri Lefebvre (1991: 62) adds that underestimating, ignoring or diminishing "space amounts to the overestimation of texts, written matter, and writing systems, along with the readable and the visible, to the point of assigning to these a monopoly on intelligibility".

9   The conceptualisation of space in dissident contexts has benefitted from a growing interest in the literature (Bayat 2003; Massey 2007; Rabbat 2011). However, these authors often focus on the visibility that these spaces provide, the streets being a "theatre of action and a place to use the power of collectives"[8] rather than the impact it can have on social actors. Indeed already in 2003, Martin and Miller (2003: 143) expressed their concern regarding the minimisation of certain aspects "such as the construction of space or the context that has led to the development of certain fundamental concepts such as identity, political opportunities, demands and resources". According to both authors, it remains essential to think of space, not only as an instrument of collective action, but also as a constituent element of it (2003: 144).

10   It is in this sense that Tilly has integrated the question of space into the study of mobilizations by addressing the concepts of "safe spaces" or "control of spaces" as stakes of contentious politics (Tilly 2000: 136, 149). Tilly states that these safe spaces are part of the spaces where protesting politics can occur (Tilly 2000: 144). Due to their location, or their legal status, some spaces are more likely to offer protection against repression by the security forces.

11   Atef, on the other hand, added to the definition of public space, specifically in authoritarian contexts, by introducing the concept of "public policy space" as a place of struggle between a powerful elite and a weakened population (2014: 69). The public space then becomes a space for citizens to "practice" their opposition to the government,

actively seeking to increase and challenge the limitations imposed by political power (2014: 55). Contentious protests are induced through street demonstrations and public debates organized on various topics relating to government policy, although also prompted by the mosques, universities (to a certain extent) and stadia, which, as we will see, offer greater freedom of expression as they are able to break away from the control networks set up by the regime and its security apparatus.

12   The development of contentious collective action in authoritarian contexts is most commonly complicated by the regime's response to counter-powers: strong coercive agencies who have carte blanche when it comes to defending state interests. These police forces usually resolve to what they call "routine" forms of repression, such as surveillance, threats, harassment, detention and "legal persecution" (tax authorities, extortion) to restrict and discourage any kind of dissident behaviour. The Egyptian case – at least until 2014 and the rise to power of general Abdel Fattah al-Sisi – is interesting in this regard; firstly because it sheds light on the weaknesses of such authoritarian regimes and secondly because it allows for a first-hand analysis of the development of large-scale mobilization. However, when contentious collective action develops in authoritarian contexts, a central question that emerges is that of the (in)stability and sustainability of the democratic process. The political system in Egypt, since the abdication of King Farouk in 1952, has been a succession of authoritarian rules. The large-scale popular uprisings of 2011 opened a whole range of possibilities, allowing different segments of society to come together, express themselves and envisage their future for the first time in decades.

13   When studying collective action, it is valuable to characterize the form of mobilization that is being observed in a certain context. To this end, James C. Scott's concept of infrapolitics encompasses the wide variety of acts, gestures and thoughts that are not quite political enough to be perceived as such (1999:183). In the case of collective action, infrapolitics can refer to forms of mobilization that do not fit into the main classifications of political action. That is to say it can also include certain forms of participation that imply a degree of collectiveness but that do not fall into the category of social movements. Originally, such politics was made up of a number of small actions, a day-to-day politics that avoided dangerous risks; a politics for those living in autocratic settings, for the peasantry and the poor. Though made up of thousands of small acts, this form of infrapolitics had the potential to become an enormous aggregate consequence (Scott 2012:113). The concept has since been borrowed and expanded so as to include a wider variety of acts of resistance and/or protest which, for the most part, do not enter the classic realm of "politics" but whose messages or consequences are highly political.

14   Indeed, certain infrapolitical forms of mobilization do not enter the category of "failed movements" or "movements-to-be", even though they perform a certain symbolic form of critique and resistance (Marche 2012: 5). That is to say that certain acts of mobilization, such as street art, cannot be analysed in the same way as lobbying actions, or political campaigns or demonstrations organised by trade unions or established social movements. Infrapolitical acts, such as the use of graffiti as a means of expression, operate beneath the boundaries of political detectability, which makes them reliable vehicles of resistance. Infrapolitical forms of resistance can thus be central in authoritarian contexts because these "offstage discursive practices are continually pressing against the limit of what is permitted onstage, much as a body of water might press against a dam" (Scott 1990:196). Among these "alternate" channels of mobilization, one can list the use of street art, or the use of the stadium – at least in the early days of the uprisings – as efficiently expressing a

resentment towards the ruling regime, without these acts being considered alarming by the regime authorities.

15   Infrapolitics is of particular interest in the Egyptian case. Because the population is deprived of legitimate channels of expression, the different active groups do not express their grievances in a conventional way, favouring other channels of mobilization aiming at challenging the status quo and/or making a claim for dignity. This is the case of the Ultras groups whose activities mostly centre on football and their club, however their acts – especially during and in the aftermath of the uprisings – can be perceived as highly political. These groups share the common idea that their social and political reality, whether linked to their activities as supporters or to the events unfolding (such as the Egyptian uprisings or the events of Port Said), could be changed through mobilization. Their mobilization takes on several forms, but mostly translates into the use of chants, slogans and, more importantly, graffiti. The use of alternate tools of mobilization, and unconventional ways of expressing opinions and grievances raises the question of whether to address these forms of mobilization as politically explicit without their means being qualified as "political", or as practices which are not political either in terms of content or means (Marche 2012: 4).

16   What is more, one of the key components in the modern interpretation of infrapolitics is the question of anonymity. When the social actor is able to conceal his identity, whether by acting in the shadows or within an undistinctive mass, his voice, and message(s) can be clearer and sharper (Scott 2012). In the Ultras' case, the use of graffiti as a means of protest is – among other motives linked to their activities as a group – essentially motivated by the fact that it guarantees a space for the voicing of grievances, concerns, opinions when most of the other channels of expression are blocked, as well as because it preserves the individual's identity while affirming his/her allegiance to a particular and identifiable group.

17   Scott's infrapolitical model of resistance is useful to account for the different forms of mobilization that do not enter the traditional models of collective action and social movements, as well as to understand the Ultras' mobilization within the framework of their supporting activities. However, it is not sufficient to clarify and explain the multiple dynamics unravelling within these different groups outside of stadium grounds, and particularly as of the moment they left the stadium and reclaimed the street in the early days of the Revolution. Accordingly, Asef Bayat's concept of "street politics" is interesting in this sense, mainly because it is concerned with everyday modes of resistance, and allows an examination of the "*the dynamics of free-form activism, to describe the politics of informal people and the dis-enfranchised*" (Bayat 1997, 55-56). Certain forms of "street politics" allow for an examination of the way people resist beyond the usual channels of contentious politics (marches, sit-ins, massive protests, etc.). This concept is particularly suitable for addressing the Ultras' mobilization during the uprisings and after the closure of stadium grounds (following the events of Port Said), as well as their rapport with figures of authority, as we will see how these groups "*carry out their activities not as conscious political acts*", but "[they] *are driven by force of necessity — the necessity to survive and live a dignified life*" (Bayat 1997:57).

18   The element of space in contentious politics distinguishes it from other forms of resistance such as sit-ins or strikes, mainly because streets are not only where people protest, but also where they extend their protest beyond their immediate circle (Bayat 2009:167). For this reason, one finds a wide range of actors including the "marginalized" –

the unemployed and the poor[9] – as well as other actors such as students, women, state employees, artists, whose presence on the street is designed to enhance their struggle. It is the wide spreading of protest that threatens authorities who make use of violence and intimidation over these spaces – spatial division, police patrols, and anti-riot squadrons (2009:167). This tactic of encircling and using intimidation and violence is frequently used during football matches against the Ultras, mainly to supersede the potential of expansion to other people present in the stadium. By refusing to withdraw themselves from social and political stages that were controlled by the regime authorities, these groups of social actors generated and discovered new spaces to voice their dissent. In such settings, the street becomes the ultimate arena to communicate discontent and grievances (Bayat 2013:12).

19   But more than just centred on conflict, streets are also spaces of flow and movement, where identities are forged and solidarities enlarged (Bayat 2013:13). So space does not simply serve as a stage for contentious collective action, it also shapes its patterns and resolutions. In this context, the *political street* (also known as the "Arab Street"),[10] denotes the "collective sentiments, shared feelings, and public opinions of ordinary people in [their daily] practices that are expressed broadly in public spaces – in taxis, buses and shops, on street sidewalks, or in mass street demonstrations" (Bayat 2013:14). The concept of *political street* and *street politics* will also be applied to other public spaces than the physicality of the street and the *midan*, in the form of the walls and their use by street artists. Indeed graffiti, much like the physical presence on the street, are efficient ways of utilizing public space to convey a message and take possession of a given territory in an act of protest.

20   As we will see in the following sections of this paper, the Ultras were able to adapt their mobilization processes and tools to overcome the stadium ban and police repression by reclaiming other spaces than their prime spaces of mobilization, namely the stadium. By reclaiming the street and the walls of the different cities – not only those surrounding stadium grounds – the Ultras took possession of these areas and made them their own, thus expanding the conception of contentious politics and the ways by which they are implemented on the ground.

From stadium to street: the Ultras' mobilization processes

> Being an Ultra is more than football. Being an Ultra means you respect the code and live by it. ⌧…⌧ Being an Ultra is about loving football, your team and your people. You know…we look out for each other.[11]

21   The first Ultras movement appeared in Italy in the late 1960s, established by a union of workers who wanted to denounce the shortcomings of the commercialisation of football (Louis 2008; Armstrong; Testa 2010). Although originally influenced by the British model of hooliganism, manifested as a sort of extension of the working class (Roversi; Balestri 2000: 187), the Italian model was closer to the anti-system youth movements of the 1960s and 1970s, engaged in demonstrations, thus encouraging the Ultras movements to adopt the same modes of action and forms of organisation (Balestri; Podaliri 1998).

22   The first Egyptian Ultras groups started forming in the early 2000s via the Internet and through forums before emerging as distinctive organisations in 2007, based on the Italian model (Beshir 2011). Other forms of organized support existed prior to the establishment

of the Ultras. Until the end of the 1990s, Egyptian football fans were known as Tersos, derived from the Italian word Terzo, meaning "Three". In Egypt, Terso came to refer to the fans from lower social classes who could only afford to buy third-class tickets to see the games (El-Zatmah 2012: 801).

23   Appearing as early as the 1920s, the Terso fans shaped Egyptian football with their chants and songs, making football an integral part of Egyptian national culture (El-Zatmah 2012). The Terso fan-base consisted of a rather homogenous social group with regards to age and gender, and cultivated a non-violent culture of support, as opposed to their Latin American and Northern European counterparts, whose hooligan fan culture was largely rooted in violence, particularly during the 1970s and 1980s (El-Zatmah 2012).[12] The Terso phenomenon started to disappear at the beginning of the 1980s, mainly due to worsening socio-economic conditions of the lower classes, making it challenging for the fans to buy tickets. The worsening economic conditions, coupled with the rise of greater gender segregation measures limiting the presence and participation of women in the public sphere (brought forth by the rising Islamisation of the culture),[13] contributed to the third-class ticket seats to be mostly dominated by young males who would later come to form the Ultras (El-Zatmah 2012: 802).

24   The changing structure of football fandom in Egypt at the end of the 1990s, beginning of the 2000s, was a reflection of both a wider socio-economic and cultural change in the country, characterised by the rise of neoliberal policies, growing unemployment rates, and an amplification of social inequalities (immiseration of the middle class, and an upsurge of people living on less than two dollars a day),[14] as well as a change brought forth by the development of the Internet and the development of social media channels such as Facebook, and Twitter.[15]

25   Different pro-democracy movements started to emerge and formulate demands (Abdelrahman 2012). These new movements, and especially movements such as *Kefaya*,[16] were the first movements to transcend ideological divides and overcome this "general state of political apathy" (Hosseinoun 2015: 43). By breaking the taboo usually associated with contentious practices, *Kefaya* opened up new possibilities for contentious collective action in Egypt (El-Shorbagy 2007).

26   In this context of socio-economic unrest and burgeoning contentious action,[17] the Egyptian youth – the *shabab* – found itself directly affected by the lack of job opportunities related to their fields of specialisation and qualification, forcing them to seek and accept low paid, precarious and temporary "odd jobs". Accordingly, it does not seem surprising that the Ultras groups started to appear at the same time as these activist groups, the youth finding in football a way to express and channel their disillusionment and frustration with their situations (El-Zatmah 2012).

27   The social profile of the Ultras is widely representative of the demographics of the Egyptian youth. Aged between 15 and 35 years old, they sweep through all social classes of society, though a large portion of their members belong to the upper classes of Egyptian society, unlike their European counterparts (Hourcade 2000; El-Zatmah 2012; Lebrun 2013).[18] What is more, many Ultras – regardless of social class – are well educated and carry a University degree or are currently pursuing studies, as a result of the free education system for public schools in Egypt, the private system being more expensive (Cupito; Langsten 2011).[19] So the main issue for these young Egyptians resides in the imposed set of goals to achieve and norms to respect according to their social status and qualifications. They feel like they are expected to live up to society's standards without

being given the tools nor the means to properly respond (Abdelrahman 2012). In this sense, certain sections of the youth find in their commitment to the Ultras groups an opportunity to counter the denigration. The Ultras groups in this context, represent an outlet for their frustrations, a way to escape the realities of their daily lives.

28   The Ultras groups' organizational chart is said to work "horizontally" by its members, in order to preserve the logic of sharing and equal participation of each member. However, a hierarchy does exist, so as to guarantee a flowing and coordinated strategy. UA and UWK differ slightly in certain ways, however their overall structure is very similar. The Ultras groups organize around leaders, or *kabos* (their numbers vary according to the group), which is the most prestigious position as they act as choreography coordinators during the matches, as well as manage the daily running of the group and settle important issues. They are helped and supported by the section leaders – also called *qaïd* (commander) or *raïs* (president) – who relay and apply decisions within their local sections. Section leaders and kabos meet when important decisions regarding activities and dakhalat need to be made. In some groups (such as UWK), there is a distinction between the sections from outside the capital (known as sections), and those from Cairo, known as *dawla* (states). The rest of the members are known as "active Ultras".[20]

29   The Ultras' identity is deeply rooted in football and is revealed most frequently during the games, but is not limited to the sporting arena. Ultras Ahlawy and Ultras White Knights were the first groups to appear in Egypt and became the two largest and most visible organizations in the country (Dunmore 2007; Mazhar 2009). Their activities are focused on the club and the support for their respective teams and are aimed at inspiring a sense of belonging among the supporters, impressing spectators with the flare shows and the chants, and intimidating rival teams' supporters.

30   Football supporters, and Ultras in particular, may resort to violence in cases of "self-defense", notably when they are being hassled by the police at the end of football matches due to their use of flares and "politically incorrect" slogans (Beshir 2012:36). Police forces routinely arrest supporters the night before the game for "questioning", to ensure that they do not represent a threat to "national security" and release them the day after, sometimes in bad shape (Beshir 2012; Lebrun 2013). Their use of violence is not only limited to self-defense. Some of the more "hard-core" fans customarily organize "street fights" with rival supporter clubs bringing their activities closer to those of traditional hooligans.[21]

The stadium, prime space of the Ultras' mobilization

31   Focusing on the Ultras groups as social actors who traditionally tend to "steer clear of the political world",[22] enables the observation of new dynamics of interaction between these different groups in authoritarian contexts, thus bringing the concept of activism to the forefront of discussion. The Ultras of Cairo provides a good case study for the analysis of the "*the dynamics that occur outside formal groups*" (Aarts; Cavatorta 2011: 3), understood as social movements, trade-unions, organized movements such as the Muslim Brothers, etc.

32   A special emphasis is to be put on the role of space in the formation of collective identity, particularly when studying groups such as the football supporters. Fernando Bosco (2001) argues that "*place-based collective rituals*" serve to maintain social network cohesion both spatially and symbolically. Places that are collectively identified as meaningful to the cause become symbols to build and maintain existing network connections (see also

Leach; Haunss 2009; Creasap 2012). The concept of territory and public space is closely related to the Ultras and their activities. As was noted earlier, Egypt's authoritarian rule and the overbearing presence of control mechanisms reduced public space considerably through extensive surveillance techniques and physical intimidation and abuse (Ismail 2012). The stadium and its surroundings on the one hand, and the walls surrounding the stadia and Tahrir square on the other, became virtual spaces of freedom and autonomy for the Ultras groups where the frustrations of humiliation and abuse could be channelled (figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1. No SCAF (Supreme Council of the Armed Forces).
Source: Kingfut.

Figure 2. ACAB (All Cops Are Bastards).
Source: UA07.

Figure 3. Zamalek stadium, Cairo, May 2012.

Figure 4. Anti-media (Ultras White Knights), Zamalek Stadium, 2012.

33   As stated above, the stadium, in contexts like Egypt, can be used as a space of freedom and dissidence allowing the people to voice certain opinions and grievances. From the outset of their supporting activities, the Ultras made use of the stadium not only to express their support for their team (figure 3), but also to express their disapproval of the figures of authority (club managers, the media, the police, the Ministry of Interior), may it be by using tifos (displays and banners, as well as choreographies), or by drawing graffiti on the walls surrounding the stadium (figure 4). In the first days of the Revolution, the stadia and their walls were used to send messages of unity as well as to

denounce the violence used against the protesters. After the events of Port Said however, the stadium was off-limits to the public, including the Ultras, giving their mobilization a new impetus.[23]

Port Said, a defining moment in the Ultras' mobilization

34   On 1 February 2012, 74 Ahly fans were killed in what was presented as a *"riot between football fans gone wrong"*.[24] The Ultras interpret the Port Said clashes as a kind of vendetta on the part of the security forces for t the Ultras' participation in the Revolution. Following the events, massive protests erupted in Cairo and around the country, with people blaming the security forces for the deadly violence. Ultras in Egypt have always had a difficult and "dysfunctional" relationship with the security forces. Many of them, as well as an abundant portion of the protesters, believe the Port Said clashes to be a way for the security forces – and by extension, the government – to take revenge for the supporters' participation in the uprisings (Gibril 2015).

35   More than just a "football riot", Port Said represents a breaking point in two ways. First, it reveals a change in the involvement of the Ultras in the large-scale mobilization. While their participation was undeniable in the first days of the uprisings, it was limited to a passive engagement. Their presence in Tahrir Square was specifically aimed at defending the protesters against police brutality. It is essential to bear in mind that the Ultras were not one of the leading forces of the movement, merely responding to a call from the organizing social movements, namely Kefaya and the 6th of April Movement, as well as the administrators of the "Kullena Khaled Said" Facebook page. After Port Said, their involvement as a group became clearer, essentially because they had a common issue and message to carry out to the regime: justice for the fallen of Port Said. What is more, in a gesture of solidarity and support towards the Ultras groups, many "civilians"[25] took part in the demonstrations, some going as far as joining the Ultras groups as full members.[26]

36   Secondly, the forced shutting of the stadiums to the general public – including the Ultras – after the deadly events, forced the supporter groups to find other spaces and ways to express their grievances; spaces that most notably included the street (as regards the demonstrations against the regime after the events), the walls surrounding the various stadiums, the walls of the different major cities in Egypt, as well as through the use of songs tackling the issue of martyrdom and the injustice of the events.

Constructing protest through image: The Ultras and their graffiti

37   Street art, or the art of graffiti, has been considered by social scientists as an efficient tool of expression, particularly in areas where political activism and resistance is difficult. For instance, the act of writing on walls was quite common in East Germany, in Northern Ireland and in the Palestinian territories (Rolston 1987; Peteet 1996; Crettiez 2014). In the Palestinian case, most notably, the analysis focused on the ability of street art to strengthen communities, unravel power relations within specific socio-political contexts such as the Intifada (Peteet 1996), as a form of political discourse and as a means of resistance (Bseiso 2017). More recent works on street art in Palestine have mainly focused

on the ways in which graffiti is utilized to access a more international space and network in order to promote a dialogue with a more international audience (Toenjes 2015).

38   In the Egyptian case, there was a notable lack of academic work on street art prior to the uprisings though some pieces could be found on the aesthetics and stylistic features of Arabic graffiti and "street graphics" (Dawson 2003), as well as some rare articles on blogs and, exceptionally, in newspapers. This gap implies that the study of street art only came to fame in the aftermath of the Egyptian Revolution, becoming the main object of a number of graphic books (Gröndahl 2012; Zeitouna 2012; Helmy 2013; Euverte 2015), essays and magazine articles, as well as documentaries (see for example, Marco Wilms' "Art War" 2014). The increase of such research allowed for different levels of analysis including the different art trends in post-Revolutionary Egypt (Carle; Huguet 2015; Abaza 2016), the representation of martyrs and the discussion of the concept of martyrdom in the creation of collective memory (Sharaf 2015). One of the most recurring themes however, is the understanding of graffiti and street art as a tool of political struggle and dissent (Khatib 2013). In the context of the Egyptian Revolution, graffiti – and its space – included the dimension of resistance in addition to the act of transgressing the rules. Some authors have suggested that its visibility somewhat extended the public space, creating a "subversive sphere" where people could express their opinions, grievances, discontent, anger, distrust, and/or nostalgia (Abaza 2016; Fahmi 2009; Nicoaerea 2014).

39   Before the uprisings, the Ultras were the prime utilizers of graffiti, using it to mark their territory, declare their allegiance to their club, criticize their rivals, as well as oppose the Ministry of Interior, the police and club owners.[27] In the next sections, we will focus on the Ultras' use of street art with regard to two main themes that have become central in their mobilization and identification processes: their rapport with figures of authority, and the figure of the martyr.

The Ultras' rapport to figures of authority

40   The police, or *dakhlyyia*,[28] and security forces in Egypt are to be distinguished from the army. While the army was credited by the population for restoring stability to the country after the ousting of Mubarak in the wake of the uprisings[29] (Karawan 2011: 45), the police's role was that of the oppressor and the physical representative of the Ministry of Interior. In Egypt, the police act not only as the organization in charge of public security but first and foremost as an agent of the government. In addition to ensuring public and national security, the police's power covers other areas, such as the market, transport, roads, taxation and public morality (Ismail 2012). The Egyptian police apparatus is, by design, intrusive, abusive and violent. The organizational chart of Egypt's Ministry of Interior is quite revealing with regard to the extensive remit of the police's monitoring and surveillance as well as the degree of specialization and complexity of its departments (Ismail 2012).

41   This intrusiveness can be attributable to several political factors that have aided the police in consolidating their power, notably the role it was assigned in repressing the Islamist opposition, dating back to the 1950s and 1960s. Another important factor was the state's decision to withdraw from certain welfare provisions and its promotion of neo-liberal economic policies, which led to the development of an informal labour market as well as the privatization of social services (Ismail 2012). Both these factors resulted not only in the heightening of security controls, but also, and more importantly, it reinforced

the existing corrupt system. In addition to serving the interests of the ruling elite, the security forces developed their own corrupt culture, instating a system of bribes and placing what is known as "plain-clothes" policemen – civilians hired by police and security forces to collect information – in neighbourhoods under the pretence of ensuring stability and peace (Abdelrahman 2015). To do so without raising suspicion[30], the police usually position their undercover informants in local communities by providing them with a vending kiosk or by appointing them to the *carta* system, shuttle buses and vans.

42   One key component of the Ultras' identity is this intrinsic opposition to police and security forces. This relationship structures their motives for mobilization as well as reinforces their sense of belonging to the Ultras as a group. The Ultras' clashes with the police are cultivated in a long history of violent encounters, of humiliations (the police often use the expression "*ya walad*" meaning "you boy", closely related to the reference to "boy" used during the segregationist period in the United States) and harassment (Ismail 2012). The feeling of anger and humiliation is an important feature of the relationship between the Ultras and the police, as it contributes to the development of a sense of injustice, which in turn encourages an upsurge of violence against police forces and shapes the supporters' identity ("I am an Ultra, and as an Ultra, I am opposed to any kind of figure of authority") (Gibril 2015: 313):

> When one of us is attacked, the whole group is attacked. We don't use our fists unless we have to. With the police, we have to be violent because they always attack us […] we have to defend ourselves and our colours. It's in our values: "always sacrifice for the group". That's what we do. What am I supposed to do?! Say "no I can't fight because I'm going to shock your grandmother?" It doesn't work like that. When the group needs you, you immediately react.[31]

43   Different tools are used to express this opposition, outside of the clashes that take place in and around stadium grounds on game day. Besides their use of graffiti, which will be discussed below, the Ultras resort a lot to using slogans, chants and songs to express their hatred and contempt for police and security forces, may it be through the proliferation of slogans such as "ACAB [All Cops Are Bastards]" or through the extensive use of flares and *shamarikh* which are normally prohibited in the stands. It is also quite common to find song lyrics referencing the police, the regime and the security forces, accusing them of high-jacking freedom and cultivating a climate of repression, as in the case of Ultras White Knights' song "*Shams el Horreya* [Sun of Freedom]":

"*Shams el Horreya*" [Sun of Freedom]	Ultras White Knights (Zamalek)[32]
Gozo' fi 'aqleyyti ma fehemhoush el <u>t</u> oghaah	A part of my thinking [is] not understood by the oppressors
Qalou shor<u>t</u>ah fi khedmet sha'ab konna e <u>h</u>na el 'abeed	They said "police at the service of the people" [but] we were the slaves
Qatalouna wa katamou si <u>s</u>outna belnar wel<u>h</u>adeed	They killed us and silenced us with fire and iron
Gahala welqam' <u>h</u>ayat hom wa khayalhom maree<u>d</u>	Ignorance and oppression is their life and they have sick minds

| Eqtel wa sgen eeh el gedeed ebny segounak 'aleeha | Kill and imprison, what is new, build your prisons, make them high |

Figure 5. Ultras White Knights, "They have sick minds" Zamalek stadium, 2013.

Figure 6. Ahly stadium, 2013.

44   In their graffiti, figures of authority – regularly represented by the police officer – are often depicted in seemingly humiliating postures such as here in figure 5. The police officer is represented as a ballerina, revealing an apparent lack of masculinity accompanied by the quote '*They have sick minds*', referring to their weakness and deviant ways. The idea here is not to open a debate on the issues of gender in Egypt, however it is important to bear in mind that Egypt remains a very conservative society in which any effeminate behaviour is strongly frowned upon and criticized. What is more, "being gay" and being identified as "gay" is a powerful insult, especially with regard to men's behaviours. Still, in this case, the portrayal of the police figures as "being gay" is to be understood in opposition with the Ultras groups who describe themselves as the epitome of masculinity, toughness and resistance to these figures of authority. By using the cultural reference of "homosexuality" and "effeminacy", they show their supremacy and their lack of fear towards what is supposed to be the physical representation of the Law.

45   However, a particular mural painted by the Ultras representing two cops kissing (in reference to the Banksy stencil) created a few issues and was altered quite quickly.

Figure 7. "Cops are Gays": center of Cairo, 2013.

Figure 8. "Homophobia is not revolutionary", Cairo 2013.

46   The two policemen in figure 7 were painted at the same time as the "Never Forget" in reference to Port Said. The message here, *'Cops are Gays'*, is another attempt to undermine the authorities by associating them with what they interpret as being a "weak and effeminate" figure, with deviant ways, hence utilizing, once more, the gender rhetoric to mock and ridicule the figures of authority. This particular graffiti was quickly replaced by the mural shown in figure 8, stating *'Homophobia is not revolutionary'* thus hindering this homophobic and gender biased repertoire. The replacement of this particular mural was not the act of Ultra graffiti artists, the use of gender-biased tropes being an important element of the Ultras' identification and oppositional process ("we, the virile and powerful against them, the effeminate and weak").

Figure 9. "We hear your fear", Zamalek stadium, 2013.

Figure 10. "All Cops Are Bastards — The time of silence has ended", Zamalek stadium, 2013.

47 Ultras also show their opposition to figures of authority by intimidating them either by letting them know they are aware of their fear of Ultras as a group (figure 9), or by portraying them as smaller and weaker than them. Figure 10 is quite representative of this idea that the Ultras – as a group – are by far stronger and braver than the police forces. This idea is supported by the use of the acronym 'ACAB' (All Cops Are Bastards)

and the quote that reads '*the time of silence has ended*'. It is also emphasized by the police officer being held in a dominated posture and shedding a tear of fear at the sight of his attacker (an Ultra).

48   For a great majority of their existence, the Ultras' repertoire regarding graffiti was limited to the glorification of the club and team, with a special emphasis on provoking and insulting the police forces. This was not only limited to the murals, it was also an essential part of their supporter paraphernalia (banners, scarves, chants, slogans and songs).

The Ultras and the concept of martyrdom

49   The Egyptian uprising and its aftermath were characterized by a number of violent events such as the Battle of the Camel on 2 February 2011, the clashes of Mohammed Mahmoud Street in November 2011, or the Port Said massacre of 2 February 2012. The question that arises then is who becomes a martyr, and who is simply dead? Martyrdom is defined as giving one's life for a cause, a better state of affairs, and simultaneously it can be about one's fate in the afterlife. Yet, the "martyr label" is only assigned post factum (Mittermaier 2015: 588).

50   Katherine Verdery suggests that the true symbolic and political power of the dead lies specifically in the interpretive malleability and ambiguity of their meaning (Verdery 2004: 306), thus becoming a powerful tool of mobilization for the living. The images of their wounds, bruises and dead bodies are crucial in the ritualization process of martyrs. They act as a powerful reminder of the sacrifices that were made in the name of a greater good as well as raise the question of what these young people died for (Armbrust 2013). Martyrs can also be objects of admiration or even role models and heroes, thus contributing to the development of a revolutionary ideal.

51   After Port Said, the issue of martyrdom became very central to the Ultras-related practices, most notably their slogans, graffiti and demands. A wide variety of graffiti emerged on the walls of the stadia around the country, but more significantly, the faces of the different martyrs started to appear on the walls surrounding Tahrir and Mohammed Mahmoud Street, mostly aided by some prominent graffiti artists such as Ganzeer, Ammar Abu Bakr and Alaa Awad (Abaza 2016).

52   A whole new series of graffiti, slogans and designs started to integrate the Ultras mobilization registry after the Port Said events. Among them, the notorious "Brotherhood in Blood" which appeared on the walls of Cairo (and Egypt as a whole) soon after the events, epitomizing the peace agreement that had been negotiated between the two biggest rival clubs, al-Ahly and Zamalek.

Figure 11. "Brotherhood in blood", AUC, April 2013.

53   The colours used here are a reference to both football clubs, Al-Ahly and Zamalek, although some Ultras give them a special meaning: the red stands for the bloodshed, the black refers to the colour of grief, and the white stands for both the unity of all Ultras groups and the purity of the message.[33] The concept of "brotherhood in blood" refers to the unity between the members of the various Ultras groups, whether friend or foe, as well as to the support given to the families and friends of the martyrs. One of the leaders of the Ultras White Knights (Zamalek) explains that as an Ultra, *"you are connected to all Ultras of the world. When a group is attacked, it is the entire Ultra identity that is attacked ... no matter which team you support. In these moments, we are all linked to each other. We fight together".*[34]

Figure 12. "Shahid", Ahly stadium.

Figure 13. "Never Forget",Ahly Stadium, 2013.

54 Another important set of imagery to make its way into the mobilization tools and processes of the Ultras was the "Never Forget" along with the number 74, referencing and remembering the Port Said events and the number of victims. They are often portrayed together, and sometimes, as shown in figure 13, one can find the names of the different martyrs, as well as the signature emblem of the Ahlawy Ultras (as shown in figure 12). Not only did they integrate the graffiti registry, but also the tifos, banners and songs, all essential elements of the Ultras mobilization paraphernalia.

Figure 14. "Martyrs", Mohammed Mahmoud, 2012.

Figure 15. Al-Naaehaat (The mourning women), Mohammed Mahmoud, 2012.

55   Finally, and maybe in the most significant way, the concept of martyrdom was epitomized by the faces of the Ultras – among others – painted on the walls of Mohammed Mahmoud, also known unofficially as *sharei' uyuun al-huriyyah* (the street of the eyes of freedom[35]) (Abaza 2013). These can be found in many different forms: in some case represented abstractly as a winged angel figure, one of graffiti artist Ammar Abu Bakr's trademarks. They are sometimes accompanied by a quote such as Kaizer's "The meaning of life is that you give it [to life] a meaning" (Abaza 2013: 3). In other representations, the martyrs are portrayed realistically, surrounded by wings, flowers and black ribbons.

56   The "al-Ahly Ultras" murals are mostly multi-artist graffiti painted by Ultras members and well-established graffiti artists such as Abu Bakr, Ganzeer, or Alaa Awad. They gather a complex amount of works by several artists simultaneously, reflecting the continuous evolution of the graffiti. In figure 14, in the upper-left corner is an image an Ahly Ultra (recognizable by the "UA" on his red shirt). Underneath him, a partial fresco by Ultras artist, "Khaled". One can decipher the explosion of a firework (used by the supporters during football matches) pointed towards a military man, represented as a demonic figure with sharp nails and teeth, accentuating the dichotomy between "good and evil". Around the Ultras figure are portraits of the other martyrs, including those of Mohamed Nasser Hector and Mahmoud Soliman, two civilians killed in the Port Said massacre.

57   Figure 15, is Alaa Awad's *Al-Naaehaat*, or the "Mourning Women" of ancient Egypt, a fresco depicting a funeral scene where these women are accompanying the sarcophagus into the afterlife. This particular scene can be found a little further away from the portraits of figure 8, symbolizing the author's desire to commemorate the fallen. According to Awad, the artist, the women on the upper part of the mural represent the muses receiving the ascending souls of the martyrs. The black flowers represent Lotus flowers and are a sign of great sorrow. Finally the tiger-like figure is a symbol of anger for the 74 victims who died in Port Said (Abaza 2016).

Conclusion

58   The objective of this paper was to examine the different spaces favoured by the Ultras, namely the stadium and the walls, within the general framework of collective action. By focusing on the Ultras' graffiti in particular, we aimed at understanding their mobilization processes within a given space, most notably by analysing their rapport with figures of authority as well as the ways by which the concept of martyrdom was integrated into their paraphernalia. Drawing on James Scott's concept of infrapolitics and Asef Bayat's concept of politically charged acts by ordinary actors, this article further aimed at highlighting the Ultras' capacity to operationalize and use graffiti and street art to express a series of grievances without associating themselves with the conventional forms of political dissent such as social movements.

59   Throughout the paper, it was shown that Ultras groups cultivate a difficult relation to the different figures of authority, most notably with the police with whom they share a long history of violence and confrontation. By analysing their graffiti, we were able to distinguish certain recurring themes and messages including those of weakness, insults (the reference to "all cops are bastards"), stupidity (the portrayal of the police force as an animal such as a pig or monkey, revealing their "intellectual limitations"), and more strikingly, a reference to effeminacy and homosexuality (the portrayal of police officers as ballerinas or as being gay). This last topic is particularly interesting as it opens up a whole new debate on the issue of gender in Egypt; an issue that would deserve further study, not only with regard to the feminine figure in the revolutionary register, but more importantly the use of feminine and/or homosexual imagery in the development of an oppositional discourse, within Ultras groups and society as a whole.

60   It was further emphasized that the stadium, in this configuration, acted as the grounds for the development of a space of resistance; a space that was subtracted from powerful state control. While most of their actions within the stadium were aimed at supporting their teams, this space contributed to building and strengthening their identity by allowing them to express themselves in ways that were not tolerated anywhere else. In this sense, football and the stadium enabled the Ultras to free themselves from institutional norms and oppose the general context of control. Indeed, by continuously challenging and positioning themselves against state regulations, the Ultras were able to efficiently turn the stadium and its surroundings into unique spaces allowing for the (relatively) free expression of opinions and grievances.

61   After the events of Port Said, and the subsequent stadium ban, the Ultras turned to other spaces and tools of mobilization, including the graffiti. And while their messages prior to Port Said mainly targeted figures of authority in general, their messages after the events mainly focused on condemning and denouncing the regime and the security forces for the deaths. Much like the stadium, the arts (street art, music, dance and theatre) can be understood as efficient means to bypass state repression and create alternative spaces of expression and contention. This became all the more relevant at a time when the Ultras' prime space of mobilization was off-limits to them. What is more, the centrality of martyrdom and the figure of the martyr in their art, reveals the centrality of emotions in their repertoires of action, as well as establishes art as alternative ways of thinking and performing protest and contention.

62 Following the events of Port Said, both their street art and music were focused on the idea of provocation and impact with the purpose of generating a reaction from the audience. By focusing on the register of martyrdom – as opposed to their more general topics such as their club, their anti-corporate or their anti-media stances – we were able to associate the Ultras' mobilisation with the creation of sacralised spaces of remembrance, whether through image or sound. Port Said brought on a shift in the messages and themes used in the Ultras' graffiti and street art (as well as the rest of their paraphernalia – their slogans, chants, songs, and banners). This revealed a whole new dimension of their identity, one that was closely related to death and the remembrance of the martyrs. The 2012-2013 period witnessed a proliferation of winged portraits, poems and messages demanding justice, not only emanating from the Ultras groups, but also coming from established graffiti artists. The use of these martyr figures is quite revealing of what Verdery calls the "powerful tool of mobilization for the living". These Ahlawy (supporters of al-Ahly club) martyrs have been risen to the status of 'heroes of the Revolution', thus giving the Ultras a positive image and contributing to the development of an "idealization" of these groups in revolutionary collective memory.

63 One question still remains however: what makes the graffiti a distinct place of contention and what happens once these murals are destroyed and erased? How do these spaces of contention evolve and subsist to this day? These questions are difficult to answer as they are being posed at a particular moment that does not give the retrospection allowed by the passage of time. However, certain elements can be identified, most notably two. Firstly, graffiti art, by its nature, avoids – at least partially – the overbearing control of the regime that has obstructed the activities of many social movements and organizations. Its rapid growth and diversification, paired with the relative anonymity it guarantees made it one of the most efficient ways to communicate in the first days of the revolution, not to mention its capacity to document and relate all important events unfolding fast. In the aftermath of the uprisings, street art served as a reminder of past events, as well as an efficient medium of remembrance; it served as an efficient way of memorializing resistance. Secondly, the graffiti of the Egyptian Revolution benefitted from large-scale publicisation and diffusion of the works, noticeably by virtue of the sharing and distributing on social media as well as through the publication of several graphic novels dedicated to the documentation of these murals, not to mention the increased research conducted on the significance of graffiti in the studies of contentious politics and resistance. Because of this attention and wide distribution of pictures, these murals enjoy a certain kind of immortality and continuity that defies the boundaries set by the Egyptian regime.

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NOTES

1. Mostly through the organisation of labour strikes, demonstrations and sit-ins, especially after 2004. See for example, Beinin; Vairel 2013).

2. The use of these terms was very common among the protesters and the Ultras. The 2011 uprisings represent that moment in time where they "took control over their future".

3. "Ultras" should not be confused with "hooligans" as they are based on two very different models. the British model – hooliganism – is characterised by a strong sense of group cohesion with no durable commitment outside the stadium itself, and is particularly distinguished by a culture of violence and confrontations with rival groups (Giulianotti 1999; Dunning 2000; Giulianotti; Armstrong 2002); the Italian model on the other hand – the Ultra phenomenon, is characterised by a strong sense of community, solid organisational ties, and elaborated carnivalesque displays in the stadium (Dal Lago; De Biasi 1994). What is more, their use of violence is seen as means rather than an end, as "a tool among others" (Roversi; Balestri 2000: 188). In other words, though both currents rely on violence, the Ultras tend to use it in a spirit of "self-defense" rather than as one of the central tools of their mobilisation.

4. The Port Said events refer to the deaths of 74 al Ahly fans during a match opposing Cairo's al Ahly and Port Said's al Masry. For more details on the unravelling of the events, see subsequent section in this paper, "Port Said, a defining moment in the Ultras' mobilization".

5. The concept of "nonmovement" was coined by Asef Bayat to define the large number of citizen groups that did not fall into the category of social movements, understood as the "organized, sustained, self-conscious challenge to existing authorities" (Bayat 2013: 20). Nonmovements tend to be action-driven rather than ideologically driven, as well as they do not have clear leader. Even though the Ultras tend to be hierarchal and organized (the *kabos* being their "centres of authority"), their activities are mainly driven by direct action rather than ideological influence, as well as they have no desire to influence the political decision making process. For more information on this particular concept, see Bayat 2013.

6. Most of the Ultras' use of the stadium before the 2011 uprisings was aimed at mocking the opposing team as well as provoking the police and security forces present in the stadium. These "teasing rituals" made use of flares, slogans and chants ridiculing their enemies (police and opposing team). For further information on the role of the stadium as a space of socialisation, see Bromberger *et al.* 2002; Hourcade 2000.

7. This law included certain articles that limited the opposition's actions thus preventing the new parties from conducting their activities until the approval was granted by the regime – a lengthy process more often than not resulting in a rejection (Khatib 2013). The law was notably used for the elections of October 2010 in which Mubarak's party got 95 percent of the seats, alienating the population.

8. Paraphrasing Asef Bayat (2003; 2009).

9. Both categories were coined by Asef Bayat in his study of the "poor-people's" movement in Iran. These categories include the underprivileged classes of Iran. We have included the Ultras in the "marginalized" category mainly because the Ultras members themselves categorize themselves as marginalized and part of this "disillusioned youth" directly affected by the lack of

job opportunities and seeking refuge in various channels that allow them to express their frustrations.

10. Before the Arab uprisings, the term "Arab street" often referred to "a reified and essentially 'abnormal' mind-set, as well as a strange place filled with angry people who, whether because they hate us or just don't understand us, must shout imprecations against us [...] Arab or other Muslim actions are described almost exclusively in terms of 'mobs, riots, revolts'" (see Satloff 2002; Bayat 2003).

11. Extract from an interview with an Ahly Ultra, 1 June 2013.

12. For further information on the hooligan culture and the socio-economic conditions of its emergence, see Giulianotti; Bonney; Hepworth 1994. In this particular book, see most notably Giulianotti 1994 in which he provides the reader with a detailed history of football hooliganism, thus outlining the production of knowledge on fan violence. See also Giulianotti 2002; Giulianotti; Armstrong 2002.

13. For more information on the underlying causes of the rise of Islamic movements in the 1970s and 1980s in Egypt, see Snow; Marshall 1984; Burgat; Dowell 1993; Ibrahim 1980; Kepel 1986.

14. For more information regarding the Egyptian context in the late 90s, early 2000s, Beinin; Vairel 2013; Boutaleb 2011.

15. See Ghonim 2012; Castells 2009; Herrera 2012.

16. *Kefaya* (which translates to "Enough") is and Egyptian movement that emerged in 2004 and that was most notably opposed to Mubarak's succession scheme (he wanted to nominate his son, Gamal, as his successor to the presidency), as well as Mubarak's *fikr jaded* or "new thinking" programme aimed at mass privatisation thus increasing the precarity of many Egyptian workers. For more information regarding Kefaya and its struggles, see El-Mahdi 2009; Chalcraft 2013; El-Shorbagy 2007.

17. Throughout the 2000s, one witnessed a recurrence of protests by different social movements (such as Kefaya, 6th of April movement, *Tadamon*-Solidarity...) struggling for social rights and justice for workers by organising sit-ins and strikes among others: see Beinin 2009.

18. European Ultra and/or hooligan group members are usually associated with the lower and poorer social classes of society. For more information regarding the socio-economic status of the stadium demographics, see Giulianotti 2002; Bromberger; Hayot; Mariottini 1987.

19. Regarding the public and private education system in Egypt, see Hyde 1978; Arum; Gamoran; Shavit 2007; Cupito; Langsten 2011.

20. In this regard, see also Lebrun 2013.

21. For further information on hooliganism, consult Hourcade 2002; Bodin *et al.* 2005.

22. Expression used by many of the respondents. The Ultras members see themselves as "apolitical actors" in the sense that they do not see themselves as being a part of what they call the "political game". Indeed they identify the word "political" with the idea of party politics. In this sense, they do not understand or interpret their actions as being political, but rather as being a natural consequence of who they are as a group and what they stand for.

23. Regarding the impact of the Ultras' mobilization on the existing dynamics, as well as the interaction with the different actors on the ground, see notably Gibril 2015. See also Lebrun 2013; Rommel 2014.

24. This reference can be found in papers such as *Egypt Independent*, *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *Al-Jazeera.*

25. Civilians as in "non-Ultras".

26. There was a period between 2012 and 2014 where the Ultras saw their numbers explode due to a high volume of new affiliations, the word "Ultra" being used as a synonym for "revolutionary" thus attracting significant portions of the youth.

27. The Ultras were not the only groups to use graffiti, this medium being regularly used by different activist groups to call protest.

28. *Dakhlyyia* literally means "Interior" and refers to the Ministry of Interior. The use of this term, refers to both the police as an individual and as an institution.

29. At least until the ousting of president Morsi in 2013. Clashes did occur between demonstrators and the army during the pro-Morsi rallies and demonstrations against the military coup of June 2013.

30. Although this has never been an official practice, the use of these "agents" is knowledge to the great majority of the population.

31. Interview with F., UKW, Cairo, April 2014.

32. Song by the Ultras of Zamalek club, 2012. Translated by the author.

33. Based on interviews conducted among al-Ahly and Zamalek supporters between 2013 and 2015. The use of colours could also refer to the colours of the Egyptian flag, further emphasizing the solidary ties present among the population, however this remains a hypothetical assumption as it has yet to be confirmed by the Ultras themselves.

34. Zamalek supporter, June 2013.

35. The name of *sharei' uyuun al-huriyyah* was given to Mohammed Mahmoud Street by a graffiti artist after the the events of Mohammed Mahmoud street in November 2011, as an act of remembrance for the people who lost their eyes to the snipers that were positioned at the top of the buildings surrounding Tahrir. During the November 2011 clashes with the protesters, the snipers aimed for the protesters' eyes, hence the popularisation of the name to *sharei' uyuun al-huriyyah* among the connoisseurs.

ABSTRACTS

The development of contentious collective action in Egypt has encouraged the emergence of new spaces of protest, but also the development of new strategies of opposition. This article aims to investigate the mobilization of the Cairo Ultras groups by examining their use of space, first within the stadium grounds, and particularly through their use of graffiti art. Through an analysis primarily centred on their graffiti, we wish to account for the evolution in their mobilization, as well as understand the development and transformation of their messages. The present study is, for the most part, based on a thorough analysis of graffiti and street art collected during a series of field trips conducted between 2012 and the beginning of 2015. The majority of the data was gathered around Tahrir Square and Mohammed Mahmoud Street, as well as around the Ahly and Zamalek stadia. Graffiti are of particular interest in the Egyptian case, most notably because they allow for expression of a specific social and/or political reality using precise graphic and discursive rules.

Le développement de l'action collective en Egypte a favorisé l'émergence de nouveaux espaces de contestation mais aussi le développement de nouvelles stratégies d'opposition. Cet article a pour but d'examiner la mobilisation des groupes Ultras au Caire en procédant à une analyse de leur utilisation de l'espace, d'abord à l'intérieur des stades, et ensuite à travers leur utilisation de l'art du graffiti. Par le biais d'une analyse centrée principalement sur leur graffiti, nous souhaitons rendre compte de l'évolution de leur mobilisation, ainsi que comprendre le développement et la transformation de leurs messages. La présente étude se base pour l'essentiel sur une analyse approfondie de graffitis et de fresques collectés lors d'une série de terrains conduits entre 2012 et le début de l'année 2015. La majorité des données ont été recueillies autour de la place Tahrir et

de la rue Mohammed Mahmoud ainsi que dans les rues entourant les stades d'al-Ahly et de Zamalek. Les graffitis sont particulièrement intéressants dans le cas égyptien, notamment parce qu'ils sont capables d'exprimer une réalité sociale et / ou politique spécifique en utilisant des règles graphiques et discursives précises.

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