LARA BALADI: That demonstration I had been to was for peace in Lebanon during the war in 2006. And so it wasn't-- there was no reason for so much police to be there. We were there to ask for peace in the region.

So it wasn't about revolution or toppling the president or whatever. So I was really shocked that there was this really ridiculous kind of fear from the Amn ad-Dawla, the State Security. And of course, what happens is that when somebody makes a little gesture, and there's like a panic movement. And of course, the police takes advantage of it and panics, because they're 17 years old or so, the policemen.

They're terrified. And everybody's terrified. Except they're armed. And they start beating people up and arresting people.

So from there, I thought on the 25th of June, I thought, I'm not going down. I know what's going to end up happening. I'm going to get beaten up.

And then I realized I'm like everybody else. I'm afraid. And the whole point of the revolution was to break that fear.

It was really that suddenly nobody was afraid anymore, and that we actually really went. And the fact that we were all together in the street was, like, OK, we're not afraid, because also we're all together. And it was really extraordinary.

But I also saw that I wasn't a photographer anymore. I had, like, 25 years ago began my career as a photographer and kind of got a little bit out of it from watching digital cameras and everybody becoming a photographer was also part of my-- sort of how I evolved as an artist. And so I moved into using images, but not so much being so focused on making images.

So for me, my role in the revolution was to really be there as an Egyptian, and to be there as a person who loves that country, and who wants to really see something through in that movement. So I really put myself, as an artist, actually outside of everything, and for quite a

long time, just watched. I participated. I was there.

I met people. I helped people. I was in the Square all the time.

But I did not take lead in a way. I did not produce art. I didn't want to do anything. I just thought this is too much. I need to process what's going on.

So it's much later in the process that I started to kind of take action in a way, or a different action than being a citizen demonstrating. And this is when these other Tahrir Cinema and sort of very time-based experiences sort of happened. But that we'll talk about a bit later.

But my role, really-- I saw my role as someone who could, from my experience and the community that I know, someone who could really connect people to each other, and also watch a lot of younger people than me, and see that I could really-- I had the experience that they didn't have. But they had, maybe, the tools and the ways to operate that I also-- my generation-- didn't have. My generation was much more individualistic, and also a little bit like a satellite. We worked as, like-- we were apolitical, in a way. We were sort of-- I think we were-- a lot of us were a little bit outside of the political sphere, because that wasn't the way to operate at the time. So

To watch suddenly this new generation come in and be very, very strong about their political views and using social media and so on was, like, OK, what can I give that they don't have? And so it was really great. Because I met a lot of people and I worked in that way with a lot of people. So it was a very organic time, in that sense. And it led to a lot of things which we'll talk about [INAUDIBLE].

PROFESSOR: We have a lot to talk about. In the classroom last week, we were asking ourselves, what is an activist? How much someone should be involved in a cause to qualify as an activist? And we were comparing anonymous members with Aaron Swartz. And we were concluding that Aaron Swartz was much more dedicated to the cause than people who just do sit-in, online sit-in from time to time.

I guess my question would be in this case, are all protesters activists in the context of a revolution? And do you consider yourself as an activist? And when does the artist become an activist?

LARA BALADI: So no, not every protester is an activist-- for sure not. I think every protester is a citizen. Every protester that comes to a demonstration doesn't necessarily know why they're coming to a

demonstration.

But this is a huge discussion. But in the case of Tahrir, a lot of people-- there was something kind of almost funny, when you look at it in retrospect, is that-- I don't know if you remember, if you know-- but on the 25th of Jan, the first group of people go and demonstrate. On the 26th and 27th, they-- the main activists of that first demonstration-- start to kind of confuse the police and exhaust the police, which was a technique.

On the 28th of Jan, everybody is called to come to the square. It's a Friday. In Egypt, Friday is the equivalent of a Sunday.

On the 27th at night, before this Friday where everybody's on holiday-- nobody's going to go to work, so it's much more scary for the government, because they know more people are free to go demonstrating-- the tension was growing throughout the country, not just in Cairo.

And at 7:00 PM, there was rumors that the government would stop our telephones and internet. At 9:00 PM, we couldn't talk to each other on the phone. We can only text. At 11:00 PM, we couldn't text. At 6:00 AM, we couldn't email anybody or open internet.

So it's kind of stupid. Because what do you do when you don't have internet, telephone, and you don't have a landline anymore? What's your natural instinct?

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE].

LARA BALADI: You go out, try to go to [INAUDIBLE]. So it's in a funny way, almost, I'd say it's almost the government helped initiate this by shutting us down. And so of course, we're all going to go look for each other.

So everybody goes down to the street in their area and talks to each other, says, what's going on? Oh, let's go to Tahrir. Because of course, we already know that there are demonstrations going on.

So most of the people are already informed that there are demonstrations and marches that will start after the Friday prayer at 1:00 from a lot of the main mosques around the cities. But most of the people who are not part of these marches necessarily will sort of naturally join. And so this is what happened.

So people found out about the reasons why this is happening, how this is shaping itself as it

was happening. There was no real-- it's not like everybody knew why they were going down. So people found themselves activists, maybe after five days, 10 days, maybe overnight.

So a good example-- and he's here Harvard if you have a chance to go, maybe meet him or find out about him-- but there's somebody, like a good example is Bassem Youssef who's a comic now that's compared to Jon Stewart in the US. But he was a heart surgeon. He was a doctor.

He was studying. I think he was still, like, finishing his studies or something, or a very early practitioner. He filmed himself talking about what was happening, posted the video on YouTube, three months later had already five million people watching him.

And then a month later, a TV that came out of the revolution-- so a free channel-- asked him to do a show. And he became a really famous figure over the period of two years that followed. So this is an example of someone who's a citizen, but then becomes an activist, but then becomes-- finds a new voice for himself.

PROFESSOR: So it's a fluid category, kind of.

LARA BALADI: So I mean, everybody changed our life. Like, I mean, everybody-- maybe a lot of people. But I would say that we all lost our friends and made new friends.

Because suddenly when you can't talk about politics, you realize that you don't get along with anyone around you. And it's like, oops, I don't think so. This is such a huge, impactful moment in history. You cannot make a compromise.

There's no time for it. There's no energy for it. And it's going so fast, and it's so intense.

You have to go to what you believe for. And so you make choices. And these choices-- you watch people sort of drop out of your life.

Suddenly, you're completely negotiating a completely differ-- so these aren't fixed-- what you are and how you [INAUDIBLE] that. And to talk about how an artist becomes, what an artist does in a revolution, I mean, this example behind me is a piece that I did in 2007. And the revolution started in 2011.

To give you a configuration of Cairo, you have those famous lions that you see the picture are the entrance of a famous bridge, called the [INAUDIBLE] Bridge, [INAUDIBLE] means bridge,

so the Nile Bridge. And in front of those lions, actually, is Tahrir. So it's a landmark a little bit like the Pyramids or the Eiffel Tower. It's a famous area in Cairo, and people would naturally go visit it.

And so in 2007, I made this piece, which is called *Justice for the Mother.* Egypt in Arabic is called the Mother of the World, Um al-Dunya. And so this work was really a work about-- it was actually a portrait of my father and a portrait of the law of the jungle-- the strongest is always the one that wins a fight.

But while I'm doing this work and sort of studying this kind of psychology of how human beings fight each other, and who wins and who loses, using these images that I've collected in my work, I attended this demonstration I told you about, where this huge cordon of police was circling us. And I was really shocked by it, because nobody in that demonstration had the same purpose. There was five or six people who were actually there for Lebanon. But really, people were there because either they were passing by, or they were activists, or they were asking for the bread to be less expensive.

I mean, everybody had a kind of different cause and purpose. And so this sort of like weird incoherence of that demonstration really stuck with me. And so this was a parody.

So this is a detail of the piece where it's a parody of people demonstrating and asking for something. But everybody seems to be, like, on their own. So you can see John Travolta, which is not your generation, but a little bit mine. Condoleezza Rice during the war in Lebanon, so with bombs and missiles that say, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, and all kinds of character that seem to be revolting.

And so interestingly, when Tahrir started, suddenly I look at my work, and I think, what am I supposed to do now that there's this huge revolution or uprising happening? Am I supposed to work? And I'm watching all these kids and all these people produ-- even citizens, not just artists, but citizens producing videos, and uploading footage, and making jokes, and doing this crazy, amazing stuff.

And I don't work like this. I work-- I take time to work. And I worked under dictatorship. So in a way, my work was shaped by the stagnant regime under which I was working, and which I was trying to also sort of mirror by making work that kind of demands attention and in a sense are heavy sometimes, but that mirrored that kind of rigidity of the regime I was working under.

And looking back at this work as one of the works was really funny, because I was, like, wow, I depicted a kind of problematic paradise behind those lines, which is-- it's actually a portrait of Tahrir. And that's how it felt. That's how the being 18 days in the square really felt like there was a possible world that we had to experience, and we were experiencing in very small moments.

But those moments where this is a possibility, this is a seed of something that could happen-- maybe in 2,000 years, maybe 200 years, maybe in 10 years. We don't know, maybe tomorrow. I have no idea. But it's possible. And it's that sort of sense that really was really interesting for me.

And it took me a long time to kind of think, OK, how do I work now? So this is also another question. Because then I start collecting footage and working with archive, and collecting pictures. But I wanted to show this as a kind of relationship to how the world changed overnight. And so there was a moment of reflection and kind of absorbing what was happening before doing things.

PROFESSOR: This was made before the revolution.

LARA BALADI: Yes, 2007, four years before.

PROFESSOR: I think it kind of shows that your work was already political before the revolution, even though you didn't really notice. There was something political in--

LARA BALADI: No, I did notice. I did notice. But it was just a different language I was using. I mean, this work-- this is Cairo.

I want to show you. These are informal areas in Cairo, which are basically illegal constructions and slums. And this was a tower that I built in the Opera House in the center of Cairo, which is a military base, and which is where the Biennial of art takes place-- used to take place.

And so this work was directly a kind of statement to the government to say OK, the subject of your Biennial is the others. So what are you doing with the others? Who are the others in relationship to the government?

They're all the people they're not addressing. They're not addressing the issues that these people have and face every day. And so I built an informal tower, a slum tower, in the middle of the garden of this military base.

I made my own brick. You can see the donkey here. And it says "hope" on it.

And here you can see the tower at night with the Opera House just behind. And of course, this was very controversial. Because it was like, wow, like putting people-- you don't go there. So I'm going to bring there to you.

And this was really like a year before the revolution, a year and a half before the revolution. So this work was really, really loaded and very much discussed later as a kind of movement in the art world, as how artists were putting their-- saying, you know, hello, alert, alert, beep, beep. There's something happening here that you need to look at. So this was the kind of landscape we were in when the revolution started in terms of the art scene.

PROFESSOR: Yes, Ali.

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE] were you inspired by Bosch?

LARA BALADI: That's what everybody always tells me.

AUDIENCE: It looks so similar.

LARA BALADI: Thank you very much. It's always a very beautiful compliment. I actually love painting. I'm not a painter. And I wish I could be.

But I'm sure I will be at some point. I've made other people paint for me. Because in Egypt, we have this tradition of making painted billboards for the cinema. I mean, in the good old days, they still existed like this. But yes, a lot of people compare my work to Bosch because of the kind of--

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE].

LARA BALADI: The delight, the Paradise depiction. But actually, when you get closer to it, it shows all the disruptions that are happening in this depiction of Paradise and how, in fact, it's closer to Hell.

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE] I saw the similarity to the free expanse, but also the two lions separated into a very three-paneled piece. It also just seemed very similar, and I really like that [INAUDIBLE].

LARA BALADI: Thank you.

PROFESSOR: OK, so now we'll enter in the discussion we're supposed to have today related to the assigned

readings. And what I did, actually, is that I used the assigned readings to build my questions. And I'm going to use these questions as a pretext to kind of push in a little bit of theory, so it looks more like a course than just a casual discussion. And then after, we'll try to connect this to your own experience as someone experimented the revolution.

So the first thing I would like to talk about is the rise of digital rebellions, citizen journalism and cyber left, which did not start with the Arab Spring and the Occupy Movement, but started 12 years before with the creation of Indymedia, which is a global, federated network of independent media centers, radio stations, newspapers, video collectives and websites. And Indymedia was already only funded as an alternative and a direct challenge to corporate media like CBS and CNN. Most [INAUDIBLE] report on the counter demonstration and the police brutality that took place during the 1999 World Trade Organization meetings.

And during its first week, the website received 1.5 million hits, outpacing CNN website for the same period. It was quite something. It was really big.

And as the platform developed, it became more than an alternative media outlet, but also a think tank and activist laboratory and mobilizing tool for the anti-globalization movement. So for those who don't remember, the anti-globalization movement was against free trade agreements that would be at the disadvantage of the poorest. And so this platform was allowing people different movement, different struggle, to kind of merge together on the same platform-- movements as diverse as the Zapatista-Mayan peasant army from the poorest region of Mexico, the South central farmer movement in LA, a movement against Wal-Mart in Philadelphia, and movement against war in Iraq.

So it was very diverse, but it was all converging on this platform here. And at that time, the activists were using chatrooms, the listservs, wiki pages where people could upload their stories, their report, their pictures, their videos. And so Indymedia was really one of the first websites where 100s of people were uploading content, generating content.

And in this book, *Digital Rebellion*, Todd Wolfson claimed that Indymedia, with its slogan, "Don't Hate the Media, Be the Media," was kind of a precursor or catalyst for social media, but also the grassroots journalism-- citizen journalism. Lara, in your article, "When Seeing is Belonging" that is very good, and I recommend everybody to read it-- it's online-- you argue that September 11 also contributed to the rise of citizen journalism. You want to tell us a little more about this idea?

LARA BALADI: Yes. I mean, I wrote this article because of my relationship to photography, and how this is how I began my career. And I found it was quite shocking to watch everybody-- can I go back to some of these images-- to watch everybody take photos in the square. Like this is quite an interesting image.

So watching this kind of scene, and I was myself holding a camera that was actually broken. So it was making scratch-- it had scratch like that. I was, like, hmm, look at everybody's really documenting this.

And I look back at my life, and thinking, OK, what do I do now? Because I felt a bit frozen. As I described, the way I work is I need time.

And in a moment where you're in the middle of a-- when the dam breaks, the river goes really, really fast. So you better be your head out of the water and go with the flow. Which, in a stagnant regime, it's more like being in a lake that is very stagnant. And you have to keep going down, and kind of trying move [INAUDIBLE] so that something happens.

So it's a very different situation. So that sense made me look back, and maybe look back at photography, and the use of media, and the use of image making, the history of image making. And I remember starting photography when I was coming out of school and the first Gulf War started.

And that was a moment in media where the war in Iraq was shown live on CNN. And that was one of the only channels that was actually filming. But you could never see anything.

It was always dark. And little lights would come out. And you didn't know what was going on.

It was just like you could see explosions, or-- that was a really important moment, in terms of discussing and debating the role of media and watching war live on television. 10 years later, there was 9/11. And I don't know how old you guys were, but it was a time when social media didn't exist.

Most people didn't have mobile phones. And if they did have mobile phones, they didn't have cameras on their mobile phones. So what was much more the thing of the time was to have a digital camera in your bag. And it was usually very low resolution. But it was nevertheless digital.

And that was the early days of creating media, in digital form. So suddenly, 10 years later,

here I am in the middle of this revolution, and watching everybody upload material, I mean, as fast as I'm talking. There's already 1,000 videos that would have been uploaded. So this whole-- over 20 years, but every decade, this new platform that image making reaches was, for me, really, really fascinating.

And yes, one of the things that came out of all the discourses and the debates around photography and image making and media in general after 9/11 was that, for the first time in years, the power had changed hands-- where the citizen-- the ones who were underneath, or very close, or watching from buildings and over windows-- were able to document what was happening. The media wasn't there. [INAUDIBLE] citizens. And that was a really, really big moment in history, in terms of suddenly the citizen had power that the media didn't have anymore. So that hold on the power and in whose hand is always at the core, I think, at the heart of those debates, especially moments like that.

PROFESSOR: So it was interesting, and this is where I speak about citizen journalism, and how and why that moment in Tahrir was really interesting for me. Because I had seen this throughout my career as a photographer and artist, and watched that. And I was really fascinated with it.

Let's talk about the role of media in mobilizing people. So Facebook and Twitter are often depicted as the main instruments of the Arab Revolution, to the point that the revolution has been called a social media revolution, a Facebook revolution, Twitter revolution. And apparently, one of the main elements that contributed to this [INAUDIBLE] uniting the young Egyptians that were not, as you said, necessarily into politics at that time, was this Facebook page that we spoke about earlier. We are all Khaled Saeed. I know I don't pronounce it well, but I try.

LARA BALADI: [INAUDIBLE].

PROFESSOR: I'm sorry about that. And apparently, this page was protesting against the death of this young blogger after his arrest by the police. And it said, even showing pictures of his disfigured corpse, I think, at the beginning, I guess, maybe.

And according to the author of one of the texts that we had to read today, Gerbaudo, this page was successful because it individualized Facebook interaction. I think he was talking as if he was Khaled Saeed, actually, at the beginning. And at some point during the revolution, apparently it became kind of a place to collect evidences against the regime and against the police brutality, and a sort of megaphone that was relaying information about events that were

coming. And apparently, it also served to build up the confidence about the movement.

So my question was, when did you see this page for the first time? And how did it affect your motivation to kind of get involved? And do you believe that, when you saw that, did you believe that it was an important, a positional movement, that was kind of rising in Egypt? Was it the proof that something was going on?

LARA BALADI: So that's a nice question, because I was not on Facebook when the revolution started. So I had no idea even, like, why people even went on Facebook. It was just I could hear my friend talk about it.

I was just horrified. I was like, [INAUDIBLE] there. So no, I was not on Facebook.

I did not have a Twitter account. I didn't even know Twitter existed. I knew about Facebook, but-- and I didn't have a television I still don't.

So my relationship with internet was a good relationship, but it wasn't like a very-- I wasn't like a freak surfer on the net. It wasn't like I was spending hours looking for things, or using it in ways that I use it now. So I wasn't aware of that page.

I remember when Khaled Saeed was killed, and I felt something is about to happen. And this was maybe 18 months before the revolution started. It was in June, 2010. The revolution started in January, 2011.

What I can say-- I mean, of course I saw the page later. And I think it had an extraordinary impact. But I think the interesting story here, which-- to go back to some of the images-- the interesting story here is how this Facebook page began.

Because we're not talking about making a Facebook page and-- this is [INAUDIBLE]. So we're not talking about making a Facebook page now, or in a normal kind of situation, or in a kind of relatively normal situation. I don't know what the normal situation would be.

We're talking about a Facebook page under Mubarak regime. And at the end of the Mubarak regime, Amn ad-Dawla, the State Security, was incredibly powerful-- probably one of the most powerful securities for sure in the region, and probably across many other countries in the world. So you're talking about a very corrupted time in history, and a very, very intense time, where there is no way anybody could say who they were or say anything about the regime, because they would be immediately arrested-- let alone on Facebook, which is a public space,

as you know.

So the story goes that there was the administrator of Google Egypt, who was in Dubai for a conference, who's a young guy who's now in LA, Wael Ghonim. And one of the activists of one of the very small but very new and probably, obviously, very important-- that became very important-- political opposition group that formed itself and called itself Sixth of April-- formed itself after the events that took place in 2010 of all the workers in the Delta in the north of Egypt that rebelled against the conditions of how they were working and how much they were paid and so on. And a lot of these people were killed. A lot of them were arrested. It was pretty much-- it was one of the very important moments pre-revolution that marked this real disruption between the corrupted regime and the people.

And so after that day, that group formed itself. So one of the people from that group was in that same conference, and sat next to Wael Ghonim, but didn't tell him who he was. And Wael Ghonim didn't tell him who he was. They were just on internet, as people do it in internet cafe, or when they have-- like you guys were at the beginning of the class. They sort of sit together, google stuff, and sometimes talk.

And at one point, one of them said, how can we get people to actually participate? How do we collect people? How do we bring people's attention? What would we do?

And so Wael told him, you know, let's make this Facebook page. And you can do this, and you can do that. And that's the way that you kind of attract people's attention.

So I don't know what was the conversation exactly. I wish I was there. I wasn't.

But from that conversation, and not knowing each other, and still not knowing each other afterwards, that's how they created this Facebook page. And people started to join and like, and like, and like. And before we knew it, there was thousands of people on the page.

And of course, with the events in Tunis followed by the events that started to escalate in Cairo and Egypt, the Facebook page became more and more and more kind of catalyzer or something that was about to happen. So I think that's the real role of that page.

Now, that page was essentially addressed to people who are in the age range of age of Khaled-- so late '20s. I don't know what's the percentage in America, but in Egypt there is 65% of the population is below 30 years old. That's huge.

We're a very young country. There's lots of babies everyday that are born. So it's like when you're talking to somebody who's 27 being killed-- imagine the impact on the similar kind of people in the population. So that kind of merging of moments, events, the fact that also it's a generation that, as you know better than I do, lives on the internet and knows internet since they were born-- it was a very natural thing. So just sort of like all these elements kind of contributed for something to happen.

PROFESSOR: So it reaches more the youth. The authors that we had to read for today, they seem a bit skeptical about if the social media were really motivating people, mobilizing people. There's no doubt that they did, but what was important of it compared to ground-level organization?

And so in the tweets on the street, Gerbaudo mentioned that it took a few months before actually the Facebook RSVP translated into massive physical attendance in public spaces. And also, the DFK [INAUDIBLE] from Tunisia. And he mentioned also that the Occupy Wall Street Movement was not magically born out of a Twitter hashtag, but gained importance after a slow process of ground-level organization.

So I know it's a tough question, but do you think that the Egyptian revolution would have happened without the digital technology, without social media? And or maybe in a more easy way to answer, how important was the role of Facebook in recruiting part spent and mobilizing people, bringing them to Tahrir Square?

LARA BALADI: I mean, when it happened-- and this is why this image actually is very important, because suddenly there's this young woman. And she's in front of the police. To see this in an Arab country was in itself an image that shocked people.

Wow, all these women were at the front line of the revolution. I mean, they weren't just standing at the back. We were actually at the front.

And so to see that, and to see that generation kind of come out and not want a revolution. They didn't come out asking for a revolution. They actually came out asking for dignity.

So please stop the police from abusing us, because I don't want to get into details, but most people have been abused by the police, and sometimes sexually abused by the police. So there's a huge amount of torture that came out-- a revelation about how many instruments were hidden into these caves of all these police stations.

The context was that you have to imagine the Khaled Saeed case leading to the Facebook page, leading to bringing all this generation-- essentially that generation-- to the street on the 25 of January. That was a very important moment. And yes, it came out of universities. It came out of a new generation that was kind of like, why are these older people not doing anything? What's wrong with them?

And very quickly, when the whole thing turned-- very quickly became violence. So from the first night, the police attacked all these demonstrators, even though they were much less in number. But they waited, as they do, because they're cowards.

They waited until everybody went home. And then they attacked when there was less people in the street. So that happens, usually, at midnight.

So then this two days that followed, there is more violence that takes place in the streets. A few people get killed-- the first martyrs of the revolution. And that sort of stated a kind of enough. Now that's it.

Those kids went to the streets. We adults are actually cowards for not having done what they're doing. We've been waiting for 13 years to even have the guts to do that. And they kill people. And why? And it's enough.

And so on that Friday, which was called the Day of Anger, the whole population went out. Everybody went out. Every single per-- and we're talking the day where there's no more internet. There's no more telephones. There's no more anything. So everybody went out.

So yes, there was a trigger that was associated to Facebook. And people called it the Facebook revolution because there was something really beautiful about it. There was people who were young, people who were courageous, people who died.

There was a real desire for change. There was something very innocent, and very, very really very hopeful. And the shift happened very quickly when that whole population followed, but very quickly also turned into who's going to take advantage of what's happening?

So this kind of unfolds as the revolution unfolds. But the role of the social media at the very beginning is really a kind of trigger and a sign that this need for change comes from this generation that wants to have a future. But then, everybody else who is politicized and everybody else who is part of the society also has different interest in things changing or not.

And so then a lot of other things happened. And then the media, as we know, also take on another role as everything changes every minute, and then every day, every week, and so on, and so forth. So yes, it's a very important role.

But it doesn't define the society because it's the trigger of something at the beginning. And also it doesn't really-- what this is not addressed also in that image-- kind of utopic image-- of watching all these young people working towards something they're dreaming of-- is that most of the population, especially people who are in the countryside, which has been very ignored during the revolution, especially by the foreign media-- everybody was focusing on Tahrir. Tahrir is just a little area in Cairo. It's actually not even that big.

And yet there's Egypt. And Egypt is essentially countryside and people who are peasants, or people who are workers in the delta. So all of these people are not necessarily connected to internet. They don't have a Facebook page.

So two million people signed up on Facebook in the first 10, 20 days of when the internet came back. So I'm one of them. So then you have also this whole relationship of how people have focused on that first moment. And it kind of colored what happened after.

But no, it's much more complex than this. And the economics of the country is at the core of the movement. The different religions are at core in the movement. There's a lot of other levels that we can get into. But it's not the subject today.

PROFESSOR: Yeah, considering the low level of internet connection in Egypt-- there was 25% of the population connected in 2011, according to the statistic that I saw-- and the low alphabetization rate-- 65% compared to 99% in the States. And the fact that only--

LARA BALADI: So you found that number?

PROFESSOR: Yeah, but--

LARA BALADI: That's huge. That's amazing.

PROFESSOR: Well, alphabetization is something subjective. So I'm pretty sure it's not 99% that read very well.

LARA BALADI: 99 is not bad.

PROFESSOR: Yeah, I mean, so it was the one beside the 65%. And only 4% of adults were on Facebook

before the revolution, so it's not much. The question is, how did the techno-savvy youth manage to bridge the digital gap, the digital divide, during the Arab Spring? And were they employing other techniques, other means, to kind of get these people who were not connected on the street?

LARA BALADI: I think that's part of the problem, is that-- I mean, I wouldn't associate that problem to necessarily-- people were using the tools they have. But very quickly, it appeared that you have community. It's a little bit like being in a university.

So you have your group of people. You have your community. You have those do sports with. You have those you have the same classes with, so on, and so forth.

And in a way, they start talking to each other. But they're not really talking to everybody else. And so suddenly, when you start-- anyway, I got on Twitter very early on-- as soon as the internet came back. Because I didn't have a television. I had to know what the hell's going on.

So I tried to figure it out. I didn't really like Facebook, but I was, like, wow, Twitter is pretty cool. So I really got it very quickly. And I got really agitated on Twitter very quickly. And so I'm, like, OK, who's important? Who's saying what?

So you start following people, and understanding, and kind of mapping who's the activists here, and who's interesting, and who's saying stupid things, and who's saying interesting things, and who's calling for violence, and who's not. So it's actually quite funny. Because it's like this whole thing is unfolding.

And you have all these characters without face that you discover. And you become part of that whole film, in a way. And the interesting thing was that some of those characters or activists or participants were really focusing on this notion of organization or this notion of criticizing or freely talking.

Because now we could talk. But there was no sense of-- I never felt that they were talking to me. They were always kind of talking to one another, like knowing who was on Twitter. And they were kind of talking to each other.

And then the media, after the 18 days that toppled Mubarak, the international media was much more present and able to document the revolution. And of course, the first thing they did is they transformed people into heroes and icons of the revolution. And yes, some of them were.

Some of those people were amazing. And they're still amazing. But what it did is that it kind of intensified the sort of ego of some of these people.

And it intensified their importance in a movement, and kind of blurred the actual reasons why this was happening, and kind of almost disconnected them from the rest of the society. And one of the big criticisms of that generation, whether it was in Alex, in Suez, or in Cairo-- doesn't matter-- was that nobody was addressing the countryside. Nobody was addressing the [INAUDIBLE] around Cairo. Nobody was addressing the actual role of all these people outside of Tahrir.

Go down the street, and go to another area. And see what's going on. So this became really problematic, because the way the focus became so about the square and so much about some of these important activists, it also created a kind of disconnection with the rest of the communities.

And as young people are-- they're very passionate and they're very radical, and sometimes a little bit blinded by their passion-- so they tend to kind of obscure themselves from the possibilities that-- to be strong, they need to have people on their side. And I think one of the big mistakes was that they were so, so radical and believed so much and in a certain way for democracy to be implemented that anybody who didn't believe the same thing, they kind of dismissed them. What they forgot to do is that they didn't realize that who they were dismissing were actually the majority of people in Egypt.

And so to lose the majority of people in Egypt is also what got us to where we are today. And that majority said, enough of this bullshit or mess in the street that's happening. And let's go back with at least having our military regime taking care of security. So I think that was one of the big mistakes, is that you throw yourself into a movement, but then you forget to bring people in with you.

PROFESSOR: Do you think-- I read that there were some tactics to kind of agitate people with face-to-face relation. Like people were going in the street, and there were some regimen points at different places in working neighborhoods. And people were meeting there, and then they were going down the street chanting slogans, positive slogans, to kind of drive more people with them walking towards Tahrir Square. Do you think that these kind of tactics are more efficient than the Facebook or the digital media tactics? Or it's kind of a combination of both that makes it

more-- that allowed to reach more people, more diverse crowd?

LARA BALADI: I think it's all of-- it's everything together. It's almost like it's something-- you have to imagine it like something climaxing. So you have all these things happening, but you're not really aware, maybe, that they're happening. But suddenly, everybody finds themselves in the same place and things collide.

And it's that explosion that's actually incredible. And that creates that fascinating time that we lived. And so it's a combination.

It's like a timing. It's like a moment where everybody was ready. There's maybe some [INAUDIBLE] I don't know. But who knows.

But there was a real kind of an invisible march towards that time. And the tactics that where you were-- of course, they started on Facebook. As [INAUDIBLE] Facebook, which I find out later, prepares people for the 25th of January, saying, go down with an onion in your pocket, with a bottle of vinegar, and with a mask if you can.

And so I found myself in Tahrir on the Friday, on the Day of Anger at 10:00 in the morning. I didn't even know there was marches going from these mosques and all this. And I just knew everybody was going to meet in Tahrir. But I didn't realize there was a kind of movement that was going to actually take place.

So I go before everybody, very early. Which means that I find myself in the center of the city where then, few hours later, there's already demonstrations. So people are marching up and down the streets.

And there's already these groups of people kind of occupying the main streets of the area around Tahrir. And there's police kind of blocking the entrance to Tahrir from the outskirts of the city, of the center of the city. And all these marches kind of come towards the center, and of course, confront the police.

But I'm also inside. So I'm confronting the police from inside. It's like a big mess.

And it's really funny. Because suddenly, I'm, like, what the hell is going on? And then boom-- tear gas. It's horrible.

I don't know if you've experienced it before. But you start really coughing and everything hurts.

And it's really itchy and so on.

And some guy next to you will give you vinegar and you wash your face with vinegar. And so it's all these tactics that were shared on the Facebook page. But then when you're on the street, you're dealing with the street.

You have to react quickly. And you have to hide when you have to hide. And you have to understand violence very quickly, and understand where you stand in all of this.

So it's a mix of always adapting and having people with you that everybody supports each other. So there's a real solidarity that's very natural that takes place. Because when you have a very clear enemy, it's very easy to be friends with your neighbor. When you're not sure who the enemy is, then everybody's your enemy, in a way.

So it's a very interesting time, because it's very clear who the enemy is. And so the energy and the kind of togetherness is incredibly strong. And so methods of responding to the very fast-changing times that we're living in those 18 days, and then a bit slower as times goes in the aftermath of Tahrir, is all about people finding solutions to everything.

And those solutions are shared on Twitter. They're in the street. And maybe you can show-- I don't know where it is in the sildeshow, but the way Tahrir [INAUDIBLE].

PROFESSOR: I have photo of this.

LARA BALADI: Yes, here, the camp. Can you do it to slideshow? So this is an image of [INAUDIBLE] and how it was organized. And so at the center of it, under the tents, you have the blogger tent, the media tent.

Then you have an area where you have the medical part, where people who were hurt were being helped by whoever's a doctor, was actually sudden improvise themselves as making a hospital. And the space in the square where people could be taken care of. On Twitter you would have suddenly hashtags of medical supplies and Tahrir Square-- different types of names and people improvising accounts, but also organizing in little groups.

And saying if you're going to bring something, bring it-- let's focus. Not everybody brings band-aids. If you want to bring something, this is what we need. This is what we need. And this is what we need. And this is where we are.

And so you can start helping people by following what's going on. So it's a combination of street intelligence and communication online, and communication between people. So it's a very fast-moving time and vary fascinating, because it really plays out on so many layers.

PROFESSOR: There's kind of an interaction between organizing on the ground, organizing in the social media. I want to switch subject and talk a bit about the role of social media for bringing the world attention to the cause. There's no doubt that Facebook, YouTube, Flickr, Twitter facilitated the citizen journalism, helped desseminating the news, showing the police brutality to the world, eliciting international attention.

And similarly, the activists involved in the Occupy Movement creatively used social media and cutting-edge technology like live streaming to kind of bring the world attention to the encampment and to the cause itself. And both movements really managed to secure an impressive degree of public support. In your article, "When Seeing is Belonging"-- I'm referring to it a lot. I really liked it.

You mentioned that the image of Tahrir Square circulating on the web and in the news, and I quote, "Turn all established cliches of Egypt on their heads." And I really like this idea. And I would like to ask you how exactly did these images change the world perception of Egypt?

LARA BALADI: It feels so old already, and sadly so, because of what's happening now with ISIS and all this horrible stuff. But at the time, if you remember, 2011-- this is like 10 years after 9/11. And there's been this whole War on Terror and this whole really-- I mean, it's not new from 9/11, but it's multiplied.

And it grew exponentially after 9/11, that whole visible of the Arab world, and putting everybody into an Arab is a Muslim and Muslim is a terrorist. And it's like this kind of generalization of what the Arab world is. So one of the cliches was-- I should have put this picture, but it doesn't matter-- but one of the first things that kind of comes up is suddenly, the dirty Arab-- the terrorists-- is not a terrorist anymore.

He's actually a revolutionary. And he's working for peace in the world. And he wants change and he wakes everybody up.

The whole world was stuck to their television looking at Tahrir. It was one of the most [INAUDIBLE], and still is until today. So that was one thing.

Then, if you remember, there was the Wisconsin actually happened more [INAUDIBLE] time of

Tahrir. And one of the funniest images that came out was this woman holding a banner saying, Egypt, help us. So from America being very anti-Arabs and anti-terrorists and anti-anything that comes out of the Arab world, you have this kind of like calling for help from-- we actually are friends. And we think the same way. And we discovered that maybe we can get along.

So this was really interesting. And of course, to go back to photography, and to my interest as an artist and the medium that I use in making images, what happens-- not so much in the 18 days as much as just after 18 days, the whole period, the aftermath after Mubarak is toppled is also to watch how I've experienced Egypt all my life as a kid, and all my life as an adult with this relationship it has with the West, and with tourism, and how Egypt has always been a place where-- I'm sure all of you have studied ancient Egypt when you were 11 years old, more or less. So that's in every schoolbook in the world, you have ancient Egypt more or less at the age of nine or 11, something like this.

So it's the first fascination with the world. And it's the first civilization. And everybody wants to see the Pyramids.

But here we go. We're like, we have Tahrir. And this pyramids, which here is not a cliche. It's actually another way of looking at the Pyramids-- which itself takes away the cliche of the idea that these Pyramids are unobtainable-- gets replaced by the birds-eye view of Tahrir.

And after the 18 days, you start watching all of these Western people that come and do tourism in Tahrir, and don't want to see the revolution, want to be part of it. So you have people who are activists. You have people who are just people who are fascinated by what's happening. They want to be part of it. They just come.

And so you see this new kind of tourism evolve, and Egypt becoming associated with the revolution, Tahrir, people, et cetera, et cetera. And no one's talking about the Pyramids. I'm not even sure anybody's even going to see them. And I'm not sure how long that's going to take for them to come back. But I think it's a very interesting sort of shift, and how overnight, that image that's been there for centuries gets kind of deleted, and replaced by this other Egypt that we're in the middle of at the moment.

PROFESSOR: I will definitely visit Tahrir Square if I go.

LARA BALADI: You'll be sadly disappointed, but I can still take you to the Pyramids.

PROFESSOR: All right, I'd like to talk a little bit about the role of social media as an alternative to commercial media. Earlier in the semester, we learned that a few media companies own the majority of the world's media outlets. And with Herman and Chomsky, we saw that this was a problem, like a threat to democracy, because the mass media tend to construct a worldview that conforms to the need of corporate advertisement, valorising some political perspective and marginalizing other perspectives.

And in this context, a lot of people see internet as a space where counter-hegemonic point of view can be expressed. And in countries like Egypt, the situation is even worse, since the media are controlled by the government and subjected to censorship. Actually, that's more a question than an affirmation. How biased was the Egyptian coverage of the revolution? And to what extent all these events happening were censored by the regime in the mass media in Egypt?

LARA BALADI: I want to maybe answer this and look a little bit-- can we come out of the slideshow so we see a little bit? [INAUDIBLE] So yeah, it's a joke. It's propaganda, but old-style. It's like grotesque. Grotesque-- you know that word?

So it's really ridiculously-- it's one big lie. And it's sadly almost funny. It's dark humor at that point.

And when the revolution starts, nothing really changes. I mean, actually people who did not want to continue to participate to that lie left their jobs at the state media. And the state media continues to have a huge amount of power, because of what I was saying earlier, is that most people actually don't have internet. A lot of people do, but a lot of people still don't.

And a lot of people believe in their army. I mean, why we're back in the military regime is because Egypt has a relationship that's a little bit incestuous with their army. We have an army that is not really that interested in keeping the country protected from potential external enemies, as much as we have an army that is there to control us.

But that army is made of us. So every single family in Egypt has at least two or three people that are in the army. So nobody wants their army to be at war, either with them or with anybody else, because that would be their son, their father, their brother could be endangered.

However, the army and the regime control the media. And so at one point in the evolution of the events, and the continuation of the role of the army post-Mubarak being toppled-- so we go from Mubarak to having the rule of the SCAF-- the Supreme Council of Armed Forces, which is the army. We have a whole series of events that take place.

And one of them is a very terrible massacre that happens in October, 2011 in front of the state media-- Maspero-- this huge building that is on the Nile in Cairo, where the media is broadcasted. And there's a demonstration because a lot of-- at the time, a lot of Christian churches are being attacked. This is a period for months and months and months where we don't have police in the country, in the city, and nowhere.

So we were very happy, actually. But there was still a lot of little crime, given that there is no police. So of course there is going to be crime.

But these crimes happening in upper Egypt lead to these demonstrations to ask for the Supreme Council of Armed Forces to protect the Christians in Egypt who are a minority. That demonstration leads to the army actually rolling over people. And the whole thing is atrocious.

People get rolled over. The photos-- I can't even tell you the horrible photos that surfaced on Facebook and whatever. Lots of people died. It was really, really ugly.

And of course, the army goes on TV and says, oh, but we don't use live ammunition. We don't actually use live ammunition. We didn't do anything. And so this graffiti says [ARABIC] liars. And it has the army cap. So [ARABIC] becomes a movement where people do sort of video flash mobs in the streets projecting videos of martyrs and others at very impromptu moments in the street, saying the army is lying to you. And this is in a popular area of Cairo.

PROFESSOR: And what about the American media? Because we saw in the course that the American media tend to be very biased, especially when they cover international politics. And we know that the States were supporting the Mubarak regime to a certain extent before the revolution. So were the American media also biased, very biased, or where they more fair during the revolution?

LARA BALADI: I don't know if [ARABIC] is-- what [ARABIC] is-- this one. Do you know what this child is?

PROFESSOR: Anybody recognize where this is?

LARA BALADI: I'm not sure where is it from, but--

AUDIENCE: It's Russia.

LARA BALADI: It is, right? So this is quite funny, because with your text.

PROFESSOR: Let's talk about the role of social media in organizing the protests. So we often refer to-- the scholars often refer to social media as a means to coordinate gatherings, road blockage, protests, other forms of actions on the ground during the Arab Spring and the Occupy Movement. Apparently Facebook was used to set the date of events. Twitter was used to connect people across distance and to share logistics in real time.

As you said earlier, you have to react quickly on the ground. So sometimes Twitter was saying this is the rallying point. This is the location where the police is. This is the things we need, the medicine we need for-- because there were people injured.

And Gerbaudo uses the expression "choreography of assembly" to describe the role of social media in facilitating the physical assembly of highly dispersed individuals, as well as the scene setting and scripting. So how did you use, yourself, the social media as a means to organize your day, where you're going to go, what you're going to do during the revolution?

LARA BALADI: I mean, again, I wasn't a Facebook, Twitter person. So I was using it more to kind of know what was going on, and to make sure I wouldn't miss something dangerous or something I should know about. So it was very-- and actually, for a little while, I always felt a little bit late. Like, I always felt like I'm really sure what's going on here.

I spent a lot of time trying to make sense of it. And in retrospect, talking to people, everybody was in that same situation. Because no one really was expecting this to happen. So everyone was trying to figure out who was who in all of this.

Who's doing this, actually? Is there somebody doing this, or where is this coming from? So there was a sense of first understanding minute by minute where you stand.

Because this is also where I live. This is my life. So for four years, I lived in the middle of-- I mean, one night, one day-- I don't know what time it was. It was maybe 11:00 PM or something.

And I live-- the Nile is not so far from me. And on the other side of the Nile is a whole area that is called Imbabah. And it's a popular area. It very, very, populated.

And Cairo is 7 million people. So it's a very, very dense population and dense city. And I live in an area where there's a lot embassies and schools. And it's between two branches of the Nile.

And so on one side is Tahrir and on the other side is other areas of Cairo. So I could walk to Tahrir. But at the same time, I was across the Nile.

So there was a sense of, also a feeling of security. People actually moved back to where I lived, because it was almost the safest place to be in Cairo, in that period. But all of a sudden at 11:00 PM, I get up. And I'm, like, what the hell is going on here?

And I look down at every window from my house. And I've never seen this. All these tanks are just driving super-fast in every street, and heading towards this area. And I mean, this was never seen. You never saw this.

Or wake up in the morning and go to my kitchen. And I'm about to go to Tahrir. It's really early. We're still in the 18 days. And I look at my window, like, what's going on here?

And I see the building across the Nile that is burning. So this whole area is burning. And that was the Day of Anger.

Also, the following days after the Day of Anger, everything had been looted and so on. So it was constantly like negotiating the danger zones, the moments where you should be in the street, the moments where you shouldn't, what you're ready to go through or not. I wasn't necessarily ready to get killed. It wasn't really-- I don't think it was a smart thing to do.

So for me, Twitter, much more than Facebook, was really a way of making sure I would know what the kind of tension-- where we were at in the tension scale. And so it was very interesting, because I was always in the Square. But I also always was aware that, oh, the army's coming in half an hour. We're going to get into a battle. Tonight, there's going to be a sucker. And this would happen.

So before this would happen, I would just go home and say, I'm not going to get into this. So it was really interesting to watch also that movement on that. But it was also very confusing, because some people were also acting from the spur of the moment and a bit of hysteria. And so not everything was real. And not everything was true that was being spread on social media.

So it's this whole constant kind of figuring out what is real, what is not. Is it really happening?

Who's there? Someone you trust? Try to get somebody on Twitter that you think will not be talking bullshit.

And then you have, also, groups that form themselves according to how the events unfold. And so some of them are focusing on giving you the right news. Some of them are focusing on giving you information about what medical supplies are needed. Some of them are organized.

And this was really incredible. Much later in the game, we had a huge amount of sexual harassment in Tahrir. So you have this amazing crowd, especially of women, that got together-- and young women-- that got together to organize bodyguards, and people who would help people go through the square without being sexually harassed. Of course, they got sexually harassed themselves following that.

So it was pretty crazy. But you had this amazing amount of energy of people really putting themselves together, and coming in groups, and creating a different support system. So this is really fascinating, in how people used social media. And that way was really beautiful.

PROFESSOR: The authors that we had to read for today, they seem to be convinced that the most successful movements are always driven by face-to-face relation, on-the-ground organization, not only by social media. And moreover, they would go as far as saying that, when we put all our energy on building websites, innovative software, technological infrastructure, we're taking away the focus from building more movement and alliance on the ground, and connecting, like making real relationship with local communities. It may be more accurate for the Occupy Movement. And there's also this idea that the virtual proximity that we can experiment online doesn't compare to the community feeling, the body density, of the protest camps where people eat, sleep together, defend their territories together. So there's this proximity of the bodies.

I don't know how you feel about this. Do you think it's important to keep this face-to-face interaction and physically occupy a space during a revolution? Or a revolution can only happen online?

LARA BALADI: I don't know. I'm not a specialist in organizing revolutions. But I mean, I don't know. I mean, it's--

PROFESSOR: Maybe a more easy question for you, because it's kind of abstract, but did, at some point in the revolution, Tahrir became a kind of coordination platform more than social media?

Meaning like you could get information on the ground?

LARA BALADI: No, no, of course. It was very different what happened on the ground and what you could--depending on-- I mean, if you are somebody on Twitter since two or three years, I think you would probably have a much more understandable kind of map of actions, events. And you would probably have been aware of the Facebook page of Khaled Saeed and so on, much more before all of this would start.

So if you're part of that generation, or a journalist, again-- were the main two categories of people that used Twitter, for example. I'll leave Facebook out for a while. You would be really aware of which kind of people have an interesting perception of the events, and how to negotiate that.

And then on the ground, you would be, therefore, definitely magnetized or attracted by different areas in the square, and where people were organized, or understand better the kind of actual mapping of the ground of the picture I showed you where you can see the bloggers and all of this. I mean, as far as I'm concerned, it was kind of weird. Because I lost my phone very-- not only there was no internet, but I also lost my phone, like two, three days after the whole thing started. And of course, every shop was closed, so I couldn't get a new phone for a few days.

So I really wanted a phone just to call my mother in Lebanon and just make sure she wouldn't worry. But I was completely disconnected from my normal, daily life. And I ended up being much more connected to people on the streets, and knowing people on the street, and figuring out how the square is organized, and participate with that.

I think your question can be answered by yes and no, because we're talking 18 days where something very specific, where people really conglomerated to Tahrir-- and in Alex and every other city. We're always talking about Tahrir, but there is the rest of Egypt. But something, again, in that period, you have a very clear enemy and you have a very careful goal. But then afterwards, it's a very different situation.

And then so the negotiations that happened on the street or online are a very different kind of-- they've become very different in terms of the dynamics and how they influenced what happens. So there were periods where Facebook and Twitter were at the front of what you needed to look at to really know what was happening. So I would say this was for sure the case during the 18 days.

At the later stage, there was much more focus between foreign media, local media and social media. So it was really covered by everybody and everything. And that was like a total concentration of media from all directions. And less action on the streets, because the sit-in finished. Some people stayed, but not the majority.

And then you have other waves, where there's much more analysis going on, where the politics on the ground are not as violent, or not as regularity violent, or not as regularly intense. But what happens online is extraordinary. And you have like 100 people talking, every day writing blogs, and so on.

Plus, television becomes occupied by talking heads. And it's talking heads, talking heads. There was two years of talking heads, of people finally talking.

And so it's analysis. So what's going on? What do you think is going on? What do you think is going to happen?

What do you think of these guys? What do you think of the Muslim Brotherhood? What do you think of the army?

And we could say anything we wanted. We just didn't realize we wouldn't have that much time to continue to do so. But it was quite an extraordinary period.

And so again, it's this kind of power of what has more power at a different moment than another moment? And so it's also, again, a kind of balance between how social media is influential, or how media is, or how being on the ground is. And there was a very clear moment where people said, you know, it doesn't do anything to go to Tahrir anymore.

We have to go back home. And we have to do the real work. And the real work is change very fundamental aspects and values within society. It's not going to the street and rebelling.

Rebelling is important, but then you have to follow up. And follow up means you have to educate people. You have to work with them. You have to get involved in your communities. You have to act directly with people that are your neighbors.

And that can take 10 years, 20 years. And not everybody wants to spend that kind of time doing that. So that's, again, another subject. But that's the kind of landscape.

PROFESSOR: I want to make sure we have time to talk about your current work. So we can go more quickly

on the next questions. In the book we had to read, *Digital Rebellion*, there's the one problematic aspect of the contemporary activism that was underlined. It is the difficulty to connect with local struggle, local communities, people from the working class.

So we said this before. But also, the fact that these movements are using the new technologies and internet so much that it tends to favor the leadership of white, male, college-educated activists at the expense of homeless people, unemployed, women, people of color, indigenous. was it also the case in Egypt? How diversified was the crowd on Tahrir Square? Were there, like, people from very different background, women and men? Or they were more favoring men?

LARA BALADI: So in the 18 days, it was very different. Everybody remembers the 18 days as something unique, and then there's the rest. But during the 18 days, of course, it was mainly occupied by all these young people that were on Facebook and did this Khaled Saeed page, and so on, and who were coming out of universities, and so on.

But there was also a majority of population from every kind of-- every city, every area of Cairo, from Alex. People were very diverse, people who were in the square. But there was a kind of attitude that was very particular during those 18 days.

And again, I think it has to do with the clarity of who you're fighting. And so nobody complained of sexual harassment in those 18 days. Although I think I'm sure there was. But I mean, it wasn't like-- there was something that held people together, because it was so dramatic.

And it was so-- we didn't know what's going to happen. And we knew that if this fails, we'll all end up in jail. So it couldn't fail. It's too late. We've gone already too far.

And actually, everybody is in jail now. Most of the people who were really, really at the front of-- like obvious activists are, for a lot of them, either in jail, or not even. There's thousands of people that have been arrested. And the others have left the country because they've been threatened to be arrested.

So you have a real escape of intellect as it happens in those situations. But the general sense is that, in the 18 days, you have very clear objective. And everybody's together towards that objective. So nobody hurts anybody. And time hasn't come yet to divide people.

So it's much later, after Mubarak is toppled, that suddenly everybody is like, OK, so who's

going to be in power now? So I want the power. No, I want the power. No, I want the power.

So there's this kind of-- now society gets divided. And people remove their masks. 30 years, maybe actually 60 years, where the guy who sells the tomatoes downstairs, or the man who you buy your bread from-- you don't know what he thinks.

You don't know who he is. You know he's Muslim, or you know he's maybe a little bit conservative. But you're not sure-- you don't care, even, what he is. I mean, personally, I don't care.

But suddenly, after the 18 days, I know this guy is a Salafi. And then this guy is a Muslim Brotherhood. This guy is against the Sadat.

I mean, everybody becomes who they really are. And they're not afraid of showing who they really are. So the beards grew. Also, the young people like you started to have beards.

And I was, like, why is everybody growing a beard? And I started asking everybody, like, OK, I get it that Muslim Brotherhood will have their beards, because they've been arrested for the last 30 years and they've been in jail for the last 30 years. So, but why you, my friend, why-- I know you are not the Brotherhood, so why are you growing your beard? What's up with this bloody fashion?

And they're like, well, when you're young, in your early 20s, 30s, the police arrest you systematically if you're a man and you have a little bit of a beard. So actually every young guy in the street let their beards grow, because finally, they were not harassed by the police for being maybe a Brotherhood or maybe not. So it's really interesting to watch this happen.

And of course, when the military came back after the Brotherhood took power and so on, it was this joke on Facebook, which was the Bic-- the company Bic that sells razors-- is going to make a fortune. Because everybody's going to have to shave again, which is what happened. Nobody has a beard now. You don't want to have a beard now. It's not a good place for that.

PROFESSOR: I want to talk a bit about the role of social media as a emotional conduit. I think you had a video about that somewhere. So it's clear that social media cannot be reduced to a purely instrumental tool for organization and tactical coordination.

It also participates, as Gerbaudo says in his text, to assemble a construction of a collective identity, a sense of togetherness, as you said earlier, among activists, physical occupiers, and

internet users. And this is kind of clear with the page of "We are all Khaled Saeed", but also with-- if I can find it-- the Tumblr page blood page of Occupy Movement that was kind of collecting different testimonies of people who consider themselves as the 90%, 99%, kind of as a rallying point for the construction of inclusive popular identity. And this moment was really appealing to everybody.

So do you think that social networks serve as an emotional conduit that condense sentiment of indignation, anger, pride, victimhood? The other example that the Facebook page, "We are all Khaled Saeed," [INAUDIBLE] maybe show about that? This one-- oh, we show it already.

LARA BALADI: Yeah, that was with the army.

PROFESSOR: But did you feel that in the end, the Facebook page was really canalizing feelings and generating people?

LARA BALADI: I mean, we are in a world that is not just a generation of 25 years old. But we're in a world where we all use internet, and we all use our computers. We all use social media-- I mean, the majority of people does.

And we are also at a time when after-- again, I repeat-- after 30 or maybe 60 years, even, of a military regime, you have a little bracket of time where everybody's allowed to talk. And so imagine the avalanche of information that we get. So from not being able to do anything-- talk, take photos in the streets without being harassed by some kind of policeman that is in civil clothes-- or by a sign that says "Do not take photos here because it's a military base," because Egypt is owned by the military. So every street is military base, really.

You have from that situation, you have a complete shift overnight to everybody can say who they are. Everybody can say what they think. And so everybody does.

And in fact, it was pretty amazing and magical and very creative. It was a very, very creative period where people were allowed to be the best of themselves. And they were.

And so the random citizen became the biggest artist. Suddenly, overnight you had this amazing video, very funny or maybe very powerful or very emotional or very poignant that would be posted on the net or on Twitter or whatever, and would communicate something. And people, again, created not just with a hashtag or not just with a Facebook page, but they created communities.

And so you have thousands of websites that were born from the merging of people to collect. So for example, you have-- this can kind of go into the work I'm doing now. But you had suddenly a group that organized to collect all the papers, transcripts, messages that were circulating every day in Tahrir, according to what was happening.

And this is, in itself, an extraordinary amount of documents. And so they would take these documents, and scan them, and put them on the net. And so this is a website called TahrirDocuments where you can go and you can see, according to the date, what was being circulated, what was available in the square, what people were giving each other, handing out.

So you have a great community-- a number of communities that have archived different aspects of the revolution. You have people who have created, of course a lot of a music came out of the revolution. This was one of the biggest outcome of the first couple of months.

You really had a huge amount of creativity. And in a way, this is what I was telling you-- it's kind of the difference between activists, artists, activism, also people doing art, but in an activist kind of way, and not necessarily in a kind of contemporary art kind of way. So it's more something that is using creativity as a tool, but as a tool to fight back, to answer something that is happening. So there was a whole lot of expression and ways of expressing oneself that was born from the first few months of the revolution. I'm not sure I'm answering you, but I think--

PROFESSOR: Yeah, just I don't want to go too far on what we're going to talk later about your work. So let me just ask you this question about the logic of Orientalism of the Cyber Left movement. Because all these new activist movements, like Occupy, Anonymous, Arab Spring and even Indymedia before, they claim to be a movement. They present himself as a direct [INAUDIBLE] democracy with a preference for horizontal structure instead of vertical.

So basically, they say they don't have any leaders. They don't do elections. Everybody's a leader, kind of.

And then the authors of the text that we had to read for today-- they claim that these movements were not as leaderless-- as flat-- as they claim. And I'm curious to know if it's the same feeling that you have. Gerbaudo used the concept of choreographer to describe the kind of soft form of leadership that took place during these movements-- people who kind of are Facebook admins, Tweets or bloggers, who set this stage but without being in the forefront, people who orchestrate the, for example, the Occupy Wall Street advertising campaign that

was really carefully organized.

So you see that there are some brains emerging in these movements. Do you have any example of soft leaders that were organizing the stage? I know that there were some bloggers that were maybe having a bigger influence.

LARA BALADI: I mean, there's a whole culture of bloggers that was born in the Middle East, I think very much after 2006 war in Lebanon and the influence of how people used internet at the time. And so they created a kind of community across the region, not just in Egypt. And so of course, there's some very influential people online.

Hamalawi is one of them, because he is the one who-- he's a [INAUDIBLE] activist who is also a photographer. And he documented 6 of April, 2008 Mahala demonstrations that I was describing earlier, which then led to the group that became opposing the power-- the 6 of April movement. So Hamalawi, for example, was documenting already in 2008 those movements. Because he works a lot with workers in Egypt.

And he blogged already three years before the revolution that so revolution will be Flickr-ized. And his statement was that if we take photos, and if we manage to document what is actually happening, and posting it, and making people see what is happening, then there will be a movement that will come out of it. And again, this was countering the media propaganda, which was not showing any of this stuff. We all knew it, but not really, but kind of.

So of course, there was very important people who were doing the work already. It's not like it happened overnight. But they were not-- they were activists. They were not trying to take power. And a lot of them, they didn't know how to take power. And it's not what they do.

PROFESSOR: Some of them became micro-celebrities against their own will, right?

LARA BALADI: Yeah, I mean, they were happy to be.

PROFESSOR: They tried to be modest.

LARA BALADI: No one refuses to be a celebrity, I think. It's kind of a human thing. But these people are not-- because they're activists, they are not politicians.

It's not because you in the street that you're a revolutionary. It's not because you are an activist that you understand politics. It's not because you are an artist that you necessarily do

good art. So these things are not simple.

And it's great to have a movement. But where it fails is that there is no handing over that moment that we have a little bit of power, but it's very fragile. And we let go of that very fragile shift that can happen.

And instead of giving the lead to someone who actually understands politics, and is able to take over the role of a part in a political party that could hold together a country like Egypt that has 90 million people, I mean, insane. Instead of that, you watch people disagreeing and ego fighting.

And something very important is that the nature of a revolution, and the nature of dictatorship-- so Egypt or anywhere in the world-- a dictatorship by nature is to dictate to eliminate anybody opposing them. So there is no actual opposing power in place during a dictatorship. And that was true during Mubarak regime.

So there was a political party called the Kefaya. Kefaya means enough. And they were really fighting almost alone and always being put in jail and out, and put in jail and out.

And they were pretty upset, because no one really talked about them when the revolution started, but they were the only ones really fighting the regime for the seven years that preceded the revolution. And then you had the 6 of April movement, which was relatively new-- three years-- but still not so public. And they were preparing a revolution for September 2011, because they had gone to, I think, the Republic of Czech and been trained in different parts of the world where there had been peaceful revolutions, that had actually succeeded.

But that was a plan just before the next election where Mubarak was going to put his son in power. So when this happened, there was no plan. We didn't go to the streets saying, we want the revolution. There was no plan to hand the power over, to have somebody ready to take power if that would work. So--

PROFESSOR: Would you say that--

LARA BALADI: That's where the gap sort of--

PROFESSOR: Yeah, because the authors that we read, they kind of argue that these leaderless movements, they don't allow to make proactive decisions, build long-term powerful organization. And not investing in leadership will eventually lead to the dismantle of these movements.

LARA BALADI: Yes, that happened.

PROFESSOR: You think the revolution would have benefited from having stronger leaders to take responsibility for some failure or some--

LARA BALADI: Yes, of course it would. But the problem was that there was nobody. And everybody who tried was rejected by everybody else for many reasons.

So even Baradei, who came back to Egypt three years before Mubarak left, was not liked by the Egyptian population, because he's lived 20 years abroad. And also for a very good reason, which is he was one of the actors that had influenced the Gulf War, the Iraq War in 2003 by being the one who was appointed to give the answer on whether or not there was nuclear weapons in Iraq. And he said yes. We never found any.

But you know, what the consequences of that is terrible. And so of course people don't forget that. So when he came and said, hello, I'm going to be the next president, of course everybody said excuse me? Who are you?

So that was the case for everybody who presented themselves as a leader. So even the Brotherhood, even everybody who-- but who can be ready when there's a dictatorship that does not-- that puts people in jail if they say, I'm going to present myself at the next election. Next thing you know is they're arrested or they have to leave the country.

So that's the nature of dictatorship. So you're surrounded by a wall. You need to break the wall.

And you don't know what's behind the wall. And you're not ready to go behind the wall. But you have no other choice.

That's the first step. You need to break that wall. So we broke the wall.

We're back into another movement. But now we know what's going on. And now we know what's going on.

And things will not be the way they were. It might take more time. And it's a very different battle that will prepare itself. But it's a necessity to go through these steps.

PROFESSOR: So we don't have much time left-- ideally, 10 minutes.

LARA BALADI: That's OK. We talked. Everybody had enough, I think.

PROFESSOR: No, but we want to talk about your current work, because it's very interesting. And the obsession of scholars for the role played by Twitter and Facebook during the revolution kind of eclipsed a very interesting conversation that we can have about the role of traditional media in the revolution. And since you're the co-founder of a radio and a cinema, during the revolution, I think you're the best person to talk about this. So can you talk a little--

LARA BALADI: Just traditional media?

PROFESSOR: Yes, cinema and radio are traditional media compared to digital media. So can you talk briefly about these two initiatives before we talk about your project [INAUDIBLE]?

LARA BALADI: Sure. So again, I'm an artist. And when all this started, I watch this amazing stuff come out of nowhere by people producing music, films and so on. And I watched one video that really fascinated me, which triggered this kind of interest for what was happening every day.

What I was experiencing was resonating with events that I remembered from my childhood-- which I didn't live, but I remember watching on TV and being very impressed by. So that first video of a truck and somebody standing in front of the police truck, the water cannon, but not going anywhere. He would just stay there. And so the police goes backwards, which is incredible.

And it's one of the first videos of courage that appears and viral on YouTube. And it was posted on YouTube, and it was called [ARABIC] Courage Video or something. And so this connection with the history, with another event from '89 in China of-- if you remember this video, if you know this video of this man standing in front of an Army tank and not moving, and the whole world watching 20 tanks kind of going towards this man-- triggered the need for me to see and understand what's happening in relationship to history in the world, not just to Egypt and Egyptian history.

And so I started collecting things, and archiving videos and just learning, and collecting, and organizing, and so on. And one of the first things I did was-- I didn't want to do any art work. That was not the time for me to do any art work.

But in the square, I met a lot of people. And with a friend of mine during the 18 days, we wanted to do a free radio so that we could connect ourselves. And the 18 days ended.

Mubarak was toppled and so on, but we still wanted to do the radio.

So suddenly, it was not just my friend and I. It was actually this guy next to me wants to do the radio. And then he knows this guy who also wants to work with him. And then this person is doing this.

And it was very organic. And before I knew it, we were a whole group of people. And we created this radio.

So it was very spontaneous. And it was a lot of-- there's one very funny show of two characters making fun of politics. And then there was a lot of music from the revolution. So we were kind of a receptacle for all this music production during that period.

Following that-- that's another image. Following that, a few months later, I realized that most people probably hadn't seen all these animation videos like the one I showed you, that most people weren't on internet, that actually, not everybody had seen what really happened in the 18 days. And we were, again, doing a sit-in in Tahrir.

So I decided I have to use the archive that I started building. And I have to show this to people. And there's a sit-in that's starting. And I know it's going to take a long time.

And I'm not going to sit there in the square and not do anything. And actually, there's no images in the square. So we need to focus on something. People need to see something.

So I decided to make a cinema, but I wasn't sure what and how-- all of this. And then I'm on Twitter, and I see somebody saying, oh, we should project films. I was, like, oh, he wants to do that, too. So I connected with him.

And then somebody else said, oh, you want to do cinema. I know your work. I've seen your work. I don't know what.

Are you going to show your work? I said, of course I'm not going to show my work. This is like the middle of a revolution. Who cares about seeing my work?

But let's get together and talk about it. And so we created the cinema and the sit-in. And every night, we projected material that was circulating on the internet, but that most probably, most people didn't see.

And it created a space for a platform for debating the revolution, a platform for convening and

sharing the archive. So people would come with their phone and say, can you give me a copy of what you show? Because I can show this in my area.

I can show this to the coffee next door, project it in the street next to my house. I can show it to my family. I can bring to my village.

And I can give you what I filmed. And so it was a way of exchanging material and kind of disseminating, also, on the ground, footage from the revolution that was countering the media propaganda that was happening. So these are some images of the crowds in the square watching the footage.

PROFESSOR: For the last five minutes, let's talk about your project on the archiving the revolution, because it's also a concern that we should have with digital media.

LARA BALADI: We even have popcorn. Yeah, so these are the two projects that I've done as the first sort of actions or outcome of collecting material, and feeling like, to make sense of all of this, because of the collage that you saw originally, you can imagine how my head works. And I have to have lots of stuff, and make connections and all this.

So it doesn't happen immediately. It takes a little bit of time to find these links. And same thing here. I just felt there's no conclusion to be made now.

But all these questions are popping every minute in my head. So my collection of archive was really about keeping this for when I'll be able to think about it, and when there will be a moment where things start to kind of come down and I can make sense of it and find a link that holds it all together-- if there is one. I don't know.

And so now my project here is about looking at that period of two, three years, and trying to build a timeline of the revolution that is interactive. So this is an example of a very fantastic, beautiful, visual timeline of the history of the world. Which this part is about ancient Egypt, as you see the Sphinx and the Pyramids.

And I find it really fascinating, because it has color coding. It has images. It has text. It has a sense of continuity. It has layers.

So things happen in one country, but you can start seeing also what was happening in parallel to Egypt-- so the tsunami in Japan, bin Laden arrested and killed, Occupy Wall Street, and all these resonating events between Tahrir and other countries in the world. And at the same

time, being quite a personal view of it, because it's a collection of elements that I'm interested in because of the nature of the work I do and the type of material I normally work with. And so I actually focused my archive on, again, that production-- that creative production from the random citizen and what I call the popular language of Tahrir.

So these are early sketches of my timeline made from a photo that I took, videos that I collected, et cetera, et cetera. This is a detail. And then this is, one of the graffitis from Mohamed Mahmoud Street that's is one of the areas that come out of Tahrir and where the street graffiti artists of the revolution have, over and over and over again, and overlaid all these fantastic paintings as things happened-- portraits of martyrs and so on.

And that huge, walled, continuous street is so extraordinary, and constitutes a really ongoing tableau vivant. And that mix between that kind of art in the street and that influence of that beautiful painting and the social media production that we experience is, for me, sort of missing something that it needs to come together. And so what I'm trying to do is a kind of painting of the 21st century, but that is interactive so that you would be immersed in as an audience, but also be able to kind of talk to and look at in a way that you would say, OK, I'm interested.

And your question is, what is the role of the Army or the social media in the revolution? And so you would only see-- suddenly, the rest of the timeline would sort of disappear. And what comes forward would be all the aspects and all the moments in which social media is actually mentioned in an article, or is in a hashtag of one or another type of media that is being displayed.

PROFESSOR: Well I cannot wait to see it. Seriously. Is there questions specifically on the presentation? Because we're going to have a discussion later on things that you posted on the forum. But is there any questions related to what we spoke about?

AUDIENCE: Yeah, there is kind of a place which you said you built next to real military base or something like that? How did they let you do that?

LARA BALADI: So the military base is a huge area that was a little bit elitist. So poor people were not very welcomed. And usually, they tended to be kind of kicked out.

In the middle of it is the Opera House, the Library of Music and the Pavilion of Arts. And all of this is managed by the government, the Ministry of Culture. But the area and that whole space

belongs to the military.

And there's a military base just next to the opera. So it's surrounded by security. It's very well guarded and blah, blah, blah.

And one of the events is, funny enough, Egypt has one of the oldest Bienniales of contemporary art. So it's almost as old as the Venice Bienniale that's very famous. And so for 25 years, there's been every two years this event, this art event, which is a disaster. And it's like a horror show.

But that year, December 2008, was one of the iterations of the Bienniale. And for the first time in 25 years, they changed the curators from the Minister of Culture to two young men that they appointed to be taking care of that event. And they asked me to be part of the event, which was in itself crazy, because I'm a woman.

I'm of Lebanese origin, so I'm not a pure Egyptian. I'm Christian. I'm from the art world that is more private, not the government type artist, so all of the things that normally they hate.

And so it was, like, wow, they're inviting me. Of course I have to say yes. But I also have to make a point of my participation.

I don't want to just show a collage or a piece that is an interesting piece, but not in this context. So I want to actually respond to where I'm going to show. So I wanted to do a work in situ.

And so I talked to the curator. And I told him that's my idea. I want to do this. And I was very lucky, because he said, oh, my god, I'm really interested in these areas.

And he, because he was one of the first ones-- I mean, the first in 25 years to have something really radically happening and changing in that structure of the Bienniale, of course he was happy to do something provocative. And he wanted to do something provocative. And he wanted his Bienniale to be successful. And already to choose me was a problem.

So it was really funny. So of course, he was totally on my side. And so I negotiated to have a piece of land, and to occupy this little piece of land.

And then I had the gardener come and tell me, what are you doing to my flowers? And I don't know what. I was, like, OK, I'll do them again. Just leave me work.

So it was very, very interesting for all of these reasons, because everybody was waiting to see

what's going to happen, what are they actually going to show? Is it really going to make a difference? And it was a fascinating, very exciting time.

And the work was really very engaging, because the people who built the tower live in these areas. And when they understood what I was doing, they became completely in love with it. And then the people who guard that military base are people who live in this area. So they actually came and did their naps. They took naps inside my tower.

The people who owned the cafes around, the library and all of this inside the garden surrounding became familiar with me building this for two months, and then showing it for another month. And so every time there was a visitor, they would come and offer coffee. So it became a cafe.

I mean, it was incredible. And I would come in the morning, and find these huge ashtrays full of cigarettes. I was, like, who smoked all this? I would ask [INAUDIBLE] who smoked all this?

He was, like, well, the Director of the Opera House came with his meeting, with somebody he was meeting. And they stayed three hours, and smoked all night. And so they were having their meetings in that space.

So that space became like a space. It was super alive. And it was really interesting, because it helped, sort of. People came to me and said, you know, normally, we see these areas are as crime-ridden, ugly, horrible people.

They have very negative connotation. And now I'm going to go back to these areas and look at it from a different angle. So it was this kind of energy, and trying to bring people to look at themselves in a different way and say, OK, wake up.

PROFESSOR: Well, I wish we had more time to discuss. It's so interesting, all of this. But we need to do another presentation. So I want to thank you. Let's applaud Lara.

[APPLAUSE]

LARA BALADI: Thank you.