Revolutionary Music in Lebanon and Egypt: Alternative Imaginaries for Self-representation and Participation

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Abstract: Globally, mainstream media excludes or misrepresents many societal groups, resulting in significant community absences. In these contexts, alternative media plays a vital role in offering meaningful self-representation and political participation. This type of media becomes crucial in revolutionary contexts, where people rise against the injustices of their governments in hopes of change. This article offers a case study approach to revolutionary music in the Middle East, where we review the socio-economic and political contexts behind the emergence of alternative media in Lebanon and Egypt. We analyze our cases by using Bailey et al.'s (2007) comprehensive approaches to alternative media. We propose that revolutionary music evolves and adapts to larger changes in the public sphere. Still, as the article concludes, while music can enable a persistent community when demanding change, it does not guarantee an actual change in the political system.

Keywords: Egypt; Lebanon; Revolutionary music; Alternative media.

INTRODUCTION

One of the long-standing issues in a variety of academic fields, and in society at large, relates to the ways of achieving political, economic, and cultural change. Revolution, in particular, is an often-deployed method, as it focuses on radical and swift changes, often reverting to violence. In some cases, revolution is driven by collective social movements that work – in the political sense – towards bringing about changes in the state and its institutions, changes to the nature

of state-society relations, and changes to societies' political cultures (Kamrava, 2020, p. 1). However, people can also revolt to seek change in non-political aspects, such as social change, environmental change, and cultural change. Also, political elites can and do organize revolutions.

This also applies to the Arab world. In response to deep socio-economic grievances, revolutions have given a voice to the dissent of marginalized communities while pressuring states to reform, using various tools. Still, after witnessing for decades, waves of revolutions in the Arab world, we still hunt for the means to end the oppression of many regimes. But when the revolutions that did occur broke the 'barrier of silence', a change in people's attitudes was almost immediately reflected in the music scene of their respective countries. Revolutionary music became a significant tool used by artists to develop art that keeps protesters mobilized, offering them the representation, for which they yearn. Through revolutionary music, protesters manage to express their persistent rage, antagonism, and opposition against (unjust) governments as a way to demand change.

In this article, we focus on two cases of revolutionary music in the Middle East. One concerns Cairokee, a rock band based in Egypt, and the other DJ Madi Karimeh, a producer and video editor based in Lebanon. We explore this revolutionary music in two different periods, the first as part of the 2011 Egyptian revolution, and the latter as part of the more recent 2019 Lebanese revolution. By revolutionary music, we mean songs that consist of lyrics opposing the status-quo, either directly or indirectly, and that are disseminated either or both digitally and actively during the protests. Furthermore, we explore how our case studies show the relationship between alternative media practices (changing mainstream media practices) and changes in political systems. We argue that revolutionary music has been a mobilizing tool for decades, helping protesters to challenge the traditional, hegemonic political and media systems in the hopes of change, even when this change eventually fails to materialize.

REVOLUTIONARY MUSIC

One of the main factors needed for a revolution to erupt is a desire for change. However, for enough people to effectively take to the streets, other factors need to be considered as well. One key factor is the need for actual mobilizations, which can occur in a variety of ways. Relevant to our argument is Eyerman and Jamison's (1998) emphasis on the role of music as a mobilizing agent, one that transcends time and space and remains an ongoing force for mobilization. Importantly, Eyerman and Jamison (1998) also point out that social movements are a blend of culture and politics, where culture–in this case music—can be utilized for political purposes. Establishing this link between culture and

politics is vital, as it emphasizes the cultural factors in social movements, where music contributes to the nature of these movements and the potential change they bring about. Similarly, Byerly (2013) emphasizes music's mobilizing capacity, as she describes revolutionary music as "a powerful weapon against the comparatively simple motivations of authoritarian rule" (p. 7). She argues that music is used against regimes, where oppressive leaders might fear its influence over the people. Furthermore, by tracing the role of music in protests through the past decades, Byerly identifies how such cultural elements contributed to the success of numerous social movements. She takes note of the musical transformation in the decolonization era, where music was used as a weapon to criticize colonialism fostering a sense of collective and inclusive identity in colonized societies.

The communicative dimension of music is essential for it to be a mobilizing force. Revolutionary music serves as a unified voice for those seeking change. Kunreuther (2018) links the notion of voice to democracy, where having a voice is necessary to guarantee successful political representation and hence a viable democracy. She argues that the notion of voice, in political rhetoric, is not constrained to "discursive speech, analytic or reasoned discourse" (p. 2), but is a broad concept that also includes more casual forms of discourse, such as "voices shouting, collective chanting [and] the production of noise for political effect" (p. 2). She then argues that individual voices are amplified through revolutionary music and chants, producing a united voice that is associated with mass movements. Barbera and Jackson (2019) stress another aspect of the communicative role that music can play, as it is one of the ways "people learn about the likelihood of a revolution's success by talking to those around themselves, the prior beliefs of the agents, the homogeneity of preferences in the population, and the number of contacts" (p. 2). As relevant music emerges, people will be able to assess how common is their desire for change, and whether enough people will participate in a potential or planned protest. This happens because music offers people a space to ultimately decide if being a revolutionary will actually lead to change.

(REVOLUTIONARY) MUSIC IN THE ARAB WORLD

In the 21st century, studies on music in the Arab world have increasingly recognized the complex social, economic, and cultural factors that impact and are influenced by music. The mediation of music through cultural traditions, structural changes, and technological advancements led to the emergence of new and ever-changing domains where music has become reflective of social traditions and norms, while at the same time subtly shaping them (Frishkopf, 2010). Furthermore, researchers have realized how studies of Arab music should not

be approached in a dichotomous manner, such as that of 'traditional vs. modern' or 'western vs. eastern', as such an approach undermines the process by which music gradually becomes a reflection of societal forces where all these contradictions co-exist (Burkhalter et al., 2013).

In the Arab world, music has long been associated with revolutionary and resistance sentiments. A prime example is the development of rap music in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. It was no surprise that such a genre would boom in times of revolution such as that of the Arab Spring, where dissent was heavily displayed through this genre (Moreno, 2017). However, as Moreno (2017) proposes in his work on Moroccan rap, the genre of revolutionary music can neither be alienated from the larger society nor be studied in a dichotomous framework that proposes culture as "fixed within perfectly built patterns of political contention" (p. 11). Moreno (2017) thus rejects identifying Moroccan rap as a *mere* form of resistance; he rather stresses its expressive nature, and how it offers a reflection of the struggles and fortunes of the local Moroccan society. Similarly, McDonald (2013) emphasizes protest songs being a form of "articulation within larger projects of social change" (p. 5).

If we focus on the countries of interest in our article, we can see that, with the advent of the Arab spring in the 2010s, revolutionary music spiked once again to prominence and became integral to these struggles. In Egypt, the 2011 revolution provided a fertile space for revolutionary and resistance cultures to emerge. In Tahrir Square, Cairo – the epicenter of the revolution – various forms of art developed, including graffiti, banners, documentaries, poets, and music (LeVine, 2015, p. 1283). Dessì (2020), writing about protest music in revolutionary Cairo (2011-2013), argues that revolutionary art and experiences bring out and activate "the potentialities embedded in shared histories, memories, and forms of life" (p. 235). Valassopoulos and Mostafa (2014) contend that revolutionary music served to provide confidence and hope to the demonstrators during the 2011 Egyptian Revolution, hence intensifying the effectiveness of the protests. Furthermore, they argue that music helped to "articulate emerging desires and aspirations" (ibid., p. 638) of the people. Their article also emphasizes the role of revolutionary music as one that counters the influence of mainstream music and discourse, which is often used by authoritarian regimes to create support garnering propaganda.

In Lebanon, even when we go back to the period before our case study, i.e., during the civil war of 1975-1990, the use of music as a propaganda tool by different sects and clans to represent themselves and advocate their views, has been well-documented (Burkhalter, 2014). For example, the right-wing parties used music that praised the Lebanese Forces and alienated those who opposed them, in efforts to garner support. Burkhalter (2014) makes a point, which is important for our analysis, that for more than 15 years after the end

of the war "a few people would still play Lebanese Forces' anthems loudly on their balconies" (p. 174). Similarly, the 2019 protests in Lebanon selectively reutilized revolutionary music whilst opposing the injustices imposed by the current presidency of Michel Aoun.

More broadly, literature about revolutionary music – whether in the Arab world or outside it – focuses on grounding revolutionary music within the social and cultural context from which it emerges. This then presents a thorough explanation of how such music affects various groups, offers them a unified voice, and gives them a tool of mobilization.

ALTERNATIVE MEDIA AS ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Through the analysis of our case studies, focused on specific artists in Egypt in 2011 and Lebanon in 2019, we want to show how revolutionary music activated these 'potentialities' by bringing people together and mobilizing them to move towards their shared goal of being heard. We will also show how revolutionary music is a form of alternative media, which is adjusted to create change. This enables us to explore how music found innovative ways to reach the audience and fulfill its role as an alternator, and how it functions as a link between different parts of society. Analytical support in realizing these objectives is found in Bailey et al.'s (2007) work on alternative media, as their framework identifies overlooked and often ignored aspects when defining alternative media.

Bailey et al. (2007, pp. 12-13) emphasize that multi-angled alternative media are not only opposite or counter-hegemonic in relation to the dominant mainstream, but may also take the form and role of community media, civil society media, and rhizomatic media. In the first conceptual approach, Bailey et al. (2007) consider alternative media to offer content that either supplements or challenges hegemonic discourses and representation. In the second approach, of community media, they emphasize how alternative media serve the community through access and participation in media production and reception (Bailey et al., 2007, p. 14). Performing this role, alternative media offer accessible content that facilitates communication between community members, and promote the participation of members as they become both the audience and the producers of the media content. In the third approach, alternative media are linked to civil society while focusing on two aspects: alternative media being the 'third voice' between the state and commercial media, and alternative media 'making democracy work' through facilitating debate and discussion. In the fourth and last approach, of rhizomatic media, Bailey et al. (2007, p. 27) focus on three characteristics: alternative media's role at the crossroads of civil society, their elusiveness, and their interconnections and linkages with the market and state.

INTRODUCING THE CASE STUDIES

Our first case study about the Egyptian rock-band Cairokee, takes us back to January 2011, when after the events known as the Arab Spring, revolutionaries in Egypt were able to overthrow the dictator Hosni Mubarak. Although the military regained power through a coup less than three years afterwards, the 2011 revolution is still considered a critical juncture in Egyptian history. It was the first time in modern Egypt where the demands of the people were heard and fulfilled, evident in the creation of the first democratic presidential elections the country has experienced (Jumet, 2018). This revolution erupted due to the regime's prevalent corruption and incompetence, where unpleasant socio-economic conditions were affecting almost every Egyptian citizen (Jumet, 2018).

At this time, Cairokee first gained their popularity. Although they were initially formed in 2003, the band gained most of their fanbase through their sentimental revolutionary songs that emerged during the revolution. Three specific songs became very notable due to their passionate and moving lyrics: "*Sout El Horeya*" [Voice of Freedom], "*Yal Midan*" [Oh Square], and "*Ethbat Makanak*" [Hold your Ground]. Each of these songs voiced the Egyptian people's demands and sentiments at different moments. Released on YouTube a day before Mubarak's resignation, "*Sout El Horeya*" captured the spirit of the Tahrir square in the midst of the revolution, with the first line of the song being "I took to the streets and will refuse to go back." Released in November of the same year, "*Yal Midan*" captured the sentiment of the Tahrir square in the hindsight of the revolution, emphasizing how 'the square' brought people together. This was released at a time where the revolution was thought to be failing and was used to maintain the sentiments of the people and bring them back together. Two months later, with low public morale still prevalent, Cairokee released "*Ethbat Makanak*." As its title implies, this song was another attempt to bolster the revolutionary sentiment of the people, a call for the people to hold their ground and keep fighting.

Our second case study concerns the Lebanese DJ Madi K(arimeh). On October 17, 2019, after the Lebanese government decided to raise fees for calls via the app WhatsApp, people expressed their rage through protesting because as 41-year-old Karimeh told Al Jazeera, "it was the last straw" (Chehayeb, 2019). Yet, this was not the main reason protesters blocked the streets and revolted against the government. The Lebanese population had been deprived of basic services, such as water, electricity, sanitation, public health, and public education (Khoury, 2020). On top of all these struggles, Lebanon had been suffering from a political and financial crisis. Shattered by the civil war between 1975 and 1990, Lebanon was drowning in debt, leading to a high rate of unemployment and instability (Chehayeb, 2019). Despite its small surface area, Lebanon has

more than 25 political parties trying to gain power, thus, causing conflicts across the country. According to Khoury, the Lebanese were not protesting because of a simple case of financial mismanagement, but "a fundamentally flawed system that superimposes sectarianism, feudalism, and corruption" (Khoury, 2020). Many Lebanese believed that the "only way out is to change the system" (Gadzo, 2019). Then, the October 17 revolution happened.

During the first days of the protests, many forms of communication and media filled the streets, such as graffiti, singing, dancing, and DJ performances. This brings us to DJ Madi K, who quickly became known as the 'Revolution DJ'. Madi ignited the revolutionary and patriotic spirit after he performed his DJ playlist in Al Nour Square, in Tripoli. The 29-year-old turned the protests across various parts of Lebanon into a "dance party with his captivating music" (Bajec, 2019). His playlist featured a revised version of the national anthem along with patriotic songs mixed with techno and other hits that he readapted, making references to the popular uprising. His choice of songs was not merely anti-governmental and revolutionary-oriented; it was also about dancing and chanting, referring to some of the top hits of that specific moment. People who physically participated in the DJ performance, and Lebanese expatriates living abroad who watched him and shared his content through social media, created a non-geographic community of protesters who virtually participated in the anti-governmental movement. Also, his later DJ performances across Lebanon, demonstrated the role of music as a revolutionary element that motivated and encouraged protesters to remain on the streets.

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES WITH CAIROKEE AND DJ MADI KARIMEH

Using Bailey et al.'s (2007) framework enables us to study the use of this communicational practice—music—in two revolutions in the MENA region. To understand how music stimulated change, we further provide a detailed analysis of the cases of Cairokee and DJ Madi Karimeh, without overlooking the imperative approaches of alternative media. We illustrate how each of our cases relates to (or does not) Bailey et al.'s definition of alternative media, its role, and how they serve people and communities.

As for the data for this article, two main sources were used, in addition to the oeuvre of both artists. First, a one-on-one interview with DJ Madi Karimeh was conducted by us in November 2020. We asked him specific questions about his music and his role in the revolution. The interview had a duration of 2,5 hours; it was conducted in Arabic and was transcribed and translated by us. For Cairokee, the primary source was "My Days with Cairokee: And a story of a generation that tried to change the world", in which book the Egyptian author Walaa Kamal

documents the eighteen months he spent with the rock-band (Kamal, 2019). The book is written in Arabic and the quotes that are included in this article were translated by us. All data were analyzed using qualitative methods, in particular thematic analysis, driven by the sensitizing concepts generated by the four approaches discussed by Bailey et al. (2007).

REVOLUTIONARY MUSIC AND THE COMMUNITY

Discussions about alternative media as serving a community must initially define the type it is aiming to serve. From there, we shall analyze how it serves that community, how accessible it is and to what extent it is participatory. This is done through evaluating two separate categories: access and participation. Access is the way "the content and form of these media validates and strengthens the community", whereas participation is "how the community is also the audience, how audiences are also producers of these media and how the topics and tools facilitate community involvement" (Bailey et al., 2007, p. 14). Each of these categories are evaluated in terms of production and reception.

The community served by revolutionary music producers is usually the community of what can be defined as 'revolutionaries.' These are groups who took it upon themselves to give voice to their dissatisfaction with the state and call for change. Revolutionaries are a localized traditional community, which binds them through shared geography and experiences. They are also a translocal community, in which their shared experiences frequently extend beyond their local borders. Revolutionary music can also serve to persuade other groups in society to participate, recruiting them into the community of revolutionaries. Thereby, the community served encompasses everyone seeking change.

Revolutionary music serves this community by maintaining their motivation for calling for change as well as serving as an agent of mobilization. Revolutionary music aims to emphasize and publicly voice the revolutionaries' views and concerns, and since they are usually a large community, this helps unify them and strengthens their cohesiveness as a community. To fulfill this role, revolutionary music needs to be easily available, understood, and interpreted.

Both of our case studies fulfill this requirement, as their music is easily accessed through digital media platforms. Furthermore, revolutionary music is easily understood not only because it is presented in a common language, but also because it emphasizes shared experiences and sentiments. To add to that, both cases portray how revolutionary music serves the community as it gives everyone the chance to mobilize against oppression and seek change. With Karimeh, the audience actively participated in the live DJ performances as a means of protesting on the streets of Tripoli, Beirut, Al Beqaa, and Zgharta. The presence of a host, Bilal Jamal, alongside Karimeh, voicing out motivational, revolutionary chants, including "We are the power" and "All of them [politicians] means all of them",

facilitated the communication and participation of the protesters in the movement. Similarly, Cairokee still plays revolutionary songs in concerts years after the revolution, allowing the audience to join in, and "give them [the songs] back to the community as they are the ones that created them" (Kamal, 2019).

To further highlight the strong link between these artists and their respective communities, it is important to note the continuity of the change they hope to bring about. Karimeh, for example, still identifies himself as the 'Revolution DJ' and claims that it will always be a part of his self-identification. Indeed, his social media platforms, especially his Instagram account, are fully devoted to anti-governmental posts. Almost two years after the protests ended, the revolutionary side of Karimeh remains accentuated. "I only stopped because of the Coronavirus" Karimeh stresses. "If a cure is found, I will be the first to protest on the streets of Tripoli all over again". The change he brought to himself and to Lebanon is persistent and continuous even though protests are currently not taking place. For example, during July 2021, Karimeh summoned students to protest in Al Nour Square as well as in front of the Ministry of Education and High Education. At that time, students were forced to study for their official exams while dealing with a shortage of electricity, water, food, medicine, and petrol. Karimeh has been continuously participating in revolutionary acts against the state long after those protests have ended, indicating the continuity and persistence of (the desire for) change.

As for Cairokee, whether it was amid the 2011 revolution, or in the years of instability that ensued, they made sure to always be the voice for those who sought change in Egypt and reflect their demands and sentiments. At times of the mass upheaval, Cairokee focused on mobilizing the masses and calling for action; and in times of relative quiet, they focused on producing songs that critiqued what they saw as unfair and unacceptable in relation to the Egyptian regime – voicing what people were unable to say. As Amir Eid, Cairokee's lead singer and main songwriter, said, "My biggest concern was representing the struggles of the Egyptian middle class, the class that set off the revolution, where thousands of youths took to the streets to find their voice" (Kamal, 2019). Over the years, Cairokee managed to stay relevant within civil society by capturing popular emotions and voicing them out loud for everyone to hear. From "*Sout El Horeya*" [Voice of Freedom] in 2011 – urging people to mobilize, to "*Yama fel Habs Mazaleem*" [Prison is full of innocent people] in 2014 – criticizing state corruption, to "*Akher Oghneya*" [The Last Song] in 2016 – emphasizing the need for freedom. While the 2016 single was not in fact the band's last song, it factored in capturing the prevalent sentiment in the band and Egyptian society. As the lyrics stress, "if this is my last song, it will be about freedom".

REVOLUTIONARY MUSIC AS ALTERNATIVE TO THE MAINSTREAM

One of the most important aspects of alternative media is how they counter mainstream media, which are usually characterized by their focus on representing powerful and dominant groups and promoting the ideology of the latter. This creates a need for under-represented groups to represent themselves through alternative forms of media. When evaluating certain types of media as alternative to the mainstream, two areas need to be analyzed: content and organization (Bailey et al., 2007, p. 16). Alternative media are usually characterized by content that is inclusive and includes numerous discourses, voices, genres, formats, and delivery methods.

When looking at the mainstream media in Egypt and Lebanon, it can be observed that they are merely a government or partisan mouthpiece. This gives no room for representation for large segments of the population, who must develop their own forms of alternative media to represent themselves. Regarding music, mainstream music is essentially songs created by artists 'loyal' to the regime, focusing on praising the state, or simply ignoring politics. In contrast, content-wise, revolutionary music is directly oppositional to the state, and thus also oppositional to many forms of mainstream media. The interview with Karimeh and the research done on Cairokee both highlight how 'revolutionary' themes are integrated into their music. In Cairokee's case, their songs, such as "*Yal Midan*" and "*Sout El Horeya*," explicitly call for revolutionary action and are clearly anti-hegemonic. They criticize the regime, praise the revolution and the revolutionaries, and call for perseverance in the face of oppression.

On the other hand, in Karimeh's case, there is an alternation of direct and indirect forms of 'revolutionary' songs. For example, along with the non-partisan mix of Electronic Dance Music (EDM), Karimeh fused a song, "*Ya Souwar El Ard*" [Oh Revolutionaries of the Earth] by the renowned revolutionary singer Julia Butros. He specifically replayed the lyrics "Oh revolutionaries of the earth, rebel against tyranny and deprivation" but then changed to a completely different genre of song, which is not explicitly revolutionary but incidentally expresses rebellious ideologies. For example, although "*Ensay*" [Forget it] is originally a break-up song that targets ex-lovers, during the revolution, it expressed people's demands for the downfall of Lebanon's political class. The lyrics were politically contextualized, such as "Forget the day you met me" and "I'm not yours anymore, yalla bye", as a way to convey their desire of removing despotic politicians from power.

In this way, Karimeh adjusted the initial purpose of the songs – entertaining the audience – to a whole different goal, the ignition of the revolution with the intention of change. Therefore, it is the counter-hegemonic content of the songs that make Cairokee and Karimeh alternative to the mainstream media. It is this type of media content that helped the Lebanese and Egyptian people create

change within the system. Another way his music is alternative to the mainstream is because of the audience it attracts. Mainstream media in Lebanon are usually very sect-specific, while Karimeh's audience brought numerous sects and factions of Lebanese society, together for a shared goal. This helped promote an alternative view of Lebanese society, one that was not segregated and violent as mainstream media often presents.

Looking at the 2011 Egyptian Revolution, numerous mainstream songs praising the regime were released before Mubarak's fall (Valassopoulos & Mostafa, 2014, p. 641). Due to their hegemonic nature, however, this music did not gain much popularity, and became even more unpopular after Mubarak's fall. Nonetheless, "*Sout El Horeya*" was a song and a music video that soon became a trademark for the revolution. Cairokee and singer Hany Adel had a collaborative project with the song's music video being recorded during protests. The recording showed people of assorted age groups, genders, and social classes holding banners that dictate the song's lyrics while they mouth it along with the artists. This illustrates the representational aspect of revolutionary music as an alternative to the mainstream, where it is not only the lyrics that represent the people, but an effort is made to represent their communal experience as well.

In terms of organization, our two examples differ. Karimeh produces DJ mashups of previously recorded songs, producing content that requires little or no cost, allowing him to be completely independent of hierarchically structured organizations and recording studios. Karimeh stresses his indifference about promoting or advertising his DJ performance during the revolution: "I asked my friends to not post anything on social media," he says, "money is the least of my concerns," indicating his stance against the commercialization of media with social purposes. Karimeh claimed he did not care about gaining money at the end of his protest show: "What I am currently doing is for my country, not for me and not for anyone else". As Karimeh stresses in his interview, "anyone making money out of the revolution is the first person to be destroying our country". Karimeh's intention of using social media is clear: to construct change in Lebanon, while remaining independent from commercialism, consumerism, and popularity.

In the case of Cairokee, production is organized as with most musical artists, where they are signed with a record label that manages their production and distribution. DJ Madi Karimeh on the other hand, is more self-funded, self-organized, self-taught, and his revolutionary music is almost completely independent of the market. However, Cairokee's provocative lyrics forced them to find alternative and innovative ways of distribution. In one of their albums – "*Noaata Beida*" [A Drop of White] – they decided to completely forgo commercial profit and released the whole album on YouTube for free. This was because of the state's censorship authority restrictions on their provocative and criticizing lyrics,

where they ended up valuing their stance as a band that "stands for the truth" and refused to bend to the state's will and publish a cut version of the album (Kamal, 2019). This meant that Cairokee's goals were not merely commercial; they aspired to mobilize the movements with their meaningful lyrics and to maintain the support of their base who expected them to not bow down to the status quo. This emphasizes the aspect that both cases do not wish to be a part of the mainstream, but instead consistently defy and stand against it.

REVOLUTIONARY MUSIC AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Civil societies are constituted by groups or organizations that work outside the realms of state and market. They open the space for people to develop an alternative conceptualization of the political and economic systems (Parker-Stephen, 2013), all of which creates a public sphere, where people of different genders, occupations, and demographics come together to discuss their similar topics of interest. In this context, public opinion emerges as an alternative to the ideologies presented by the government or private sectors. It is crucial to note that civil societies are not entirely independent from the market and the state (Bailey et al., 2007, p. 22). By defining alternative media as a part of civil society, we are considering it to be the third voice between the state media and private commercial media (Bailey et al., 2007, p. 22).

Moreover, when linking alternative media to civil society, we shed light on its importance for the viability of democracy. This is because alternative media allows citizens to take active roles in micro-participation, such as participating in demonstrations and uprisings. Micro-participation teaches citizens ways to adopt many democratic and civic attitudes, and hence, allows for the macro-participation of society. All of this allows citizens to participate in public debates to represent themselves in the public sphere (Bailey et al., 2007, p. 25).

When describing civil society in our case studies, it was vital to mention the demands that bind people together through music. In both cases, citizens were exasperated by the corruption and the despotism of the regimes, so they were protesting to demand reform and change. It was the demands of the protesters that served as the point of connection that builds consensus and solidarity between them, hence forming civil society. Another noteworthy aspect of civil society is how music binds people of disparate social identities in one place, where music becomes the public sphere that facilitates communication between citizens.

Firstly, to emphasize their role as a third voice, it is important to note how each of our case studies reached out for help and funding. In the case of Karimeh, all his equipment, including the DJ set and the speakers, was self-funded. The DJ set had been stored in his room "for years", Karimeh notes. Every step was spontaneous and unplanned, so he asked some of his friends to help him set up the DJ set, and then rented speakers from a local business beside his house.

"I did not take 1000 L.L [Lebanese pounds] from beginning to end", Karimeh says. He went on to explain his independent position away from the private sector or the state by clarifying "I'm here to give energy to the people and to keep the revolution alive". Unlike his previous DJ shows, Karimeh modified the reason for using music. In response to the corruption of the Lebanese government, Karimeh said that all he wanted was to offer motivation, inspiration, and liveliness to protests with no reciprocity. Karimeh adds, "sometimes one should forget about money … Money comes and goes … But if my country goes, it needs years to come back".

Secondly, the inclusion or exclusion of opinions and identities is also an essential aspect of being a third voice. The Revolution DJ's performances were fully committed to community participation. "My phone blew up with messages asking me to DJ," he says. This is unlike other DJ performances, where the audience's participation is limited to just singing along, as is the case with Cairokee. Since their media artifacts are professionally produced and organized, the community's inclusion is limited.

Moreover, it is important that we mention how revolutionary music mediates change. As mentioned above, Karimeh's DJ mashups and Cairokee's songs supported revolutionary changes within the community. The former embellished the streets of Al Nour Square in Tripoli, stereotyped by dominant media as a terrorist land, with protesters from all around Lebanon, regardless of their religion, political affiliation, or social class. "All social classes were protesting on the street", Karimeh says, "the rich, the poor, and the middle class". Karimeh explains that inclusivity is what made the October 17 revolution successful: "a protest with only one class protesting is automatically unsuccessful, everyone needs to be protesting". This has never happened before. Unity was never conventional or 'normal' in Lebanon. It was an act that could lead to extreme chaos between different religious sects and political parties. Nevertheless, with revolutionary music, Tripoli became the symbol of inclusiveness, unity, and peace after long being considered a space for war, division, conservatism, and terrorism. Change in the views and perceptions of people was constructed after Karimeh unified people with his revolutionary mashups.

REVOLUTIONARY MUSIC AS A RHIZOME

The fourth approach is the rhizomatic approach of alternative media. Here, we focus on three characteristics: their role at the crossroads of civil society, their elusiveness, and their interconnections and linkages with the market and the state (Bailey et al., 2007, p. 27). The first characteristic, at the crossroads of civil society, shows how alternative activities in a revolutionary movement, are locally grounded, yet can also be engaged in trans-local networks. The second characteristic, their elusiveness, makes alternative media embedded in a fluid civil

society and media organization where activists appear when an event requires their presence, and then disappear or transform into another media activity (Bailey et al., 2007, p. 27). The third characteristic, their interconnections with the market and the state, emphasizes how alternative media cut across borders and build linkages between the state and market without losing their proper identity (Bailey et al., 2007, p. 28).

Revolutionary music is rhizomatic, a metaphor for "nonlinear, anarchic, and nomadic" (Bailey et al., 2007, p. 26). To consider revolutionary music a rhizomatic medium, we explain the three crucial characteristics. For example, when looking at Cairokee, the issues they talk about are usually specific to the Egyptian community. Nevertheless, they also connect with people all over the world – at least the Arab world – due to the trans-local nature of these grievances, such as state corruption, poverty, and economic difficulties, all of which are prevalent across the region. For the DJ street performances, it all started in Tripoli, where after receiving great engagement and response from the audience, Madi Karimeh translocated to Beirut, Al Beqaa, and Zgharta. Karimeh also mentions that he "performed the same songs to each area in Lebanon, and each gave the same response and engagement." All this links back to how revolutionary music in Lebanon and Egypt reflects anti-governmental and revolutionary conflicts that are prevalent globally.

To identify the trans-locality of revolutionary music is to think about the "fluid articulation of a diversity of alternative media organizations" (Bailey et al., 2007, p. 27). Both Cairokee and Karimeh use Rock and EDM – considered to be Western elements – while revolutionizing against Arab regimes. In this case, both of their music is fluid because they employ elements from different non-Arab parts of the world into Arabic songs. Hence, both stay locally grounded as they sing or remix Arabic music while incorporating Western musical styles and genres.

Second, revolutionary music is elusive, meaning it is embedded in a fluid society but is simultaneously antagonistic towards the state and market (Bailey et al., 2011, p. 27). In other words, revolutionary music is not merely counter-hegemonic; it engages with the state and the market, making music trans-hegemonic (Bailey et al., 2011, p. 28). This is another example of how (mainstream) media practices can be changed. Although Karimeh is in opposition to the mainstream public and commercial media, he still performs in events sanctioned by the government or the private sector, such as the color fun festival that was organized a few days before the October 17 Lebanese Revolution. Indeed, Karimeh pops up when an event requires his presence, but he then transforms into a different character when change is needed. Karimeh adjusts how he practices music depending on the conditions surrounding him and his country. Similarly, Cairokee is part of the worldwide music market where they produce songs unrelated to the rhetoric of revolution, possibly fitting mainstream market demands.

Amir Eid always claims that he writes what he feels, expressing himself and his views through his music. So, depending on the context, Cairokee produces and performs revolutionary songs when they see fit, otherwise, they operate as a regular rock band that produces music for a wider audience. As a result, music as a medium is adjusted and modified based on the political situation of the country and vice versa.

Thirdly, the creation of interconnections with the market and the state is another characteristic of revolutionary music as a rhizome. To elaborate, identifying mutations and collaborations with the market and the state is vital. For example, national TV stations advertised, in an indirect way, Revolution DJ through broadcasting the whole performance. Hence, this advertisement facilitated building linkages between different parts of Lebanon. In the case of Cairokee, the band collaborates with various sponsors to reach a larger audience to fight against hegemony.

This brings us to how revolutionary music can be perceived as trans-hegemonic. Both cases use their collaborations with the state and market to critique hegemony. For example, in the midst of the Lebanese revolution, Karimeh traveled to Qatar during the weekend to perform in one of the clubs. His playlist heavily integrated revolutionary and anti-government songs, so Madi took advantage of his paid job to build linkages between Lebanon and Qatar. By building these connections, revolutionary music established solidarity between the Lebanese community in Qatar and Lebanon to solidify their position against hegemony.

In the case of Cairokee, the band collaborates with various sponsors to maintain funding and reach a larger audience to fight against hegemony. Over the years, Cairokee has been involved in the production of commercials for numerous multinational companies, including Coca-Cola, Samsung, Vodafone, and Uber. According to Amir Eid, their involvement in these commercial activities is the "dark side of success". He admitted that he hated doing these commercials, but due to the band's decision not to be bound by a production company, so as not to limit their creative freedom, Cairokee realized the limits that come with stable funding and have opted to depend on sponsorship in order to maintain their unique oppositional voice (Kamal, 2019). Therefore, we can see how our case studies make trans-hegemonic engagements with the market and the state to reinforce their revolutionary stance against hegemonic discourses. Finally, the trans-locality, fluidity, and elusiveness of revolutionary music characterize it as a change-seeker in the face of corruption.

Both case studies are great examples of the idea of how media can change. Karimeh changed the purpose behind his social media platform, which was initially utilized to promote his work, to a medium that aims to promote the need for change. In a way, Karimeh alternated the use of his Instagram account in times when a lot of people in his country were protesting for reform. His purpose was

not commercial anymore; it became revolutionary. This is like Cairokee, which is a popular rock band whose main goal ought to be to increase revenue and popularity in the music market, while complying with the law. The band chose to attract state criticism by releasing anti-governmental songs. However, the risks involved in creating revolutionary songs were not considered obstacles for Cairokee; if anything, they opened the door for more activism and antagonism. Cairokee's music adjusted when Egyptians pleaded for change.

CONCLUSIONS

This article demonstrates how media changes can be in harmony with the need for change in the state. Changes advocated by revolutionary music, itself using more alternative forms and content, can possibly lead to incremental changes in the political system. By 'incremental', we mean small changes that may eventually lead to the big changes that people long for. For instance, Karimeh's adjustments in his style of DJ mediated change in Lebanon, starting from Tripoli's symbol of unity to the resignation of the country's Prime Minister Saad Hariri. Yet, the government did not withdraw from their authoritarian position. Additionally, although changes in music may lead to big changes in the system, they are not permanent. After the 2011 Egyptian revolution, huge changes occurred within the regime such as the implementation of the first democratic elections. Nevertheless, Egypt got another authoritarian military regime less than three years after the revolution. Hence, it is important that we understand that revolutionary music may stimulate changes, incremental or radical, temporary or permanent, in the system.

However, it is vital that we emphasize that the link is not direct. Revolutionary music alone cannot guarantee change. "Nothing can bring them down, not music, not violence, nor chaos", Karimeh angrily says. Music encouraged many protesters to remain on the streets to fight for reform. In Lebanon, revolutionary music became an inspirational tool that motivated many to persevere until change was achieved. Cairokee's music in Egypt served a similar purpose, where they helped keep most protesters mobilized in the streets and kept the revolutionary sentiment going. Furthermore, Cairokee's insistence on maintaining their authenticity and stance against the authorities allowed them to remain relevant almost a decade after the revolution.

In this article, we have stressed the significance and limitations of revolutionary music. The importance of revolutionary music lies in the role of uniting civil society groups into a larger community and providing them with a representative and interactive public sphere. This then creates a unique form of solidarity, the local aspect of revolutionary music that counters globalization influences

worldwide, and hence creates a sense of identity between local groups. This special form of unity has helped people through the decades to stand against their oppressors with resilience. Overall, we can conclude that revolutionary music was altered and mediated to seek change in the system. Nonetheless, while it served as an agent for voicing people's demands by giving them a united voice, changes were either incremental or temporary. Revolutionary music is not the sole factor that stimulates changes in the system, although it does offer a contribution.

Furthermore, these case studies illustrated the complex relationship between societal changes and the media. The former was manifested in people's willingness to finally speak up against their oppressors and was mirrored in the emerging culture of revolutionary music. Although this type of music is certainly not a recent phenomenon, it is tied to and integrated with the ideologies that emerged during a certain period. We can see how it serves to reflect the prevailing mood of the people during the revolution – sometimes being upbeat and motivating, sometimes expressing hope for change, and at other times expressing the people's disappointment in the lack of change. Yet, revolutionary music seems to achieve more of an emotional change within people rather than tangible systemic changes. Indeed, being hopeful and feeling motivated does not necessarily mean that positive change will be an outcome; it only means that there is a higher chance of change happening.

In order to further understand the roles of Cairokee and Karimeh in encouraging acts of hope, resilience, and change, we encourage researchers to study the revolutionary contributions of both case studies in a continuous manner, and to look at other artists as well. Also, we encourage them to interview the audience that participated in the performances to further identify the impact of revolutionary music during oppositional times.

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