**Media and popular culture in contemporary Egypt: An introductory overview**

*by Naomi Sakr*

All media were once upon a time ‘new media’, and people in Egypt – whether under occupation or after independence – have historically been quick to experiment with ‘successive waves of new media’ (Armbrust, 2012, p162) while they were still new. Film screenings took place in Alexandria and Cairo in November 1896, less than a year after the world’s first public film screening in Paris and, within a generation, films made in Egypt were giving rise to ambitions of building a Hollywood-equivalent in Imbaba, northwest of Cairo (Darwish, 1998, pp9-13). Radio broadcasting began in Egypt in the 1920s, while it was also still beginning elsewhere, with more than a hundred transmitting stations operated by radio amateurs and entrepreneurs who wanted to use the medium for advertising (Boyd, 1977, p6). Shortwave transmitters installed immediately after the 1952 revolution enabled Egypt to launch state-run radio services in Asian, African and European languages at such a rate that by 1973 it was the world’s sixth largest international broadcaster in terms of weekly programme output (Boyd, 1999, pp30-32). Although not the first country in the region to establish television as such (Ibid., p37), Egypt in 1960 did become the first independent Arab state to introduce a substantial television service (Dabous, 1994, p67), using expertise developed through film and radio to meet additional demand for programming fuelled by the creation of television channels in other Arab countries, especially Gulf oil producers after the mid-1970s oil price explosion.

A reputation as ‘early adopter’ was maintained through following decades, for both ‘big’ and ‘small’ media, where size refers not to audience reach but to a distinction between vertical communication that is professionally produced and a horizontal form based on active popular participation (Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi, 1994, pp20-21). Looking first at ‘big’ media, the collectively-owned Arab satellite, Arabsat, launched in 1985, remained under-used until 1990, when Egypt became the first country to lease a transponder to send news and entertainment programming through what became the Egyptian Space Channel (ESC), ten months before the next Arab satellite channel start-up, MBC (Sakr, 2001, pp10-11). Having reserved an orbital slot in space in the 1980s, the Egyptian government finally ordered a broadcasting satellite of its own in 1995, as Arabsat signals were starting to deteriorate. When Nilesat came into operation in 1998, providing the expanded capacity afforded by digital technology ahead of Arabsat’s first digital satellite, it put Egyptian authorities in a position to befriend broadcasters rejected by Arabsat (Sakr, 2012a, p146).

As for ‘small’ media, it is instructive not to overlook audiocassettes, used to circulate sermons as well as music. Portable cassette players and blank cassettes were introduced to Egypt, as elsewhere, in the 1960s, and by the mid-1970s private record companies and the state-owned Sono Cairo were reissuing music on cassettes (Castelo-Branco, 1987, pp35-36). Cultural anthropologist Walter Armbrust, whose work on the Egyptian media scene spans the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (Armbrust 1996; 2019), points out (2012, pp168-169) that audiocassettes, albeit an analogue medium, prefigured digital media in miniaturisation, ease of duplication and ‘dispersion of textual authority’. With Internet introduced to Egypt in 1993 (Abdulla, 2005, p153), the same year the world’s first web browser became available, the stage was set for the post-2000 spread of digital media that would reproduce the vibrancy of the country’s print media scene in the first half of the previous century, with its many ground-breaking features of the time, from innovative women’s journalism (Dabous 2004; Baron 1994) to social satire (Dougherty 2000). Developments in digital media are a significant focus of most chapters in this section of the Handbook.

How best to present and understand those developments? International media development specialists have finally come to recognise the ‘deeply political nature’ of media institutions and the fundamental place of ‘power and politics’ in determining outcomes in the media sector (Nelson, 2019, p31). That observation is key to making sense of the introductory narrative above. As the narrative suggests, every change in Egypt’s media landscape merits an analysis that encompasses not just the relevant technology, content and impact of each new medium but also the context and contingencies behind its introduction. For example, ESC emerged on Arabsat in 1990 and no earlier because Arabsat’s other owners boycotted Egypt from 1979 until 1989. It was Egypt’s participation in the US-led coalition to end Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 that gave it the incentive to send programming to Egyptian troops and other potential viewers in the Gulf.

Connection to the Internet in 1993, initially limited in extent and reliant on a sole Internet Service Provider (ISP), was expanded after Egypt was required to provide adequate internet connectivity for the UN International Conference on Population and Development, which it hosted in 1994. The government kept the additional capacity after the event, allowing free connections to non-government users (Abdulla, 2005, pp153-154). A further boost came in 1999 with the creation of a Ministry of Communications and Information, headed by the former chief executive of a major private corporation, who was qualified in computer engineering (Ibid, p152) and was charged with implementing a master plan, driven at least in part by the objectives of linking Egypt to the global market place, promoting ‘e-learning’ to eradicate illiteracy, and encouraging an ICT export industry (Kamel, 2010). The imperative of trade connectivity can be seen in the context of Egypt’s 1995 accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO), its consequent exposure to foreign competition, especially in textile manufacture, and pressure from the World Bank to make local industries more ‘competitive’ (Shenker, 2016, pp159-160). During the 2000s, the ruling National Democratic Party, reorganised around a central policy committee tied to wealthy private business owners and international financial institutions (Ibid, p62), earned praise for Egypt from the World Bank as the ‘world’s top reformer’ (cited in El-Mahdi and Marfleet, 2009, p2) and the International Monetary Fund as a ‘top performer’ in structural adjustment and ‘improv[ing] the investment climate’ (Shenker, 2016, p64). It was during this decade that privately-owned television networks and newspapers were permitted and became established, and popular grievances built to the point where they erupted in the revolution of January 2011.

When media developments are set in their political and economic context, various cross-cutting themes emerge that offer further perspective. One theme, evident in Nasser’s radio transmissions as well as the Arabsat-Nilesat saga, is Egypt’s role in regional affairs. Another, reflected in the vision of ICT as a tool for teaching and job creation, is the way media activity intersects with demographics and inter-generational communication and how issues around living standards and youth prospects are represented. A third, implicit in legislation allowing but controlling private media, is the web of legal and extra-legal limits on expression. A fourth, signalled by the vitality of media content at certain points in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, is the resourcefulness of those resisting repressive controls. The rest of this introductory chapter presents an overview of the contemporary media field in light of these themes, setting the scene for the section’s other chapters.

**Regional rivalry and conflict**

As Tourya Guaaybess notes in her chapter on successive changes in media ownership, the rise of privately-owned satellite channels and newspapers in the 2000s came about in part through Egypt’s determination to maintain a leading role in the pan-Arab media landscape. The 1990s had seen Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) seeking to influence regional politics via pan-Arab broadcasting – in Saudi Arabia’s case through private proxies of the government operating from bases in London and Italy. By the end of the decade, Saudi-owned MBC, ART and Orbit sought to reduce costs by relocating to so-called ‘media free zones’ established in Dubai, Amman and Bahrain (Sakr, 2007, pp195-197). Not to be outdone, Egypt’s government decreed the addition of a free zone in 2000 to its existing Media Production City studio complex and satellite uplinking facility. The zone enabled private entrepreneurs to circumvent the terrestrial broadcasting monopoly retained by the government-run Egyptian Radio and Television Union (ERTU). By starting new satellite channels these entrepreneurs provided platforms for Egyptian television presenters who had made their names in Gulf-owned media. Instead of working for MBC, ART, Dubai TV or Qatar’s Al-Jazeera, these people could now address their compatriots on topics of national rather than regional interest. Viewers in Egypt responded by getting the necessary equipment: the percentage of TV homes with cable or satellite access soared from single figures in 2002 to 50 per cent in 2006 (Sakr, 2012b, p326).

A novel focus on Egyptian affairs, increased access to channels offering it, and higher advertising spend making them more viable: these stimuli took time to exert their mutual impact. But it is illuminating to chart the process by reference to regional push factors as well as domestic ones. An early push came from the pay-TV network Orbit in 2000, with the start of its nightly live variety talk show *Al-Qahira al-Yaum* (Cairo Today), produced from Cairo studios. Aimed at promoting Egypt to Gulf audiences, the show was not primarily intended for Egyptians, since the decoder needed to receive Orbit was not allowed on Egyptian markets until 2003. These unusual circumstances gave the young, locally recruited production team an unusual degree of licence, enabling them to conduct discreet news-gathering that was effectively off limits even to the ERTU (Ibid., p327). Evidence that Egyptians were tuning in, often through pirated connections, emerged in the ERTU’s introduction in 2004 of an evening show intended to compete with *Al-Qahira al-Yaum*, as part of ERTU changes that followed the appointment of the country’s first new information minister for 23 years. This was a period when, as Rasha Abdulla explains in her chapter on social media, outrage at the US-led invasion of Iraq prompted demonstrations in Cairo as in other global cities, and this protest was documented by Egypt’s first bloggers. The sense of a national conversation becoming possible thanks to the rise of communication channels not under direct government control was a pull factor for Egyptian media personalities then working abroad. But two well-known names, Hafez al-Mirazi and Yosri Fouda, who quit Al-Jazeera to take up job offers in Egypt in 2007-08, both told interviewers at the time that they were also unsettled by editorial (pro-Islamist) and administrative changes in Al-Jazeera.

Qatari foreign policy behind decisions taken at the top of the Al-Jazeera network continued to affect Egypt’s media scene through the aftermath of the January 2011 uprising against Hosni Mubarak, president for the previous 30 years, the ouster of the Muslim Brotherhood president Mohamed Morsi in July 2013, and under the presidency of Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi. An antecedent of the hostility that erupted between Egypt and Al-Jazeera after 2011 can be seen in the privileged place that Qatar and Al-Jazeera accorded to the exiled Egyptian cleric and former Muslim Brotherhood member, Yousef al-Qaradawi, as recounted by Ehab Galal in his chapter on media and religion. When mass demonstrations began in Cairo on 25 January, 2011, Al-Jazeera Arabic (AJA) editors said they had so few staff on the ground that they decided to rely instead on citizen reports coming in on Facebook and Twitter, taking a ‘clear … pro-rebellion stance’ (quoted in Sakr, 2013, p71). This stance lay behind the creation in February 2011 of a dedicated channel, Al-Jazeera Mubasher Misr (Direct from Egypt), which had to broadcast from Doha after the Egyptian authorities closed the Cairo operation in September 2011. In 2013, with the Al-Jazeera ownership widely perceived as supporting the Muslim Brotherhood, security forces raided the network’s Cairo offices and arrested Egyptian and foreign staff members. The trials that ensued were notorious for the lack of evidence supplied (Boserup, 2019, p6), while the defendants were also not helped by Al-Jazeera’s serving notice of its intention to lodge a US$150m international arbitration claim against Egypt, alleging destruction of its media business in the country.

The fate of Mubasher Misr provided a bargaining chip as Qatar sought to mollify the bloc of countries, including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the UAE, lined up with Egypt against it. Under a new emir, Qatar financed additional media outlets in London that seemed intended to deflect attention from the Al-Jazeera network. With these, and the rise of Egyptian opposition media operating from Turkey, the earlier flow of Egyptian journalists into Cairo was reversed, with many leaving for Doha, London and Istanbul. Yet those working for or expressing themselves through such outlets had as much reason to fear recrimination by the Egyptian state as Egyptians still inside the country (Ibid, p8). For example, in February 2018, Abdel-Moneim al-Futouh, a candidate in the 2012 presidential election, was arrested on his return to Egypt after criticising President Sisi during an interview with Al-Jazeera. He was held in pre-trial detention for two years before facing further charges in February 2020. The original charge was ‘inciting violence and chaos through anti-state media outlets, joining an outlawed organisation and harming the state’s reputation’ (Dunne and Hamzawy, 2019, p12). In January 2020, Egyptian security forces raided the premises of Turkey’s Anadolu News Agency in Cairo, arrested four employees and referred them to state security prosecutors, prompting Sherif Mansour, regional coordinator for the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), to warn that ‘journalists operating in Egypt should not have to work in fear that they will be used to settle political scores between countries’ (CPJ 2020).

**Issues of representation: migrants, minors and media irresponsibility**

An outflow of media practitioners and activists escaping political repression under the Sisi presidency added to earlier outflows of economic migrants, some of them professionals bound for North America or the Gulf, but others smuggled across the Mediterranean to Italy without qualifications, papers or job offers. Despite the rise of new media platforms in Egypt in the 2000s, mainstream media coverage remained very limited on the issues of joblessness, poverty and lack of prospects experienced by large swathes of the population. Reports in 2007-09 of scores of young, undocumented, Egyptian migrants drowning at sea in their attempts to reach Europe prompted some critical analysis in the heyday of evening talk shows on Egyptian channels during the years leading up to 2011, but even that was countered by government media narratives placing the blame for people-smuggling and drownings anywhere but on government neglect (Sakr, 2014, pp199-203).

Daring to contemplate the harsh realities of why young people from deprived backgrounds would face death at sea rather than stay in Egypt was one example of how the pre-2011 expansion of media outlets began to fill gaps in public knowledge. Another was to be found in efforts to tackle long-standing general under-representation of children and youth. Implications of this phenomenon were set out starkly by development scholar and social entrepreneur Iman Bibars in 2004. She wrote of Egypt’s ‘youth’ that ‘no one wants to listen to them’, that they are ‘surrounded from all directions by orders and prohibitions’, ‘have no clear channels to express themselves’ and ‘feel excluded from decision-making and dialogue’ (quoted in Karam, 2007, p85). It was against that background that young people’s use of online media, described in Rasha Abdulla’s chapter, took off. But there were also developments on TV. The Saudi-owned ART network had ART Teenz, produced in Cairo, which borrowed the talk show model popularised across pan-Arab satellite channels and adapted it to issues that teenagers wanted to discuss (Sakr, 2017, pp53-54). ART Teenz went off air in 2008. But that same year Egyptian state TV was persuaded to introduce a show about children’s rights, entitled *Esma3oona* (Hear Us Out), which the government presented to the UN’s Committee on the Rights of the Child as a step towards children’s media participation (Sakr, 2016, p381).

Media initiatives like *Esma3oona* were shortlived. After the coup that ousted President Morsi in 2013, local child’s rights advocacy groups documented escalating ill-treatment of children, including those detained during protests. Failure to ensure that media coverage would protect children’s interests was demonstrated repeatedly. In one incident, a Sohag University professor published a call in the private newspaper, *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, to control rising numbers of street children by killing them (Mada Masr, 2014). In another, a father informed his two young children of their mother’s death in hospital that morning on live television, in a show hosted by ONTV (Al-Arabiya, 2014). Adel Iskander (2019, p157) cites ‘speech bans’ along with official violence and ‘cynicism on the part of their elders’ as having severe ‘emotional repercussions’ for Egypt’s youth in the aftermath of 2011, leading some to kill themselves and the vast majority to disengage entirely from politics or government attempts at mobilisation, communicating instead through satire and sarcasm on social media platforms. However, as the Sisi presidency became more entrenched, the authorities cracked down increasingly on these platforms and genres. Two high profile satirists forced to flee the country in 2014 and 2018 were just tips of an iceberg. They were respectively, Bassem Youssef, creator of the irreverent show *El Bernameg* (so successful it was taken from YouTube to ONTV and then MBC Masr), and Mohammed Andeel, the cartoonist and comedian behind *Mada Masr*’s weekly video blog *Big Brother*.

Youssef, Andeel and others like them had only to point to frequent incitement on Egypt’s television screens against figures deemed oppositional or inconvenient by those in power. Under international law, free speech is supposed to be exercised with due regard for the rights and reputations of others. Yet the private channel Al-Kahera Wal-Nas (Cairo and the People) ran a show called *The Black Box* in 2014 that aired tapes of activists’ private telephone conversations in an attempt to smear them as enemies of the state. Syrian refugees in Egypt were also targeted after the 2013 coup as alleged sympathisers of the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood. Tawfik Okasha, a prominent talkshow host, warned Syrians that Egyptians ‘took the addresses of where you are staying’. ‘If you stay with the Brotherhood’, he said, ‘after 48 hours the people will go to destroy your houses’ (Fick, 2013). The host of a TV show that filmed a police raid on a bathhouse in 2014, showing 26 men escorted naked from the premises, was acquitted in 2016 of defamation and spreading false news. She had presented the undercover filming as part of a campaign to protect the public from AIDS.

**Contradictions in law and practice**

It is an anomaly of Egyptian media that, despite layers of law and regulation, there is no effective protection of rights and reputations for those whom the government does not wish to defend. Anomalies like this are rife. Ramy Aly shows in his chapter how prohibitions embedded in contemporary laws have been passed down through the decades, such as those designed to safeguard a vaguely defined ‘public morality’ or punish any act deemed to defame the ‘reputation of Egypt’. The latter taboo leads to incongruities such as occurred in 2019 when Nabila Makram, Egyptian Minister for Immigration and Expatriate Affairs, made a throat-slitting gesture while telling Egyptians in Canada that anyone who said anything bad about Egypt would be ‘cut’ (Daragahi, 2019). Neither she nor those members of her audience who laughed in response appeared to consider the episode’s negative impact on the country’s image, or acknowledge the extent to which reputational concerns stoked up domestically were in conflict with positive attention paid at home and abroad to cutting-edge Egyptian cultural output. For example, Mohamed Diab’s films *678* (2010) and *Eshtebak* (Clash, 2016) received international acclaim but were accused at home of distorting Egypt’s reputation. Ahmad Naji’s novel *Istikhdam al-Hayat* (Using Life), praised abroad, got its author a two-year jail sentence in 2016 for ‘violating public modesty’. A conference held in the Egyptian town of Fayyoum after the sentence was imposed, entitled ‘Freedom of thought and creation between a constitution that ennobles it and a law that criminalises it’ (Chitti, 2019, pp113), highlighted a further contradiction in the country’s laws on media and culture.

With Egypt sliding down the Reporters sans Frontières (RSF) World Press Freedom Index to 163rd out of 180 in 2019, ahead only of countries like Saudi Arabia, China and North Korea (RSF, 2019), and with 30 journalists in jail in 2020, many of them detained for up to two years without trial (RSF, 2020), the mismatch is striking between guarantees enshrined in Egypt’s 2014 Constitution and penalties incurred in practice. Article 65 of the Constitution guarantees the right to express thoughts and opinions ‘verbally, in writing, through imagery, or by other means of expression and publication’. Article 67 guarantees ‘freedom of artistic and literary creativity’ and promises state protection for artists, writers and their productions. Yet the Constitution co-exists not only with a raft of repressive laws mentioned in the chapters by Tourya Guaaybess and Rasha Abdulla but also with the long-standing Emergency Law – a co-existence which puts into question any push for the ‘rule of law’ in countries where laws do not embody values of fairness or human dignity. The Emergency Law places major curbs on expression, making citizens subject to censorship, arbitrary arrest and detention, and authorizing special security courts with judges appointed by the president to try civilians with no right of appeal. The law had its origins in the martial law imposed under British occupation and enforced during World War II, which was retained by the Free Officers in 1952 and renamed a ‘state of emergency’ in 1958 (Brown, 2017). Reinstated from 1967 to 1980 and again in 1981 after the assassination of President Anwar Sadat, the state of emergency was regularly renewed until 2012, when it lapsed briefly. Reintroduced in 2013, it became again subject to repeated renewals, first for northern Sinai and then for the whole country from 2017, the eleventh being decreed in January 2020.

Despite its far-reaching impact, various quirks camouflage the way the state of emergency crushes media and cultural activity. First is the anomaly of having a quasi-permanent Emergency Law when such laws are supposed, by definition and under international treaties, to be temporary. Another, given the Egyptian parliament’s rubber-stamp status under Sisi, is the way repeated renewal of the law after 2017 flouted the spirit but not the letter of Article 154 of the 2014 Constitution, which made a two-thirds vote in parliament mandatory for even a second renewal. Insights into this duality of the political system, where a few formal trappings of participatory institutions are retained in what is essentially a police state, rarely feature in foreign reporting on Egypt, because they cannot be conveyed with the simplicity and immediacy usually required of news (Sakr, 2010). At the same time, foreign correspondents themselves have been subject to draconian measures since 2015, including summary deportations affecting US and UK national dailies, the *New York Times* and *The Times*, while the Sisi government has boycotted and blocked the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). The Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE) drew attention in 2019 to the way key news reports about Egypt were being delayed or even withdrawn from foreign outlets because fear on the part of both informants and correspondents often prevented the latter from getting beyond the official version of a story (AFTE 2019).

US and UK leaders’ failure to protest at the deportation and blocking of their own constituents further obscured the depth and severity of the media clampdown from public view. So limited was the response of governments – and, as Rasha Abdulla shows in her chapter, big social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter – to the dire situation of media and culture practitioners in Egypt that an opera house in the German city of Dresden awarded a medal to President Sisi in 2020 for bringing ‘hope and encouragement’ to a ‘whole continent’ (DPA, 2020), before being forced to revoke the award in the face of protest cancellations by German celebrities engaged to take part in the award ceremony. As the protest indicated, defenders of free expression within international civil society were acutely aware of the realities facing their counterparts in Egypt, especially after Check Point Software Technologies provided evidence that the Sisi government was behind a sophisticated malware attack aimed at gaining access to the online communication of journalists and activists (Check Point Research, 2019).

**Resourceful resistance**

As determined lawyers and practitioners sought to contest the invasive and all-encompassing web of restrictions stifling media and cultural expression under the Sisi government, they continued a tradition of resistance to repression stretching back through previous presidencies to the British occupation. Nadine El-Sayed and Viola Shafik show in their chapters how Egyptian musicians, artists and filmmakers were ever ready to challenge injustice in the status quo and have continued to do so to the present day. The same spirit of innovation and enterprise that brought early adoption of new media technologies, recounted at the start of this introduction, persisted into the 2020s, against all the odds, in the actions of those not prepared to concede defeat to the forces of silencing and extermination.

Those forces were in evidence at a trial in March 2017 when the public prosecutor sought the death penalty for 739 people in a single case, among them the photojournalist Mahmoud Abou Zeid. Known as Shawkan, he was first detained in August 2013 while documenting the shooting of protestors in Cairo’s Raba’a Square, which international human rights bodies say killed at least 900 people. On assignment for a UK photo agency, Shawkan was arrested with two foreign journalists who were soon released. He, in contrast, was held in jail for more than five years – charged with murder, attempted murder, weapons possession and illegal assembly but not convicted of any offence until September 2018, when he was found guilty of property damage. His eventual ‘release’ in March 2019 was, according to a petition submitted to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, nothing of the sort, since he was required to spend 12 hours every night at a police station for the next five years (Mansour, 2019).

Shawkan’s treatment, an extreme but far from isolated case among journalists and bloggers, reflects an overwhelming imbalance between the vulnerability of independent media workers and the seeming impunity of the Egyptian authorities. Regardless of the imbalance, the vulnerable have persevered. Hossam Bahgat, renowned as founder of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights and for his investigative journalism after 2013, has articulated their perseverance. Detained in November 2015 for covering the trial of 26 military officers accused of planning a coup, but quickly released when Ban Ki-Moon, then UN Secretary General, expressed concern at his detention, Bahgat was subjected in 2016 to an asset freeze and travel ban which he and 12 other plaintiffs affected by the same orders were still fighting in court three years later. In the words he used to a reporter in 2018: ‘No one would deny that the title of this chapter is defeat, but there are signs that the defeat is not complete’ (Stevenson, 2018).

*Mada Masr*, an independent news analysis website founded in 2013, used the law and technology to signal its refusal to accept defeat. After it was blocked along with hundreds of news and other websites in 2017, with no formal notification or explanation given, local human rights lawyers took the government and national security apparatus to court on *Mada*’s behalf. Meanwhile the Mada team worked to circumvent the block, managing in December 2019 to create a mirror for the website on the TOR network that cannot be blocked, unlike solutions involving Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) that have security issues and are susceptible to blocking. The technical initiative was announced a month after *Mada Masr* offices had been raided by plainclothes security personnel, who confiscated laptops and phones and took the chief editor and two journalists away, having taken the news editor from his home the previous day. Their release soon after meant that *Mada Masr*’s distinctive reporting continued. It provided, among other things, exceptional insights in March 2020 into the government’s handling of the coronavirus pandemic.

Behind the pioneering resourcefulness of *Mada* staff lies a whole hinterland of young independent media innovators, who seized opportunities after 2011 to push for a range of novel outlets, experimenting with online radio, collaborations between citizen journalists and professionals, hyperlocal and regional journalism, outlets for teenage reporters, platforms for coverage of gender inequality issues, and much else. Undercut by the mass blocking of websites in 2017, development of these initiatives was put on hold. However, as emerges from the remaining chapters in this section, the generations-long timeline of media innovation in Egypt had by no means reached its end.

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