



**Youth and Internet in Egyptian Party  
Politics- Balancing Authoritarianism with  
Agency in a Condition of Negative Peace**

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## **Abstract**

The thesis focuses on the role of youth members in political opposition parties in the Arab Republic of Egypt. The parties, as well as the state, are authoritarian in structure. The thesis discusses possibilities for youth participation in the upper-levels of political parties, and their subjective opinions of being included or excluded in internal debates and decision-making processes. In particular, the thesis discusses the parties' use of internet and whether the internet arena is a space in which young people can contribute in the development and working of the parties. The analysis is based on data from first-hand information obtained through interviews with members of several Egyptian parties. The discussion is situated within academic debates on the nature of agency within authoritarian party and state structures.

The conclusion suggests that youth members in Egyptian opposition parties may influence the working of the parties. However, due to the domination of structural phenomena, such as authoritarian structures, patron-client relations and a patriarchal system, youth's presence does not affect the parties in a substantial manner. Youth possess agency but do not produce organizational change, because the structural phenomena are used to control people and social entities. It is further concluded that the internet is an arena in which mainly youth members participate. The internet gives youth a larger room for involvement, but does not contribute at a general party level. This situation is not a result of structural phenomena, but is caused by the age gap between leadership and active youth members. The analysis suggests that Egypt experiences a situation of negative peace.

## **List of Abbreviations**

**CPP-** Committee of Political Parties' Affairs

**DFP-** Democratic Front Party

**ISPs-** Internet Service Providers

**NDP-** National Democratic Party

**NGOs-** Non-Governmental Organizations

**NPUP-** National Progressive Unionist Party

**SLP-** Social Labor Party

**SMS-** Short Message Service (referred to as sms in the paper)

**UNDP-** United Nations Development Programme

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

The thesis discusses democratization and political involvement under authoritarian regimes, more precisely, the political opposition to the regime of the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and the National Democratic Party (NDP). I focus on young people's role within the opposition. Young people are a large and growing part of the population in the Arab Republic of Egypt as well as in the Middle East region (Assad and Barsoum, 2007: 5). Growing up in an authoritarian state with high levels of poverty and unemployment, in addition to lack of social welfare and good quality education can be a challenge. It is therefore important that youth find channels in which they can engage and state their opinions.

Much has been written about the illegal Islamic opposition in the country, the largest one being the Muslim Brotherhood. I want, however, to focus on a different group of opposition, namely the legal political parties. These parties have an interesting position in the political arena. On the one hand, they are marginalized from any serious political engagement by the authoritarian regime. On the other hand, their existence is encouraged by the authorities as a way for the regime to legitimise its control, and further as a way to keep an eye on and control the opposition forces (Albrecht, 2005: 391). These parties do not have to hide their activities from the state and can participate in elections, but in order to keep their status there are boundaries in which they cannot cross. If they become too confrontational they lose their position (Ibid: 389). When this is known, one might wonder how these parties function internally. How can an oppositional party be in opposition, and at the same time harmonize its critique not to upset the power holders? How do parties manage to attract young members with such a limited space for action? According to a recent study on youth exclusion in Egypt it is stated that "evidence suggest that civic participation yields positive developmental outcomes: facilitating collective action, yielding more effective and better-targeted services, and reducing corruption by allowing channels of accountability" (Assad and Barsoum, 2007: 6). The authors also state that the opposite, "civic inactivity may contribute to socially deviant behaviour such as crime and religious militancy" (Ibid). In fact, Carrie Wickham writes that the Egyptian political parties have failed to attract disaffected youth, which in turn has created a vacuum that militant Islamic groups have taken advantage of (2002: 68). This data illustrates clearly the importance of focusing on youth in general and Egyptian youth belonging to political parties in particular.

The current political situation in Egypt relates to the situation described as “negative peace.” Many scholars, among them Barash, distinguish between positive and negative peace. Negative peace means the absence of war, while positive peace involves “the establishment of life-affirming and life-enhancing values and structures” (Barash, 2000: 2). Even at the absence of war, violence may exist in a society. Galtung has developed the idea of direct, structural and cultural violence. Direct violence is physical violence against someone, for example killing children. Structural violence is indirect violence that is not necessarily intended, for example children dying out of poverty. Cultural violence is that which justifies violence, in this case the killing/starvation of children, or does not respect the value and dignity of other people (Ramsbotham et al., 2005: 10-11 and Miall, 2007: 11). To Galtung, negative peace is the absence of direct violence in the form of a conflict/war, and positive peace the absence of direct violence as well as structural and cultural violence (Ramsbotham et al., 2005: 11).

In my opinion, Egypt is a country in a state of negative peace. The country has been to war against the state of Israel on many occasions throughout the last century. Internally, the state has also in the last decades raged a fight against militant Islamist groups. Today however, the war with Israel is long gone and the state has somewhat managed to clamp down on the militant Islamist opposition. In this sense, there is no direct violence in the face of a large scale conflict present in Egypt. However, I argue that there is a lack of “life-affirming and life-enhancing values and structures” within the country, and Egypt is therefore in a state of negative peace characterized by direct, structural and cultural violence. Firstly, the Egyptian state is authoritarian in structure. Democratic participation and co-determination is not taking place. Secondly, the authoritarian regime is violating human rights. Torture in prisons is well known and lack of fair trials as well. In addition, people are discriminated against because of religion and some people are denied proper citizenship. Thirdly, Egypt is a country with high economic inequalities where large parts of the population live in severe poverty, with few possibilities of a life in dignity. These facts illustrate that positive peace is not present in Egypt. It also justifies the importance of focusing on the country in a peace and conflict perspective. The political opposition parties, the focus of the thesis, have a dubious position in the political environment. Leaders and other members are accused of having links to the regime, of participating in dirty games of corruption and merely thinking of their own



prosperity. However, by the various parties' presence on the political scene they are showing that opposition and discontent exist and that someone is fighting for change.

## 1.1 Research Questions

Youth are the future of the Egyptian state. If someone is to bring positive change to the country in the future it is them. It is therefore important to understand which political arenas youth can enter. Becoming a member of political parties is a relatively safe way to engage, and a party offers a place where youth can practice and learn. It is on this account I have formed my research questions, which are as follows:

1) To what extent may youth be given the opportunity to involve in political parties in contemporary Egypt? The question is relevant due to the parties' authoritarian structures. In particular, I look at access to formal positions in the different bodies in the party hierarchy and subsequently to participation in dialogues and decision-making.

2) The use of internet is increasing in Egypt, in particular among the younger generation. What is the parties' attitude to internet use, and to what extent has the internet become an arena for youth participation in authoritarian party structures?

The arenas focused on in this thesis are upper-level bodies within the parties and the internet. I find these issues to be of interest because of the authoritarian nature of the parties. In authoritarian organizational structures youth representation in upper-levels may be neither expected nor accepted. To youth though, this must be an important issue for joining a party and for continued membership. In authoritarian parties the internet may be viewed as a threat to the authority. Overall, computers and the internet are technologies young people are interested in. It is then interesting to find out what the parties' attitudes are towards the internet and if they have integrated in into their party affairs. As I see it, both youth representation in upper-party levels and internet integration are issues that are positive for youth involvement and participation. If they are present, they are both part of a platform from where youth can fight for their political opinions and for a bettering of their own position within the parties.

Another related issue is the actual influence youth have on party politics. This is an issue I touch upon, although it is not a main issue. The topic is approached from the perspective of individuals' experiences, but my study on the issue is not comprehensive.

## **1.2 Thesis Outline**

The following chapter, chapter two, offers a background to the field of study. Through a historical review of the political development of the Egyptian state as we know it today, I introduce the authoritarian character of the state and highlight challenges related to democracy and multi-party participation. The nature of the opposition parties is also elaborated on, which illustrate their position in Egyptian politics, caught between the intruding authoritarian state and their formal status as opposition parties. It also illustrates the many similarities between the authoritarian regime and the opposition parties themselves. This can show signs of an unfortunate weak state- weak society cycle, which can prove difficult to alter.

Chapter three presents the methodology of the thesis. I have used a qualitative research approach with interviews as my main method of data collection. The chapter mainly concerns the fieldwork I conducted in Cairo, where I collected the first-hand data that has been used in the thesis. I elaborate on how I got in touch with informants, on the interviews in general, and also on other situations and problems faced in the field. In total, this chapter aims to illustrate the reliability and validity of the project.

Chapter four presents the theoretical framework. The theories I apply are structuration theory, selected understandings of authoritarianism and institutions, in addition to hypothesis on the effects of the internet on modern organizations. The main concern here is the balancing point between, on the one hand, individual action in the face of youth involvement and, on the other, organizational structures, here represented by authoritarianism, institutions and social structures in general.

Chapter five presents data and findings. Here, the research questions and the theoretical framework are combined to discuss first-hand data and secondary literature. Youth involvement and participation within the parties, in addition to the parties' internet use are the focal points of discussion. First, are youth represented in the upper-levels of the parties and how far does their involvement and participation go? Second, has the parties' internet use resulted in a larger room for youth to involve within the parties?

Chapter six presents concluding remarks. Here I sum up important points that have been made throughout the thesis and present an overall conclusion of the project.

## **2 BACKGROUND: EGYPT AND THE POLITICAL PARTIES**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter I present the Egyptian state in a political and historical perspective. I also elaborate on the current political situation. Further, I present the political opposition parties, and give a suggestion to an Egyptian state-society dynamic.

### **2.2 Egyptian Political History**

The establishment of the Egyptian nation-state and political system has emerged from the breakdown of the Ottoman and British empires. If we go as far back as to the 16<sup>th</sup> century we find that in 1517 Egypt was put under the power of the great Ottoman Empire, which had its base in today's Turkey (Cleveland, 2004: 41). Egypt became an autonomous province of the Empire, and would uphold this status for a long time. In 1882 the British seized control of Egypt (Ibid: 100). This was done for several reasons and in the context of the imperial competition of the era. The main reasons were to protect the Suez Canal and to restore the country's political and economic stability (Ibid: 104). Egypt remained a monarchy and Britain viewed the country neither a protectorate nor a colony, but ended up influencing state affairs and controlling the country until 1956 (Ibid: 100). In the years following its invasion, protests against the British occurred and anti-imperial nationalist movements developed. By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century three political organizations were established, which all fought for independence, but differed in their views on how an independent Egypt should look like (Ibid: 109). In 1918 a delegation was established, which would later become the Wafd Party, "one of the most widely supported political parties in modern Egyptian history" (Ibid: 194). The party demanded a constitution and a parliament. By 1924 a constitution was made and the first Egyptian parliamentary election took place. The Wafd Party won an overwhelming victory, and their party leader became the prime minister (Ibid: 196). With this, an experiment of parliamentary democracy came to Egypt. The experiment did, however, not function well and as we will see, did not last for long. The difficulties the new system faced were primarily due to the power struggle between the king, the British and the Wafd Party. In addition, the king was granted enormous powers, and the Wafd leader acted authoritarian and did not want to cooperate with the opposition (Ibid: 196-97). These unfortunate traits of power struggle have followed Egyptian politics ever since.

In the eyes of the people, the new system of parliamentary democracy represented secularism and European values. The fact that the government did not manage to improve the situation for the masses further discredited the system. As a result, people started to engage in organizations outside the structured party system, and organizations promoting Islamic activism were particularly popular (Cleveland, 2004: 198-99). During and after World War II, the political scene was dominated by unstable coalition cabinets, which resulted in a political paralysis (Ibid: 2003). This, and the Treaty of 1936, which granted Egypt relative independence from Britain, laid a favourable ground for a group within the military planning a coup against the king and the government.

In July 1952 a group calling themselves the Free Officers carried out a coup d'état. The coup resulted in a regime change that has lasted until today. The country was turned into a republic and "[t]he constitution of 1923 was abolished, parliament was dissolved, and all political parties were banned" (Cleveland, 2004: 306). Officers were put in political positions, resulting in a complete military control of the state (Ibid). After internal struggles within the group of the Free Officers Gamal Abd al-Nasser proved victorious and became the president of the newly founded Egyptian Republic. He grew to be an authoritarian leader whom did not hesitate to rid himself of people that challenged his authority. A single-party system was created, which was "designed to guide the popular will, not to respond to it" (Cleveland, 2004: 308). The overall ideology of the Nasser era was socialism, combined with heavy nationalization and the ideology of pan-Arab unity. Nasser died suddenly in 1970, and the presidency was, peacefully but not without complications, handed over to Anwar Sadat. He changed the course of the Egyptian state, from socialism to a state driven by liberal economic principles, and from a single party system to multi-party one (Kassem, 2004: 23). In addition, he signed a peace treaty with Israel that resulted in Egypt being excluded from the Arab League (Cleveland, 2004: 380).

When Sadat created a multi-party system, this did not mean that a democratic system was established. The single party created by Nasser was renamed the National Democratic Party and Sadat became the party leader. Two additional parties were formed, one leftist and another on the right (Cleveland, 2004: 380). However, as indicated above, Sadat remained the authoritarian leader he had always been (Kassem, 2004: 23-6). In 1981 Sadat was killed by

an Islamist group, one of many that grew up during his presidency out of dissatisfaction with his policies and the peace treaty with Israel (Cleveland, 2004: 381-2).

Neither Nasser nor Sadat managed to improve the living conditions for the majority of the Egyptian population. This resulted in the alienation of the masses. People viewed the political system as closed and headed by people that only cared about personal gains. After Sadat died Husni Mubarak became the new president of the country, and he is currently in his 28<sup>th</sup> year in power. He has not improved the situation for the Egyptian people, but somewhat continued and further developed the political path stalked out by Sadat. He has continued the liberal economic policies and further developed the multi-party system (Cleveland, 2004: 392-3, 533-4). However, similar to the multi-party system introduced by Sadat, the political opposition has no real chance of winning elections and Mubarak rules as an authoritarian leader, just like his predecessors.

## **2.3 The Authoritarian State Power**

The current Egyptian system of governance has prevailed for 57 years. This long reign is not due to its popularity among the masses, but rather to the authoritarian structures the regimes have created. Such a system includes exclusionary laws, patronage and cooptation, and a coercive apparatus (Kassem, 2004: 3).

### **2.3.1 Exclusionary Laws**

The Egyptian constitution is developed with an unequal balance of power. The executive office holds tremendous powers in relation to both the judicial and the legislative branches. This results in an exclusionary system, and the constitution is therefore viewed as containing exclusionary laws.

In 1971 president Sadat created a constitution that is still in effect today. Here, the immense powers of the executive branch are evident. When it comes to the legislature, the president can bypass objections the parliament may have and call a referendum of the people. The president also has the right to dissolve the People's Assembly, and "independent-minded legislators are denied both entry and re-entry to the assembly" (Kassem, 2004: 24). Concerning the judiciary, the president is expected to supervise their affairs, and appoint and

promote judges and other positions within the judiciary. In addition, he can establish state security courts, which gives him an alternative judiciary body when needed (Ibid: 25). Moreover, the president has the power to promulgate and object to laws, rule by decree, declare a state of emergency and appoint and dismiss the cabinet (Ibid: 24).

When Mubarak came to power in 1981, after the assassination of the former president, he declared a state of emergency. When a state of emergency is declared it is mainly done to maintain political control. Because the state of emergency has lasted ever since, it has contributed in upholding the personal authoritarian rule of President Mubarak (Kassem, 2004: 37). Under such a rule censoring of political activity is allowed. People can be arrested by mere suspicion of political crimes and gatherings are severely restricted. In addition, civilians can be tried in military courts (Ibid). These restrictions have, among other things, limited the political opposition parties to the point where they have difficulties to function and interact outside their party offices (Ibid: 38). We can conclude by saying that the constitutional framework helps preserve the political status quo and has provided the regime “with the flexibility to move from a one-party to a multiparty structure (...) without being challenged in the process” (Kassem, 2004: 6).

### **2.3.2 A System of Patronage and Cooptation**

Kassem has observed that “in the absence of democratic institutions, accountable representation, and a compelling and mobilizing ideology, authoritarian regimes depend on the distribution of patronage to establish a clientalistic system that secures some form of stability” (2004: 4). A system of patronage involves providing resources to people that support your regime, like employees and supporters of your party. These are particularly directed at people with power and influence that are part of the cabinet, the army, the police, civil service etc. (Ibid). By creating a system of patronage people are co-opted into the current political system and their interests are therefore preserved by the endurance of the status quo.

Such a system can also be called a patron-client relationship. James Scott has suggested a definition of the concept:

The patron-client relationship-an exchange relationship between roles-may be defined as a special case of dyadic (two-person) ties involving a largely instrumental friendship in which an individual of higher socioeconomic

status (patron) uses his own influence and resources to provide protection or benefits, or both, for a person of lower status (client) who, for his part, reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services, to the patron (1972: 92).

This illustrates that patron-client relations is a reciprocal system that is vertically organized between people of higher and lesser status/power. The patron provides resources while the client answers by supporting the patron in one way or another. A patron-client pyramid is a vertical relation between various patrons and clients (Scott, 1972: 96). In this sense, a person may be a client for a patron above him in the pyramid, while he himself is the patron of someone below him again. In the Egyptian case, President Mubarak may be seen as the ultimate patron in the patron-client pyramid. Below him are patrons and clients, but viewed from the position of the president, they are all clients in an intricate web that ensures his political survival.

### **2.3.3 The Coercive Apparatus**

The coercive apparatus largely includes the military and the police. In democratic states these institutions work to defend the country and protect government policies. In authoritarian states however, these forces extend deep into the political realm as well. This is done to the point that these forces both support and intervene to protect the regime (Kassem, 2004: 7). The president is both supreme commander of the armed forces and supreme chief of the police (Ibid: 25). In addition, he appoints the top leaders of each of these institutions. The close ties between the president and these institutions should therefore be clear. However, the support of the coercive apparatus does not come for free. These institutions are therefore heavily linked to the patronage system (Ibid: 168).

Some examples of how the coercive apparatus is used to protect the current regime in Egypt is provided here. First of all, both the military and the police forces are used to contain and control political activists. As mentioned earlier, because of the state of emergency the military courts can be used to try civilians, and the police can arrest and detain almost whom ever they want (Kassem, 2004: 40). Further, the police supervise elections, both the actual voting and the counting of ballots. Thus, the police have a role of “maintaining the regime’s electoral success” (Ibid: 41).



## 2.4 The Development of Political Parties

As we have seen above, it was President Anwar Sadat whom introduced the multi-party system in post-1952 Egypt. The process started publicly in 1976 when it was stated that the single party was to be divided into three factions: the left, the center, and the right. The following year the president announced that these groupings were to receive complete political party status, and a year later Sadat had established his own party, the National Democratic Party (NDP), which President Husni Mubarak seized control over when he followed Sadat (Kassem, 2004: 52). The NDP naturally became the ruling party, getting favorable grounds and always winning elections. During Sadat's presidency a few more parties were created. However, a party boom did not take place before well into the presidency of Mubarak (Fahmy, 2002: 71). Today there are 23 legalized opposition parties present in Egyptian politics (UNDP), and they are all viewed as weak (Stacher, 2004: 219).

The interesting point here is that neither of the presidents allowed for a multi-party system because they wanted true democracy. Sadat created the system to achieve economic and political goals. Economically it was a way to attract Western aid, and politically it was part of an effort to get the old power block of President Nasser's regime out (Kassem, 2004: 53). According to Cleveland "Mubarak's principal goal was to ensure the survival of the regime", this was done by "introducing a minimum of structural adjustments while appearing to liberalize political and economic practices" (Cleveland, 2004: 392). In the beginning of his reign, Mubarak stated his support for true democracy (Kassem, 2004: 54), and in the two parliamentary elections in the 1980s he somewhat seemed to be keeping his word, as the opposition parties won more seats in parliament than ever before (not including the Muslim Brotherhood and independents) (Fahmy, 2002: 87). However, in the 1990s the table turned and the regime tightened its reign (Stacher, 2004: 215). As Kassem suggests, "the characteristics of personal authoritarian rule as exemplified under Nasser and Sadat are preserved under Mubarak, albeit under the guise of a multiparty system" (2004: 82).

Above we have seen that a multiparty system was created within an undemocratic system. The regime that created this system did not want any real opposition to its power. The multi-party system was merely created as a means to an end, the end being regime survival. But how does the regime manage to keep the opposition down? Part of this question has already

been answered. It is due to the constitution, which gives unbalanced powers to the president over the legislative and the judicial, and the creation of various electoral and political party laws. It is also due to the cohesive apparatus, which supports the current regime, and the patronage network of benefits and dependence. The opposition parties are in fact part of the clientalist network of the regime. In that way, the various party leaders may benefit from the status quo, and see no urgent need in pressing for change (Albrecht, 2005: 379, 384). This illustrates that the legal opposition in Egypt holds an interesting position that is both linked to the regime and to the so-called opposition. How the regime manage to prevent the opposition parties from posing a real threat to its power is further due to the state of emergency, which limits gatherings, allows for censoring of activities, and also allows for arresting people on mere suspicion. In the following I elaborate on electoral and political party laws.

A committee named the Committee of Political Parties' Affairs (CPP) has been created. This committee has the power to approve or decline groupings applying for legal party status. It can also freeze established parties by stopping their newspaper and their activities. The CPP is highly linked to the regime and the executive office since many of its employees are part of the government. Among these are the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Interior Affairs (Fahmy, 2002: 67-8). The Egyptian newspaper Al-Ahram Weekly describes the CPP as "the government watchdog" (2005). When it comes to allowing a party to form, the CPP has many guidelines to follow. The parties must for example have a party program that is distinguishable from all the other parties, and no party can be formed on the basis of class, religion, gender, ethnicity or geographical location (Ibid: 67). In addition, people active in politics before the 1952 revolution are banned from political activity (Ibid: 68). Such laws, coupled with unpredictable decisions from the CPP, have resulted in the fact that ten out of eleven parties established under Mubarak have been legalized by court ruling (Kassem, 2004: 57-8). Meaning that the parties first have been declined by the CPP, and then decided to take the issue to court. In total, the challenges put forth by the CPP have the objective of "discouraging potential parties from applying for legal status" (Kassem, 2004: 58).

When parties have achieved legal status they also face obstacles in their mere political life. The state of emergency contributes much to the hardships political parties face, and several laws do the same. Here I focus on the latter. In order to receive representation in the People's Assembly (the lower house of parliament) the parties must receive eight percent of the

national vote, and if this number is not achieved the votes are given to the leading party, meaning the NDP (Fahmy, 2002: 69). The Ministry of Interior has been assigned the right to decide where parties can have gatherings. This often results in opposition parties being assigned distant and inaccessible areas. Moreover, if an opposition candidate criticizes the government during an election campaign the gathering can be dissolved and the candidate arrested (Kassem, 2004: 56-7). Fahmy also explains that the party leader and the editor of the party newspaper are viewed as responsible for anything that is written in the party newspaper, and they can subsequently be sued if it contains any criticism of the executive office (2002: 68). Another important point that illustrates the difficulties faced by the parties is that between 1998 and 2004 seven parties were closed down by the CPP (Stacher, 2004: 215).

## **2.5 The Nature of the Political Parties**

The Egyptian opposition parties are, as previously stated, viewed as weak entities. This is due to both external and internal factors. The external factors have been presented above, and it mainly concerns the regime and the system it has built up. The internal factors however, involve the nature of the parties themselves. One important point is the nature of leadership. A party leader can sit for an unlimited period of time. This is best observed in the oldest parties that were established in the 70s. The same leaders have held office for decades and a change in leadership has not taken place until a leader has died. There is also a lack of democracy within the parties, to the point where leaders are acting dictatorial. The top leadership often seems to take decisions without neither involving other senior members nor the grass roots, and if opposition exists it is repressed (Fahmy, 2002: 95-6). Both of these traits, continuity of leadership and an undemocratic system, are areas in which the regime receives criticism from the opposition parties. It is interesting that the opposition builds their organizations on the very same qualities.

Other internal factors that weaken the opposition are divisions within the parties and lack of cooperation and trust between parties. The internal divisions have been highly present in two of the parties I have been in contact with. The Social Labor Party (SLP) split into a secular and a religious faction (Fahmy, 2002: 75). In the New Wafd Party the factions and struggles have continued for a long time (Ibid: 79), at one point resulting in the leader expelling two of its Members of Parliament (Kassem, 2004: 79). Divisions can in fact go as far as a faction

deciding to leave and create a party of its own. Such problems do not help attract members and voters in a society where the masses are already alienated from politics. In addition to this, lack of cooperation across parties rids the opposition of the opportunity of being a united and therefore also a stronger force against the regime. Naturally, the regime finds divisions and lack of cooperation within the opposition to be in their benefit, and they tend to play on them (Fahmy, 2002: 95-7).

Yet other internal weaknesses are the fact that the parties often lack an ideology and a clear political standpoint. Instead, they can be built up around the personality of a prominent and charismatic leader or serve the interests of a small group in society (Fahmy, 2002: 97). This last point, in addition to the ones listed above, have had serious consequences for the parties' relationship and support among the people. Fahmy writes that "the failure of the parties to establish communication channels with the grass roots, [...] has contributed to their failure to institutionalize the party system in the political culture of the masses" (Ibid).

## **2.6 The Political Parties in Focus**

In this section I shortly present the seven parties that have been engaged in this study. Contact with the parties has taken place through interviews with party members. Methodological issues related to the field research are discussed in the following chapter.

### **2.6.1 The New Wafd Party**

In comparison to the other parties on the Egyptian political scene, the Wafd Party has a long history. It was first established in 1919 when Egypt was a monarchy under British control. After the coup in 1952, the party was banned. It was allowed to reemerge in 1978, only to find itself forced to disband until 1983 (Fahmy, 2002: 77-8). This turbulent history has, among other things, resulted in a slight name change from the Wafd Party to the New Wafd Party. In this paper it is referred to as the Wafd Party.

The current leader of the party is Mahmoud Abaza (information communicated by informant). The Wafd Party is a liberal party and was historically also secular. How it should be defined today is a tricky business since the party has cooperated with the Muslim Brotherhood and is also demanding the implementation of Islamic *Shari'a* law (Fahmy, 2002: 79). The party is

promoting political reform, the development of a new constitution, a strict separation of power and greater civil liberties. It is further promoting a market economy where private enterprise is encouraged, but where companies should not be allowed to establish monopoly (Al-Ahram Weekly, 1995).

### **2.6.2 The National Progressive Unionist Party**

The National Progressive Unionist Party (NPUP) was one of the two opposition parties Sadat established in 1976, and it was designed to attract leftist groupings. Accordingly, it consists of an amalgam of various ideas such as Marxism, socialism and Nasserism, and further of people viewing themselves as social democrats and liberal independents. As Fahmy puts it, this leads to an “uneasy co-existence, and often calls for compromise solutions” (2002: 73).

The leader of the party is Mohammed Refaat al-Saed (Egypt State Information Service 1). In short, the party calls for liberty, socialism and unity, which they believe only can be realized after a thorough democratic transformation. The party also promotes Arab-African cooperation and Arab Solidarity (UNDP).

### **2.6.3 The Social Labor Party**

The Social Labor Party (SLP) was created by Sadat in 1978 and was thought to be the new loyal leftist opposition, since NPUP “failed” and turned into an authentic opposition. However, the Labor Party did not stay loyal for long either, and as with the NPUP it faced a major crack down initiated by President Sadat (Fahmy, 2002: 74-5). The two parties, SLP and NPUP, have similar political views and reaches out to the same social groupings. Hence, they challenge and threaten each other’s social base (Ibid: 74).

The long time leader of the SLP, Ibrahim Shukri, past away last year (Al-Ahram Weekly, 2008) and I do not know who has taken over the leadership. Over the years the party has developed a division between a secular and an Islamic fraction, with the latter taking control (Fahmy, 2002: 75). The party promotes both Arab nationalism and Islam. It is further against the “Zionist-American alliance” and supports “independent economic development that avoids the sins of Western development” (UNDP). The party was frozen by the CPP in 2000, supposedly due to internal leadership strife. The succeeding investigation found, among other

things, that the party had cooperated with the illegal Muslim Brotherhood (Fahmy, 2002: 76-7). According to a party pamphlet I received from an informant, the Labor Party took the issue to court and the CPP's action was found to be illegal, however, in the summer of 2008 the case was still being tried in court.

#### **2.6.4 The Democratic Arab Nasserite Party**

The Democratic Arab Nasserite Party, often just referred to as the Nasserite Party, was founded in 1992, and is well over a decade younger than the ones listed above. The leader of the party is Dia al-Din Daowd (Egyptian State Information Service 2). As its name reveals, the party supports the ideas of President Nasser, which includes socialism and Arab nationalism. It further supports constitutional reform and restrictions on the presidency. The party promotes international cooperation, but supports the fight against dependency and foreign hegemony (UNDP).

#### **2.6.5 The Dignity Party**

The Dignity Party is the only party I have been in touch with which is not yet legalized. It applied for legal party status to the CPP in 2000, but their application was refused. The party then took the matter to court, but lost. Today the party is somehow functioning as the other legal parties. That is, it has its own newspaper and activities, and since independent candidates can run for parliament the Dignity Party has two representatives there (informant communicated by party member).

The leader of the Dignity Party seems to be Hamdeen Sabahy (Wikipedia). The party is an offshoot of the Nasserite Party and believes in socialism. The party seems to have a great focus on Arab unity and the Arab personality of the Egyptian state. The Arab character is built on the Islamic civilization, but also on Christianity. Within Egypt, the party wants to fight poverty and corruption. In their view, Egypt needs deep changes, which can be achieved by peaceful resistance and wide civil disobedience. At an international level, it is against what it sees as imperialism lead by the United States of America and Israel, and globalization. It further views the Arab leaders as satellites of the United States (information communicated by

party member). As I see it, the party's harsh political stand must be one of the reasons why the party has not been legalized.

#### **2.6.6 The Tomorrow Party**

The Tomorrow Party was founded in 2004 by the now quite famous Ayman Nour. He was previously a member of the Wafd Party, but was forced to leave the party after internal disputes (Kassem, 2004: 79). Ayman Nour participated in the first presidential election in 2005, and came second after President Mubarak. Soon afterwards he was sentenced to five years in prison charged of forging signatures in relation to his party's application to the CPP (Al-Ahram Weekly, 2006). The current chairman of the party is Ehab al-kholy, while Nour has been elected Honorary Leader of the party (information communicated by party member).

The Tomorrow Party is a liberal democratic party, which believes in a "third way" where liberalization and the encouragement of private initiative are balanced with social welfare and a strong government. The party further believes in freedom of thought, expression and religion, and in the empowerment of all citizens. The party has proposed a new constitution where there are more balanced power relations between the executive, the legislative and the judicial (information communicated by party member). The Islamic religion receives a special place within the party, and it has an Arab focus. The party promotes an Arab Court of Justice, further developing the Arab League, and the development of an Arab Common Market (UNDP).

#### **2.6.7 The Democratic Front Party**

The Democratic Front Party was founded as recent as in 2007. The leader of the party is Osama al-Gazaly Harb. It is a liberal democratic party that supports a secular state (information communicated by party members). A truly democratic state is its ultimate goal. In order to achieve this, the party suggests that the country needs a new constitution, a canceling of the emergency law, and an elimination of exceptional laws and exceptional courts. Further, the party promotes the right to establish political parties and civil society organizations, and it also promotes political decentralization and health care services (UNDP).

## 2.7 Conclusion: the State- Society Dynamic

What we have seen above is a presentation of an authoritarian state that severely represses society in order to stay in power. According to Kassem, "restrictions on the public sphere from the late 1990s onward have reached an unprecedented level in the Mubarak era" (2004: 170). We have further seen that the political opposition, here represented by political parties, are weak and take on the same characteristics as that of the regime. How are we supposed to understand this reality? Ninette Fahmy proposes a solution. She understands the Egyptian state-society relationship to be that of a weak state and a weak society, which further influences each other to stay weak (2002: 255-57). The weak state- weak society model describes the state as having little capacity to penetrate into society and having an equally low capacity to extract resources from it. This results in the state having to use repression, both in order to carry out its policies and to ensure regime survival. The repression the regime executes is a mix between coercion, bribery and corruption. These are signs of a weak state, which by its repression further weakens society. Political parties and other organizations are therefore also weak and easily take on the same characteristics as that of the state. This result in the alienation of the masses, that is already apathetic to the system. The parties cannot represent and promote the people's interests and the state has built a political system on repression. There are therefore no "proper" channels the masses can use in order to state their needs and interests, and in that way affect policies. Such a situation force people to develop their own strategies of survival, which are executed through the very same system as that created by the state. The result is the fact that "[c]lientele networks, corruption and patronage prevail and supplant normal channels of mediation between state and society" (Fahmy, 2002: 255). It ends up as a vicious cycle where society reinforces the devastating characteristics and strategies of the authoritarian state.

It is through this weak state-weak society model the nature and position of the Egyptian political parties is understood. Further, it is in this context the participation and agency of party youth members is interpreted. In the following chapter I elaborate on methodological issues concerning the fieldwork I conducted in Egypt. I was fortunate enough to meet with members of the opposition parties and hear first-hand how they themselves view their party, their position in the political landscape and the role played by youth members.



### **3 METHODOLOGY: IN THE FIELD**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In the following I introduce the methodology of my research on youth members in political parties in Cairo, Egypt. I start by briefly introducing the concepts of validity and reliability, and then move on to my chosen methodology. Here I elaborate on the qualitative research approach, and on my data collecting method of interviewing. Moreover, I intend to present the most important aspects of the data collecting process; the choices I have made in relation to informants, the use of translators, and the issues of registration and ethics. My goal is to be honest and transparent about the process, I therefore reflect on the choices I made in the field and try to judge them objectively and see what could have been done differently.

This thesis is based on a qualitative research method. Two concepts are important for the qualitative research method, namely that of reliability and validity. These two concepts can help determine "the quality or sustainability of qualitative evidence" (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 270), and they concern the whole research process, from fieldwork sampling to the making of analysis and conclusions (Ibid: 270-275). The two concepts are therefore important to take into consideration, not just in relation to methodological concerns, which here mainly focuses on fieldwork, but in all parts of the research. The word reliability means 'sustainable', and concerns the replicability of findings, meaning that if a person did the exact same research as another person, they would end up with the same findings. Reliability further concerns the ability to generalize beyond the research sample (Ibid: 270, 272). Validity means 'correctness' or 'precision' (Ibid: 273). Hammersley has explained that "an account is valid or true if it represents accurately those features of the phenomena that it is intended to describe, explain, theorise" (Ibid: 274). Validity therefore also relates to the accurate use of measurements, which means that findings must be labeled with the correct words, and that the correct research "path" is chosen so that one is measuring the intended (Ibid: 273). Even though these two concepts concern different aspects of research they end up demanding similar methods of reassurance. First, they demand extensive checks on the quality of the data/findings. Second, they both demand a detailed presentation of the research process (Ibid: 272, 274). It is mainly the importance of a presentation of the research process that is the focus of this chapter. However, the two demands are highly interrelated, because if the fieldwork,

and the research process in general, are not of appropriate quality, the findings will be less trustworthy as well.

### **3.2 Qualitative Study**

Qualitative research can be described as “a naturalistic, interpretative approach concerned with understanding the meanings which people attach to phenomena (actions, decisions, beliefs, values etc.) within the social worlds” (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 3). Further, Holliday illustrates that the researcher can only “(...) explore, catch glimpses, illuminate and then try to interpret bits of reality” (2007: 6). We can then say that the researcher can interpret bits of reality and through that an understanding can be achieved.

Methodology “refers to the choices we make about cases to study, methods of data gathering, forms of data analysis etc., in planning and executing a research study” (Silverman, 2005: 99). The reason why I chose a qualitative and not a quantitative approach is because I found it suitable for my research. As Silverman has stated, the topic should decide what methodology a researcher ends up using (Ibid: 6). When carrying out my research I wanted to learn about youth's experience in political parties in Egypt. In order to be able to dig deep into this reality I had to sacrifice scope for detail. Here I have presented a division between two research methodologies, that of the qualitative and the quantitative. It is however important to be aware of the fact that these two are not individually unified "paradigms", but rather consists of various traditions.

My main research approach has been interviews with selected informants. An important motivation for using this method has been the lack of data on the topic, and qualitative field research could bring new knowledge into the field. Participant observation is another widely used method in qualitative research. I was, however, not able to use this method sufficiently. I shall return to this below.

### **3.3 Interviews**

I traveled to Cairo on May 31<sup>st</sup> 2008 and ended my fieldwork on August 1<sup>st</sup>. During these two months I conducted interviews with leaders and youth members of political parties. In total,

people belonging to seven different parties were interviewed. The initial plan was to interview one leader and one youth member from each of the parties I got in touch with. I ended up interviewing one leader from each of the seven parties, and in total 14 youth members. Of the 14 some were not properly interviewed, they came along as friends of the informants, and just made comments when they found it suitable. In reality I therefore interviewed 11 youth members in the proper sense of the word. In addition to party members, I interviewed a non-partisan political activist and one of the leaders of a liberal youth organization.

In-depth interviewing is one way of organizing an interview. It can be described as an unstructured interview, or as a form of conversation (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 138). This method is a good facilitator for making unforeseen discoveries about the research topic, which is something Holliday describes as an important quality of qualitative research (2007: 5). When planning for fieldwork I prepared for a mix of in-depth and structured interviews. This was done in order to get answers to specific questions that I found important, and also invite the informants to guide me to issues which they viewed as important. Question guides were prepared, one for party leaders and one for youth members, with topics that I wanted to touch upon during the interviews. In this way the interviews were supposed to be semi-structured, in-depth sessions. Some interviews, especially with party leaders, ended up more structured than I planned and hoped for. I met them in their offices between appointments and we therefore had limited time available. To save time, we worked our way through the question sheet. The interviews with the youth members were, on the other hand, more in-depth in character. We often met in a relaxed place, like in a café, and the informants usually had more time available. These factors resulted in a relaxed atmosphere where the conversations had a natural flow. However, I find it important to specify that not all interviews with leaders were structured and not all interviews with youth members were particularly in-depth. There was a mix, but it was more or less as described above.

Interviews are affected by the people that participate, in addition to the place and time in which it is conducted. This is something Hanne Bjertnæs elegantly points out in her thesis; "[a]ll conversations are ultimately interactions set on a social stage, where we act according to circumstances or participants. The setting is the stage, and what performance we put on is to a certain degree dependent on the audience" (2007: 26). This quote leads me to an additional

explanation for the difference in nature between the interviews with youth members and party leaders. Dealing with leaders in a political environment where positions and authority matters can affect the researcher and thereby the interview. Managing to get interviews with busy party leaders that have great respect among their colleagues most likely affected me as a researcher. I consequently acted in a more formal fashion, which resulted in more structured interviews. This illustrates that there can be several reasons why interviews take a specific direction.

Participant observation can be explained as doing research while being part of a social setting (Glesne, 2006: 49) Valuable information can be extracted, and the method can be particularly fruitful when combined with interviews. Glesne has suggested, "through participant observation (...) you learn first-hand how the actions of research participants correspond to their words" (Ibid). In relation to my research it would have been interesting to observe the daily routines in a party office and to observe settings where youth members and party leaders worked together. Such observations would have given my interviews a deeper foundation in the reality of the field, and it would also have given me, as a researcher, a deeper understanding of my topic. There are various reasons why these kinds of observations did not take place. One is the lack of sufficient planning before entering the field. Another is that I had to put much effort into getting the amount of interviews needed. And yet another factor is that the political parties in Cairo are not organized into units of people working closely together at all times. People come and go, and when they are at the office they seem to work in separate rooms. Conversations, both informal and formal, seem to take place in the halls, of course depending on the size of the party office. This is my impression from visiting parties when conducting interviews. The number of visits was limited, but these observations gave me the understanding that simply spending a day in a party-office would not have been particularly fruitful. On the other hand, participating in various activities, such as seminars, meetings, and rallies could have been useful. My lack of competence in Arabic would, however, have been an obstacle. Moreover, it is an open question whether party members would have allowed me to do such observations. To conclude, more effort should have been put into participant observation. How it would have been perceived by party members, and if it would have been a fruitful experience is impossible to judge.

### 3.4 Informants

My interview subjects were leaders and youth members of seven different political parties. In particular, I wanted to speak with youth members, since they are the main focus of this research. Leaders were chosen because they have significant power within the parties, and are somehow responsible for the status quo of the organizations, as well as for their near future. Approaching both groups would allow me to learn about youth's role in the parties and their general participation in the parties from two perspectives, the youth and the leaders. The leaders could also contribute with valuable information since a leader is supposed to have extensive knowledge about his/her party.

In general, “Youth” and “young people” are two vague terms. In the thesis, I apply the understanding the parties themselves have of what a youth member is. Usually a person can be a member of the parties’ youth committee/union until he or she has turned 35. In a few parties, the age limit is 30. A person who has past 30 is generally speaking not a youth, but since the leaders of most parties are elderly men in their sixties and seventies, 30 years of age is relatively young. Throughout the thesis I refer to youth members as one unified group within each of the parties. The Egyptian parties are, however known to be split into different rival factions, and the youth members must also be understood as participants in these rivalries. I treat them as one group, “the youth”, because it is convenient in relation to my topic.

The informants were mainly male. Only two informants were female, one was a leader and the other was a youth member. This is not to say that women are not involved in party politics, but there were few women present in the party offices when I contacted them, and I was seldom referred to a female member for further interviewing. This is in itself an interesting issue, but since the research does not focus on gender differences I do not explore the phenomena further.

In order to get in touch with party members I used four different strategies. First strategy was to go directly to the party office. This was the preferred strategy and was used whenever possible. The second strategy was to call the party office, through the help of an Egyptian friend. My Arabic speaking friend helped when neither my English nor Arabic skills were

sufficient. The third strategy was to contact party members on Facebook. This was a strategy not frequently used since I had a difficult time locating political party members on this website. However, Facebook is popular among politically active Egyptians, especially young people, and is therefore a useful website to follow in order to get some insight into what is happening on both the formal and the more informal political arenas in Egypt. This is an issue I elaborate on in chapter five. The fourth strategy was to let party members already interviewed guide me to other members or people active in other political parties.

### **3.5 Reflections**

When I contacted parties, either in person or by phone, I asked to interview one of the leaders of the party. This resulted in interviews with leaders holding different positions, some more powerful than others. This is a choice that can be criticized. Different positions of leadership have different responsibilities and most likely deal with youth to a various degree and in different ways. For comparative reasons, it could therefore have been reasonable to interview people in the same leadership position in the various parties. However, I decided not to do it this way, partly because it would have been too time consuming. Often, the interviewee was the leader present at the time I contacted the party, or the one that could speak English. The other reason why it was decided to interview leaders in various positions was because I assumed that the topics of youth members and parties' relationship to the internet were topics most leaders had knowledge about. This seemed to be the case and it was therefore not viewed as problematic to interview people holding different positions of leadership.

The fourth strategy used in order to get in touch with informants was to let party members already interviewed introduce me to other party members. This was a strategy mainly used to get in touch with youth members of the various parties. I usually first interviewed a party leader and by the end of the interview I asked if he could put me in contact with one of the youth members. This raises a question of reliability. One can ask if it was correct to let party leaders introduce me to youth members? This is an important question to ask considering that the interviews evolved much around youth's influence and position in the various parties. Since the leaders interviewed knew this, they could intentionally have introduced me to youth members they knew were satisfied with their role in the party. In that sense, the leaders could intentionally have shaped the data into taking a specific direction. However, this is not

believed to be the case. The leaders usually put me in contact with youth that knew English, the leader of the youth committee/union, or youth that were already at the party office. This can illustrate that the leaders most likely did not introduce me to youth they had chosen because of their “correct” view of the party and the leadership.

Another case also raises the issue of reliability. One leader I interviewed decided to introduce me to two youth members already in the office. These did not speak English so the leader, who was fluent in English, translated for them. To let a party leader translate for youth members in an interview partly evolving around their opinion on youth’s level of influence and position is problematic. The ‘dependability’ (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 271) of some of the data collected in this interview can therefore be questioned. These parts of the interview will be treated with some scepticism. However, the interview has also presented valuable information that I do not find a reason to question. In addition to this, it was interesting to see the leader and the youth members interact. In my view, there was a relaxed and easy atmosphere. The youth, without knowing what the leader previously had answered to the questions he was presented with, gave many similar answers.

Five of the seven parties I was in contact with have official political party status, in addition, the Dignity Party has not received legal status as a political party and the Social Labor Party is currently frozen. In both cases I did not know about their political status until during the interview. After the interviews I evaluated their relevance to my project, and concluded that they were both still highly relevant. Both parties have the same internal structure as the legal parties and behave in similar fashion. The only significant element that distinguishes them from the other parties is how they are treated by the regime. This discussion can be taken further and put in relation to the limited role the political parties play in Egyptian politics. One can therefore ask what difference it makes if a party is illegal and cannot formally participate in elections when the legal parties that do participate cannot win any significant number of seats? When it is also known that people belonging to illegal parties and movements run as independents in election and can win seats in parliament, the difference between legal and illegal/frozen parties become even more insignificant.

### 3.6 Translator

Because of language barriers a translator had to be engaged. An Egyptian friend of mine offered to help. This was something he did in addition to help make phone calls, as mentioned earlier. In total he was an interpreter in relation to three parties. There are both advantages and disadvantages in using an interpreter. The main advantage was that by engaging a translator it was possible to interview party members that did not speak English. In one party at least, the translator was an essential part of me being able to conduct any interviews, since no one seemed to speak English. The main disadvantage with using a translator is that the information received becomes second-hand. The information presented by the informant is not directly received by the researcher, but first goes through an interpreter whom quickly has to translate the information received. In such a process data can be lost. In addition, other problems depending on the situation can occur. In my case, I lost some control over the interview session. Time was spent during the interviews explaining questions to the translator, and sometimes he also slightly changed the questions presented to him. Further, I did not always get a full translation during the interviews, which made me less able to pose questions to the informants' answers. However, most of the time the interaction between the translator and myself went well, and we improved after each interview.

The advantages and disadvantages listed above are directly related to the researcher. However, using a translator can also result in implications in relation to the informant. How does the informant feel about having a translator present? If the informant is not comfortable with it, he can decide not to share specific information. In a country like Egypt, which is an authoritarian state, the issue of using an interpreter is important to discuss. It is even more important when the interpreter is an Egyptian citizen. In an authoritarian state where the political parties live on the mercy of the regime, it is important to know whom you share information with. If something is said to the wrong person, the security of informants can be jeopardized. My topic of research did not directly involve the Egyptian state. I study relations inside the political opposition. But since the political parties are part of the political milieu of the state, they are naturally affected by it. Therefore, during the interviews, the state was usually mentioned in one way or another. However, engaging a local translator could also have made the informants feel more comfortable. They were allowed to speak in their own language and had a person present that could better relate to the information they presented.



The fact that the level of freedom of expression is higher in Egypt than in other authoritarian states in the region makes it less problematic for a person to express his views on various issues. From my point of view, engaging a translator did not affect the informants in a negative way. I would even dare to say that it affected them in a positive manner. However, this is difficult to judge objectively.

Four interviews were conducted using party members as translators. One was the case described above where the party leader translated for the two youth members. In two other cases a leader was present and available for an interview when I showed up at the party office. The leader could not speak English so an English speaking party member was located and translated during the interview. In one of these parties the same translator was used the following day when I returned to interview a youth member.

Mainly the same advantages and disadvantages of using a translator listed above apply when using party members as translators. In addition, these translators seemed to get quite involved in the interview session. While translating they would sometimes present their own opinion on different issues. Also, when a translator belongs to the party the issue of sharing information changes. Here, the informant knows the interpreter, at least on a political level, and the uncertainty about revealing information that may cause harm should not be present. However, since the interviews mainly evolved around internal party issues, using an interpreter from within the party could have resulted in informants not telling their true opinion about certain topics.

### **3.7 Registration**

Most interviews were recorded on a digital recorder and transcribed afterwards. A few interviews were recorded manually. I wrote down as much as I could during the interviews and shortly afterwards filled it out more extensively. Using a tape recorder is, in my view, a more accurate and objective way of recording. But deciding which method to use, usually comes down to what the researcher feels comfortable with. When using a tape recorder I personally found it easier to make the interview more of a conversation than a formal interview. However, when recording manually I found it easier to pay attention to the relevance of the data received during the interview, simply because I then wrote down what I

found to be important, and before leaving the informant I could easily check if all the needed data was collected.

Two of the interviews were transcribed by the interpreter. He offered to do this because he felt that he did not manage to translate sufficiently to English during the interviews. I do not know how accurate his translations from Arabic to English are. However, the translator did not have any political affiliations and would in that sense not have a reason for changing the informants' statements.

### **3.8 Doing Research in the Middle East**

Being a European person and a woman doing research in an Arab/Islamic society did not result in any difficulties per se. Cairo is a big city with a great variety of residents. The city is also visited by many tourists and has quite a few foreign residents. My presence was therefore not remarkable. However, I do believe that my effort to dress modestly gained me some respect and trust among my informants, and other people I had to deal with throughout the fieldwork. It is common among Egyptian woman to dress modestly, and the majority also wears *hijab* (a shawl to cover their hair and neck). I did not wear a *hijab*, mainly because I did not find it necessary nor personally appropriate. When dressing modestly I felt that I managed to distinguish myself from European tourists and others enjoying the city without being aware of the local customs. I found this important to signal since I needed the informants' trust, and in order to achieve this they needed to know that I was interested in and respected their culture.

Being a European doing research in Egypt can be an advantage in some respects. Being a political person in an authoritarian state representing some kind of opposition to the ruling elite can be a challenge. It can be dangerous to talk to strangers and you have to be careful about what you say. This often result in suspicion towards others, and being open about political matters to people you have just met can be a challenge. In those cases it can be easier to trust a foreigner. The likelihood of him or her being involved on the "wrong" side of state politics is low. This can be one of the reasons why I did not face any particular problems when it came to finding informants and conducting interviews. Moreover, I also got the impression that many of the youth members appreciated the fact that a foreigner had come to

Egypt to study their role in the parties. The majority of the youth were eager to share their experiences and opinions on my research topic.

As previously stated, my identity as a European woman did not prevent me from being accepted or taken seriously. The language barrier was felt as a stronger obstacle. My proficiency in Arabic is low and many Egyptians cannot speak English. Not knowing Arabic properly made it challenging to direct myself in the field, to get in touch with party members, and to conduct interviews. However, the language differences did not seriously challenge the research. It only created slightly more work and the fact that a translator sometimes had to be engaged. This resulted in a few problems, but I was nevertheless able to get interviews with party members that did not speak English. This was, in my view, more valuable than the problems faced when using a translator.

### **3.9 Ethics**

My informants did usually not find my presence and requests for interviews problematic. Because of that it often felt out of place to show the informants written documents of my identity as a student, ask them for consent to use the information they presented, and explain that I would not revile their identity. Because of their relaxed attitude towards my work I sometimes also forgot to do this. But all informants knew that I was a student whom would use the information they presented in a thesis. This is however not the correct fashion of doing research ethically right, and I see now that I should have been more clear about my own role and the informants' role while on fieldwork. Some of the informants do probably not mind having their name published in this research, but because I did not always settle this matter during the interviews and because I had already decided to keep all my informants anonymous I will do just that.

Before the interviews formally started I asked if I could use a recorder and explained that it would only be used for personal reasons and would not be shown to anyone else. None of the informants had problems with it. At one point an informant told me that I should not share the information he presented with anyone, only use it in relation to the thesis. Names of the informants and the interviews, both the digitally recorded version and the written version, are stored separately. In some cases the first name of informants are present on the digital version,

either because informants or I have unconsciously said them during the interviews. These names are however not present in the written version.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have elaborated on the methodology and methods used in this research. I have also discussed important issues and problems that I faced during fieldwork. This has hopefully made for a clear understanding of where the data I use in the analysis chapter (chapter five) comes from, how I have obtained it, and subsequently how valid and reliable it is. In the following chapter I present the theoretical framework, which is also an important element of the analysis.

## 4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 4.1 Introduction

In the following I elaborate on the theoretical framework that is used in the thesis. I define concepts that are important, such as authoritarianism and institutions. I also present the theory that I have chosen to use, namely Anthony Giddens' structuration theory. In addition, I use James Slevin's hypothesis on how modern organization can be affected by their use of the internet. I do not intend to give a complete review of the concepts or the theories, but focus on the points that are relevant for my work.

### 4.2 Authoritarianism

The Egyptian state and the political opposition parties in the country can be described as authoritarian (Stacher, 2004: 219). My main focus is on the authoritarian character of the parties, but since the state is also authoritarian and quite intrusive on the political and civil society, it is important to include the state in the discussion.

In the book *Non-Democratic Regimes*, authoritarianism is described as “a situation where (a) freedom is restricted in favour of obedience to authority, and (b) this authority is itself exercised with few restrictions” (Brooker, 2000: 22). In my study of the organizational structure of political parties, the “authority” is the party leaders, who are often senior men. However, at a state level, the authoritarian Egyptian state that is, the parties are heavily controlled and their freedom to act is limited. Thus, the party leadership acts in an authoritarian fashion within its party organization, while it at the same time is subject to an authoritarian state.

The authoritarian structures of power and influence illustrates that organizations, at least in authoritarian states, cannot be properly understood if only studied in isolation from the rest of the society. The authoritarian Egyptian state is intrusive on society and any organizational study would fall short if the state power is not included in some way. According to Juan J. Linz, authoritarian regimes usually have a privileged party. Other political/societal groups can be allowed, but their presence is decided upon by the regime. Such an arrangement is described as limited pluralism. However, much of the pluralistic forces end up somehow connected to the ruling elite. Leaders of various sectors and institutions are co-opted into the

system and subsequently become participants of it (Linz, 2000: 161). Linz further explains that authoritarian regimes often have a semi-opposition that is legal, in addition to the illegal opposition. The semi opposition has an interesting position in society, in that it partially criticises the regime and at the same time is involved and participates with it. Such a situation results in costs imposed by the regime on the semi opposition. This can explain their frustration, disintegration and the fact that they allow themselves to be co-opted by the regime (Linz, 2000: 168-70).

The Egyptian regime is made up of members of the National Democratic Party, which here is the privileged party. As described in chapter two, the Egyptian state has opened up for a multi-party system and it has also allowed non-governmental organizations and other societal groupings to form. However, it is difficult for such groupings to become legalized and if they do manage to obtain legal status these groupings, either it being political parties, NGOs or professional syndicates, are heavily controlled by the state. Hence, there is as Linz explained, limited pluralism present in Egypt. The Egyptian opposition parties fit well with Linz's description of a semi-opposition. The parties are restricted by the regime and many of their members are co-opted into the state's patron-client relations.

Linz further explains that authoritarian regimes usually lack a specific ideology. This can be due to intricate power relations, which makes the domination of an ideology impossible or at least challenging. This lack of ideology results in both positive and negative realities for the regimes. When it comes to the positive aspects, the lack of an ideology dampens the cleavages present in the regime coalition, and allows the regime to uphold the loyalty of the various fractions. It further makes the regime able to adapt relatively easy to changing conditions, especially in relation to the more hostile groupings in society. Opponents can be neutralized, actors can be co-opted, and the regime does not have to worry about living up to ideological utopian standards (Linz, 2000: 162-4). The negative results of not having a specific ideology are mainly that it alienates groupings in society from political participation, and mass mobilization seems impossible. Intellectuals, students, youth, and deeply religious persons are the groups that are the most difficult to involve (Ibid: 164).

The Egyptian regime does not have a specific ideology. Regime survival seems to be the main priority. In general, the political parties have also been described as not having a clear

political standpoint/ideology, but rather built up around the personality of a charismatic leader. However, as described in chapter two, many of the parties have some ideological foundation, either it being socialism, liberalism or pan-Arab unity. The issue of ideology may then be a breaking point between the Egyptian state, consisting of the co-optation of various sorts of social groupings, and the relatively small political parties. However, concerning authoritarian structures, the state and the parties are similar.

Moreover, Ninette Fahmy has described the Egyptian state as having several similarities with the bureaucratic authoritarian state model developed by O'Donnell (Fahmy, 2002: 242-45). In short, O'Donnell's model includes authoritarian regimes that incorporate various bureaucratic segments into the state machine. There is usually a strong connection to the military and to other public bureaucracies. Private bureaucracies like business corporations, technocrats and social sectors are also included. This inclusion by the state of bureaucratic segments is done in order to control social sectors by "encapsulating their political representation into government-dependent interest groups and/ or political parties" (Brooker, 2000: 30). This is done in an attempt to politically exclude and deactivate the popular sector (Ibid).

Fahmy points out that the Egyptian regime is built up by "an alliance between the state, the military and selected segments of the bourgeoisie" (2002: 242). There is a particularly strong connection to the military. An evidence of this is that since the revolution in 1952, all three presidents have come from the military (Ibid). Another similarity between O'Donnell's model and the Egyptian state is that the relations of power are organized in favour of the executive office. In Egypt the president holds enormous powers. In addition, the Egyptian state behaves exclusionary by trying to eliminate the normal mediators typically found in democratic states. In democratic states political parties are viewed as mediators in that they represent a bridge between the state and civil society (Ibid: 244). In Egypt, political parties are present, but they are restricted and marginalized in various ways, while they at the same time are incorporated into the state machinery (Albrecht, 2005: 391). The consequence is that Egyptian political parties have little value as mediators, which again makes them unattractive to the masses. People's critiques of the government cannot be channelled through the parties and they are in that sense of little help to the oppressed people (Fahmy, 2002: 255).

### 4.3 Institutions

The Egyptian parties are political organizations. They are also institutions, both in themselves and as part of larger entities. Institutions can be explained as “multifaceted, durable social structures, made up of symbolic elements, social activities and material resources” (Scott, 2001: 49). As already indicated, institutions are present at all levels of society, from the large world structures to local structures between people (Ibid: 48).

Institutions are shaped by processes activated by three elements, the regulative (rules), the normative (norms) and the cultural-cognitive (cultural beliefs). These elements form the institutional structures of our societies. They bring stability and order, and one can say that they are “the elastic fibres that resist change” (Scott, 2001: 49). This is done by restricting individuals and groups through defining legal, moral and cultural boundaries. However, at the same time as institutions resist change they also empower. This is because the legal, moral and cultural boundaries do not just represent prohibitions and constraints, but also guidelines and resources (Ibid: 50). When people and groups are empowered by the institutions they are part of they can influence and affect them, and the institutions can themselves therefore undergo change. The changes can be minor and take place within the existing structures of an institution. But the changes can also be of a major art, and challenge and change its very structure. The idea of institutions undergoing change is relatively new and it has altered our view of institutions as mere properties to also include a continuous state of process. Hence, institutions are dynamic entities (Ibid).

Above, it was stated that the regulative, the normative and the cultural-cognitive elements of social life form the institutional structures of our world. One can say that these are the symbolic aspects of social life (Scott, 2001: 49). But can symbolic elements develop and survive on its own? The answer to this is no, because there is a need for more hand fast and visible elements too. This is where behaviour or social action, and material resources come into the picture. When it comes to behaviour, Scott has written, “[r]ules, norms, and meanings arise in interaction, and they are preserved and modified by human behavior” (Ibid). If we take a look at material resources we find that they are important in relation to power. This is something Giddens and Sewell have written about and it comes down to the fact that if rules and norms are to be effective they need to be supported by power, and power is again related



to resources (Ibid: 49-50). Both of these points illustrate the complexities of social institutions.

Institutions across the globe develop differently and they also face different challenges. It is, for instance, a fact that institutions in the West have given social actors (people and organizations) greater autonomy and independence compared to South Asian societies (Scott, 2001: 73). Maye Kassem suggests that both the Egyptian state institutions and the political opposition parties are weak (2004: 81-2). The state leader is placed above all institutions to the point that personal authoritarian rule has become institutionalised in contemporary Egypt. Such a system relies on a weak political system that is never fully institutionalised (Ibid: 167). Institutions in Egypt are therefore not as strong and decisive as in democratic countries.

The idea of actors being able to influence and change institutions has been, and still is, a contested issue. Some scholars emphasize the constraints individuals face as actors within institutional structures. Other scholars give more attention to actors as being able to “make a difference” (Scott, 2001: 74). Anthony Giddens belongs to the latter group of scholars, but he is also seen as integrating both views. This has been done through his theory of structuration and that is where I am now turning.

#### **4.4 Structuration Theory by Anthony Giddens**

Towards the end of the 1970s Giddens began to publish literature on the theory of structuration. In his book *Central Problems in Social Theory* (1979) he writes that the theory begins from a lack of a proper theory of action in the social sciences. Understanding human action from the point of view of social determinism was, in his eyes, not right (Ibid: 2). Giddens also states that structuration theory should be viewed as “a non-functionalist manifesto” (Ibid: 7). And he adds that “social systems have no purpose, reasons or needs whatsoever; only human individuals do so” (Ibid). In the following I shortly present the theory of structuration and elaborate on the points I find important in relation to my thesis.

##### **4.4.1 The Basic Features of the Theory**

Structuration theory has a focus on social structures. Giddens sees these structures as consisting of patterns of social activities related in time and space. The social structures are

highly connected to rules and resources. Here, rules refer to “generalized procedures applied in the enactment/reproduction of social life” (Scott 1979: 75, and Giddens in Scott), and resources to human or nonhuman objects “that can be used to enhance or maintain power” (Scott, 1979: 75, and Sewell in Scott). Another important aspect related to the social structures are, what Giddens terms the ‘duality of structure’. By this he means that social structures should be viewed as having two equally important aspects, which are neither opposites nor mutually excluding. This phenomenon can be explained as structure being “both the medium and the outcome of the reproduction of practices” (Giddens, 1979: 5), or put in another way, that the social structures are both the “product and platform of social action” (Scott, 2001: 75). The duality here is that social action is formed by the existing social structures while it at the same time can evolve beyond the structures and possibly transform them.

In the Egyptian case, the social structures are, among other things, shaped by authoritarianism and patron-client relations. Both concepts have been explained previously, but it can be added that both phenomenas are hierarchically based. This has implications for rules and the distributions of resources. Those high up in the hierarchical structures naturally control the resources and are privileged enough to make rules that favours themselves. This can partly explain why the current system in Egypt has proven resilient and difficult to change, because, when individuals and a system in general are supported by favourable rules and resources, this provides them with the power to control and suppress challenging forces.

If the individual actors are placed within these grand structures it becomes apparent that also they are related to the idea of duality. Individuals are “simultaneously constrained and empowered by existing social structures” (Scott, 2001: 75). In order to understand this we must go back to the duality of structure. When social structures are both the product and the platform of social action it illustrates well how these structures are both constraining and empowering actors. Rules and resources are an essential part of this duality of structure. These two elements can both be constraining and empowering. Rules can prevent actors from doing what they want, but rules can also be favourable to certain actors. In addition, rules can provide a secure setting for acting. Resources can be used to gain power and in that way be empowering. It can also be used to prevent others from gaining power whom then will be constrained. We can conclude by saying that an individual’s actions are a product of the social

structures and thereby constrained in some sense. But these structures are also a foundation or a platform from where actors are empowered, and can influence and change structures if the actors manage to mobilize resources or are surrounded by favourable rules.

The concept of power needs some further elaboration. Within structuration theory power is related to interaction in a dual sense. Power is both present in the process of interaction and it is used to accomplish goals (Giddens, 1979, 88). In the process of interaction power is understood as a two way process where both parties, by mere involvement in the relationship, possess power over the other (Giddens, 1979: 6). This illustrates that everyone in a relationship possess power simply because they are part of the relationship. The leader of a company is the most powerful person in an organization, but ordinary workers also possess power. This gives them a foundation from where to negotiate their position, fight for their causes etc. When it comes to the power to accomplish goals that is related to rules and resources. If the example of the company is used again, we find that the significant power of the leadership comes from their position as leaders, and the resources and rules that are present in the organization. Leaders can use both rules and resources to accomplish tasks they find important. However, in relatively democratic organizations rules are also present to limit the power of the leadership over the rest of the organization.

But does such an understanding of power work in authoritarian states and organizations? Here, the difference in power between the leadership and the others are severe. The leadership possess great powers through being supported by resources and favourable rules, and it may be difficult to understand where the power of those outside the leadership lie and subsequently how they might challenge the leadership in interaction. This is an interesting issue and something I return to in the following chapter.

Another key point in structuration theory is related to the individual actor. Giddens views actors as knowledgeable on the society they are part of (Giddens, 1979, 73). This means that actors are not "cultural dopes", but rather possess knowledge on their situation and their society (Ibid: 71). Another term related to actor is agency. Agency refers to the ability actors have to affect the social world and in that way alter the rules and distribution of resources (Scott, 2001: 76). This is related to the idea that "the agent could have acted otherwise",

implying that actors can intervene in the world (Giddens, 1979: 56). However, Scott makes it clear that even though all actors (both individuals and collectives) possess agency, the amount of agency varies between actors and forms of social structures, and he reminds us that “[a]gency itself is socially structured” (2001: 76). This illustrates well that every component of the social world is created within social structures and in that way is a product of it. But as Giddens emphasizes throughout his book, this does not keep actors from evolving beyond the current structures (1979).

#### **4.4.2 Institutions and Social Change**

Where does social change come into the larger picture of structuration theory? Giddens writes that in structuration theory “the possibility of change is recognized as inherent in every circumstance of social reproduction” (1979: 210). This is related to all the concepts dealt with above. Here I just mention the duality of structure. According to the idea of duality, change can be grasped when it is recognized that action “both draws upon and reconstitutes the institutional organization of society” (Giddens, 1979: 255). Viewed in this way, change occurs continuously, but the same goes for reproduction and continuation. The implication of the theory is that change for the most part is subtle, and only rarely revolutionary.

How can we link the theory of structuration to institutions? Within the theory of structuration, institutions are viewed as “those types of social structures that involve more strongly held rules supported by more entrenched resources” (Scott, 2001: 75). This means that institutions consist of social structures, just like everything else in the social world, only that these structures are stronger. However, the duality of structure, rules and resources, agency and action, and all the other elements related to the structuration theory, are also present here. Therefore, continuity and change are the daily routine within institutional structures as well.

#### **4.5 The Internet**

Burnett and Marshall have written that, “The Internet is the specific name of the communication network that is comprised of millions of interconnected computers that freely exchange information with each other worldwide” (2003: 46). The use of the internet started to grow by the mid-1980s, and since then the growth has continued and become ever more

rapid (Ibid: 47). The Internet naturally affects our societies, including organizations of various kinds. In his book *The Internet and Society* James Slevin describes the changes organizations have been through on their way to become modern organizations (2000). Centralized authority is not as rigidly preserved as before, but have opened out and in that way managed to form relationships across traditional bureaucratic hierarchies (Slevin, 2000: 126). Modern organizations also facilitate greater individual autonomy of action, which further makes space for innovation and the development of skills, in contradiction to plain fulfilment of duties (Ibid: 126-7). In this way, modern organizations are viewed as a constellation of relationships of intelligent agents (Ibid: 127). This understanding of actors as intelligent agents corresponds well with Giddens' view of actors as knowledgeable on their situation and possessing the ability to affect the world around them.

When Slevin writes about modern organizations he suggests how the internet can be used to further develop these modern organizational structures. It can help increase the spread of centralized information, increase the vertical integration of the organization and support networks of decentralization (Slevin, 2000: 128). The internet can further make the significance of time and space less important (Ibid: 132), in the sense that people do not have to be at a particular place at a particular time in order to keep up to date and be included. All in all, the internet can contribute to more inclusive and transparent organizations that build on the knowledge of their members (Ibid: 129, 135). However, Slevin also makes it clear that the internet is not a tool that can magically transform and change organizations. First of all, organizations need to put much effort into organizing and monitoring the organizational links to the internet (Ibid: 137-8) (for example home page etc.). Second, one needs to be aware of the fact that organizations are different, with different histories, geographies and general institutional arrangements, and therefore also need to be linked to the internet in different ways (Ibid: 136). Third, the use of internet in organizations may have positive as well as negative consequences. If an organization gets connected to the internet and people can do their job outside the office this can lead to an increased feeling of freedom and maybe also increased efficiency, but it can at the same time lead to a feeling of alienation. In addition, members/workers may also feel that the organization has omnipresence and can control them wherever they are (Ibid: 132).

Does the theory of modern organizations correspond to current organizations with authoritarian style leadership? In this sense, can the political parties in Egypt be viewed as modern organizations? When related to Slevin's arguments I must say no. Centralized authority in the various parties has firmly been preserved and they do not seem to have opened out. The practice of authoritarianism severely limits people's freedom, and any significant amount of individual autonomy can thus not be present. If the authoritarian Egyptian parties are not modern organizations in the sense defined by Slevin, can their use of the internet affect the parties and possibly transform them? The internet is a relatively democratic arena where actors are somewhat equal. On the open-accessed areas the internet does not distinguish between a party leader and a youth member. In this sense, the room for and the possibilities of individual agency, as described by Giddens, are highly present on the internet. It is then interesting to see how authoritarian organizations relate to and possibly are affected by a democratic technology such as the internet.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have presented the theory that is used in the thesis, as well as elaborated on crucial concepts. I suggest that Giddens' theory on structuration, which holds a positive view of human beings as being able to affect the social world, while it at the same time acknowledges the power of existing social structures, can be used to discuss the role youth play and the possibilities they have in the Egyptian opposition parties. However, in the Egyptian case I do not believe that the theory on structuration can explain the complete picture. Authoritarianism and other social phenomena related to it are important to include. Because, what happens when a leadership has the power to continuously suppress human beings, and when both the Egyptian state and the Egyptian society can be characterised as weak and as further affecting each other to stay weak? I find it interesting to combine these various theories, concepts and models as a frame for detecting the role youth play in a part of the Egyptian society.

The concept of institutions is important for my understanding of the Egyptian political parties. The parties are political organizations and institutions, both in themselves and as part of larger political entities. However, Kassem has suggested that the Egyptian president is placed above all institutions, which has resulted in personal authoritarian rule becoming institutionalised

and the institutions themselves being weak (2004: 167). The leaders of the various political parties can be thought of as further continuing the strong position of the ruling figure compared with the institutions. This illustrates that viewing the Egyptian parties through the lens of institutional theory alone cannot work. Again, it is important to include some country specific phenomena like authoritarianism and patron-client relations.

What happens when the concepts of structuration theory, institutions, authoritarianism and the weak state-weak society model are applied in a study of the internet? The internet promotes agency and democratic relations. The parties, on the other hand, stand for authoritarianism and hierarchy. Structuration theory may suggest that Egyptian youth can use the internet as an arena from where to create agency and possibly social change. But is that possible within weak authoritarian organizations? In the next chapter, the analysis, I apply the theory and the various concepts presented here as I look into the issue of youth involvement and internet use in the Egyptian opposition parties.

## **5 YOUTH, INVOLVEMENT AND THE INTERNET**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I analyse and discuss the research questions and arguments that have been presented in preceding chapters. The discussion is based on first-hand information obtained through interviews with party members, in addition to secondary literature. The data is analysed through a backdrop of selected theories and concepts. The theories I apply are structuration theory, selected understandings of authoritarianism and institutions, in addition to a hypothesis on the effects the internet have on modern organizations. The research questions are as follows:

- 1) To what extent may youth be given the opportunity to involve in political parties in contemporary Egypt? The question is relevant due to the parties' authoritarian structures. In particular, I look at access to formal positions in the different bodies in the party hierarchy and subsequently to participation in dialogues and decision-making.
  
- 2) The use of internet is increasing in Egypt, in particular among the younger generation. What is the parties' attitude to internet use, and to what extent has the internet become an arena for youth participation in authoritarian party structures?

### **5.2 Youth and Involvement**

As previously suggested, authoritarianism means that the freedom of those outside the leadership is heavily restricted, and that the freedom of the authorities themselves faces few restrictions (Brooker, 2000: 22). This illustrates that restrictions, and therefore also exclusion, is the reality for the majority. Involvement on the other hand, can be explained as "the act of taking part in something" (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2005: 820). Restriction and exclusion seem to contradict with involvement. However, is it not possible to be partly excluded and involved? In this sense, is it possible to exercise involvement in an authoritarian party when you are outside the authority? Both the Egyptian state and the political opposition parties are authoritarian in structure. A small leadership holds a significant amount of power. The state leaders control a whole nation while party leaders exercise power within their party organization. Is it possible for youth to exercise some influence within such structures?



If political parties are authoritarian in structure, they typically exercise exclusion. Youth can easily be viewed as too inexperienced and too radical to be given power. Being radical is a particularly dangerous trait for Egyptian political parties, since they function on the mercy of an authoritarian regime. If radical youth who want substantial change become too powerful within a party, the regime might feel threatened, and subsequently freeze the party, shut it down, or arrest party members. This could be an argument for excluding youth from power in political parties. At the same time, the parties are dependent on active youth members (Wickham, 2002: 69). Engaged youth members can be activists, represent their parties in different arenas and attract young people. In addition, they possess knowledge and skills that older generations often lack. A senior member of the Democratic Front Party (DFP) said, “youth are a very essential part of the formation of the party”. Similarly, a top leader of the Wafd Party stated that “youth are very important for the party”, and he further estimated that 60 percent of the member mass was thought to be youth. But are youth only active launching activities, or do they also participate in forming the parties on a higher level? The expression used by a senior member of the Social Labor Party (SLP), who described youth as the "muscles" of the party, might support the notion that youth merely participate in activities, but do not initiate or lead. However, according to the majority of my informants, both leaders and youth, youth members are part of the higher offices, participate in discussions, influence decision-making and the like.

### **5.2.1 Formal Party Structures**

Let us first look into the issue of youth representation. In order to do this I briefly explain the overall structure of one of the parties, namely the Tomorrow Party. I do not have a detailed outline of the structure of each of the parties included in this research, but I assume that the overall structure is somewhat similar since the parties have developed in the same political environment, and many parties have developed by a fraction leaving a mother party. The Tomorrow Party is divided into three levels. 1) The local committees are headed by the Executive Board and the General Assembly. The local committees are among others the Youth Committee and the Committee for Woman. 2) The party has central committees headed by an Executive Board. This board is built up by the Secretary General, deputies, a treasurer, vice presidents, assistants and finally of the leaders of the main committees. Among the committees on the central level are the Organizational Committee, the Legal Committee and

the Youth Committee. In the Tomorrow Party, youth members (situated in the local and central youth committee) are not represented by quota neither in the local Executive Board and the General Assembly nor the central Executive Board. However, according to a central figure in the party, youth members can receive seats here if they are active and engaged in the party. In the summer of 2008 youth were, according to him, occupying seats here. 3) Above the central committees and the Executive Board is the General Assembly. This is the highest committee in the party. This assembly elects a Higher Council of 46-90 members, and also the president, and a Council of Wise Men. The Higher Council has five seats reserved for youth members. The council appoints the various members sitting in the central Executive Board. The Council of Wise Men consists of senior members that are above 60 years old that are appointed for life. Their main task is to oversee the party affairs and resolve conflicts when they evolve (all information communicated by party member).

Although the structure of the parties may be quite similar, youth representation differs between the various parties. In the Tomorrow Party we have seen that youth only have reserved seats in the Higher Council. The National Progressive Unionist Party (NPUP) on the other hand, has reserved one seat for the leader of the Youth Union (similar to the youth committees in the Tomorrow Party) in the higher offices at the local level, and 10 seats on the national level (information communicated by party member). In the not licensed Dignity Party there is an internal law stating that each part of the party (committees, board etc.) must leave one third of its seats for youth (information communicated by party member). The Dignity Party is, in my view, a radical party on the Egyptian political scene. It argues for radical changes in the country, and urges for wide civil disobedience as a means to reach that end. In addition, it has a favourable law of representation for youth. In this sense, the party's exclusion from legal political participation is not surprising.

### **5.2.2 The Nature of Leadership**

The descriptions above illustrate that youth have a voice in the upper levels of the parties. However, if the party leadership is authoritarian in its style of ruling, does upper-level youth representation really matter? In my opinion, the answer to this question depends on the style of ruling of the leadership, beyond that of being authoritarian. If the leadership is pragmatic and listen to the concerns of their members before taking a final decision, youth

representation still matters and therefore has a great value. If however, the leadership is more dogmatic in style, youth representation may have little value on a party level concerning, for example, outcomes of policies and decision-making. In this sense, the level of youth involvement in political parties may vary from one party to another. Moreover, it is not the formal structures of representation and laws that matter here, but rather the subjective feeling and experience of being included. The members of the Wafd Party that I talked with emphasized the positive changes that had taken place after the party got a new chairman, Mahmoud Abaza. He was described as renewing the party, being interested in the internet and subsequently developing its use within the party. Moreover, he was described as having a good relationship with the party's youth members and having a flexible attitude towards them. A central youth member in the party explained that for a long time the elders were the only ones in the leadership positions, but according to him, this had changed over the last two years and youth now play a more important role. These examples illustrate well how important the chairman is for determining the course of the parties, and the integration and inclusion of youth members. In the following I look into how youth members themselves view their own participation in dialogues and decision-making.

### **5.2.3 Participation: Decision-making and Dialogue**

A central youth member in NPUP, whom I call Mustapha, was satisfied with youth's role in the party. By having one representative in the upper level in the local branch, Mustapha said that the youth union could influence decision-making. He also drew a picture of an active dialogue between the youth union and the rest of the party. These dialogues could also turn into more fierce discussions when a difference of opinion occurred, as Mustapha described, "we [sometimes] have to fight each other". Most of my youth informants had similar opinions on youth involvement as that of Mustapha; they were satisfied with their level of participation in dialogues and decision-making.

Two youth members from the Wafd Party, whom I call Ali and Hassan, were also quite positive regarding youth's role within their party. Ali stated firmly that the youth members of his party have a great influence on the decision-making process. According to Ali, when there is a difference of opinion between youth and leaders, the topic opens up for discussion and the

camp holding the most convincing argument wins. Hassan was also quite positive to the role of youth within his party, but his opinions were more nuanced. He stated:

Formally youth are not involved in decision-making, but informally I can affect policies. I myself can affect policies taken by the party through lobbying (...) in the Supreme Committee. [They have a] democratic debate about the policies they pass. But you should convince them (...) you should do an effort to do so.

Hassan further presented some interesting statements regarding patron-client structures within the party. He said that youth members are given selected topics to engage with, which often turn out to be topics of less importance. He further explained that actors within the various parties are used as tools. In this sense, members are only receiving the exact information they need in order to do a job, and not the complete information. Members will therefore always come back to those above them in the political hierarchy and subsequently be dependent on them for the completion of political tasks. What Hassan is referring to here is a patron-client relationship. In chapter two this system was described as a trait of the state and the regime. The similarities between the state and the political parties were also made clear. Here then, we find another similarity. Patron-client systems are common in the Middle East, and since the state is, so to speak, built up on such a system, it is not surprising that the parties are engaged in it as well. In a patron-client system youth can easily end up at the bottom of the pyramid because they often have less experience, influence, power and resources.

Two youth members from the Democratic Front Party (DFP) were quite negative towards their leaders and youth's possibilities of influencing the party. They said that youth members were viewed as important for the survival of the party, simply because youth make a party more powerful on the ground. But they made it clear that youth did not participate in decision-making. Hussein admitted that the leader of the youth committee met with the party leaders, but as he explained:

They get someone from us, someone we do not like (...). And now if you ask them, they say that we have your representative, talk with your representative (...). He can participate with them in the small office, but we do not know him, we do not know how to [cooperate] with him in decision-making and we do not agree with his mentality and so on.

Here we see that some youth members find youth representation to be of little value, while as we have already seen, others find it to be sufficient. This can be due to differences between the parties, after all the DFP is a newly established party and one can assume that the youth committee is not as organized as the youth committees in the older parties of NPUP, Wafd and SLP. However, the difference of opinion between various youth members can also be because some expect more from their party than others. The DFP is, as previously stated, a new party. The party is also emphasizing its democratic character (UNDP, informants). Young people that decide to join the party may have high hopes for a democratic organization and subsequently of youth getting a fair share of power and influence. In this sense, the youth members from the DFP may have been disappointed. However, I talked with three youth members from the DFP. I interviewed Omar and Hussein first, and a few days later I interviewed Mahmoud. What is interesting here is that Mahmoud, in stark difference to the other two, was satisfied with youth's role in the party and their ability to influence decision-making. It then becomes apparent that the youth in the DFP are not so different from youth in other parties. This illustrates how individual the experiences of inclusion and participation are, and how they may differ between people within the same party. The DFP was the only party where I interviewed as many as three youth members. In the other parties I have only heard one or two views. This indicates that there are differing views on the topic in focus within the parties as well. This further illustrates that being in contact with one or two youth members from the same party is not sufficient in order to understand the complete picture. However, it gives us an indication of the trends that are present within the parties.

#### **5.2.4 Youth Challenging Authorities**

Hussein from the DFP told me about a recent local election his party had participated in. He said that the youth members had been working hard with the election campaign, and since it was the party's first participation in an election they had agreed on it only being a test. But a few hours before the end of the election day Hussein stated that the leaders decided to pull the party out of the race. According to him, the youth were furious and made a demonstration, and he further explained that:

I confronted the president of the party (...) [and said that] it is not your decision to make, it is our decision. Never quite again and participate with us in decision-making (...). I have been removed from my appointed titles, I have only kept my elected titles.

Hussein also pointed out that the party had changed the limit for being considered a youth from 35 to 30. In his view, this was done to get rid of the real activists from the youth committee and in that way control it. Because as he said, many youth members are ready to fight for real change and confront the regime, but the party leaders do not want this. Hussein, along with a few other members, which he described as real activists, had just past 30 years of age. As he explained:

Our leaders now need to control the youth activists, so they cast the age to be under 30 and they bring a lovely boy to manage those under 30 boys (...). He doesn't have his own vision (...) he just goes after the directions of the upper level of the party. I was not like that. I take my decisions, I impose my vision (...), I am very much convincing in the Supreme Council so the members there believe in me.

Among my interviewees, Hussein represents a different voice. He represents a break in the line of relatively positive youth, and is therefore an important informant. As I see it, the case of Hussein may suggest that as long as youth keep inside the boundaries drawn by the leadership youth seem to be included, but if they cross the line they become marginalized. Hussein appears to represent something different than his leadership. He wanted to fight for real political change, while the leaders may not want to do so for various reasons. Hussein stated:

We get little real practice because of the lack of political will among some leaders to go and engage in real political action because they want to protect their personal interests. It is very bad because they are very old and they have their personal interests somehow engaged with the government, they are government employees. Somehow a government employee is an opposition leader, a party leader. So we are frozen, no real activities, just demonstrations with a smile, just workshops and training. Just academic issues that are not related to our society.

In Hussein's opinion, his leaders do not fight for real change because they want to protect their own positions. However, it is a fact that if the parties challenge the regime they will be shut down. Whatever reasons a leadership has for engaging in a party, either it being personal enhancement or a true political vision, losing its party status is never a good option. Hence,

the parties are forced to carry forth the boundaries the authoritarian regime has set up, otherwise they will not survive as legal political entities. This illustrates the difficulty of examining the authoritarian parties separately from the authoritarian state.

In this part of the chapter I have suggested that the boundaries drawn by the party leadership, and indirectly by the state, offer some room for manoeuvring. This space gives youth the ability to participate and to be involved. However, it has also been illustrated that this issue both depends on the nature of the leadership and the subjective opinions and expectations of youth themselves. I further suggest that even though there is room for youth involvement there seems to be a firm line that cannot be crossed. The line seems to appear when youth directly challenge and go against their authoritarian leaders. But as long as their views and demands are moderate, the ability to influence and participate seems to be present.

### **5.3 Youth and the Internet**

After interviewing both leaders and youth members in the various parties, I learned that the parties have different relationships to the internet. Some parties seem to be highly engaged with it, while others do not find it particularly useful and therefore do not engage actively in it. Moreover, it seems that regardless of the level of internet use within the various parties, the youth members are the most active in this field. In some parties, youth members are responsible for party web pages, in others, youth members are generally politically active on the internet and directly/indirectly represent their parties. In this part of the chapter, I look into parties' internet use and the role youth members play here, but first I give a brief presentation of the development of the internet in Egypt.

#### **5.3.1 Internet in Egypt**

Egypt has been one of the forerunners in the use of internet technology in the Arab region. The internet was first introduced in the country in the early 1990s. Then, it was only available on university campuses. By the late 1990s the Internet Service Providers (ISPs) were allowed in private hands and the internet expansion could begin. It was no longer only a service for students and staff at universities, but could be set up in private homes and in businesses. However, for the average Egyptian the cost of both a computer and internet access was too

high, and only a small minority could take part in the technological expansion. In 2003 Egypt began providing free internet services to its people, and internet cafés are blooming in the big cities (Tandros, 176-77). This has resulted in the internet becoming available to a larger part of the population, but severe poverty and high illiteracy is still challenging this development.

It is interesting that Egypt, an authoritarian state, has had such an encouraging attitude towards its people's internet use. The internet naturally breaks down the state's monopoly on information, and can in that way constitute a threat to its power. This even more so since there is unfiltered access to the internet in Egypt. However, internet activity is heavily monitored by the state (Hofheinz, 2005: 79) and people have been sentenced to prison for publishing writings on the net (The Washington Post, 2007). Expressions of dissent towards the regimes in the region are widespread on the internet, and the various governments have not managed to silence it. There has, on the other hand, been an increase in the use of technology for coordination and communication purposes among opposition groups and civil society activists (Hofheinz, 2005: 80).

In 2003 it was estimated that four percent of the population in the Arab countries were using the internet. With the increase that was taking place the following year, it was suggested that it would rise to 11 percent in 2006. Egypt and Saudi-Arabia have the most internet users in the region. In 2005 they counted for a third of all Arab internet users. Internet use in the region is most widespread among urban, middle and upper class groups. It is further increasing the most among young people aged 20-30 and woman (Hofheinz, 2005: 82). When it comes to young people and the internet Hofheinz has suggested "among the younger, educated elites (...) it is increasingly a fact of life" and "it is today rapidly becoming a factor in the socialization of the younger generation" (Ibid: 83).

It is popular among Arab internet users to engage in debates, in fact "[n]o other language group debates as avidly on the Internet as Arabic speakers" (Hofheinz, 2005: 92). The most popular issues to debate are politics, religion and relations between the sexes. These topics are considered taboos in the region (Ibid). However, on the internet people seem comfortable talking about them. When it comes to politics, Arab internet users are interested in political development and urges for political reform and public participation (Ibid: 89). Considering



people's engagement in politics on the internet it is surprising to hear that the opposition parties in the region are weakly represented here. This seems to be due to the fact that the internet is not widespread enough within the population. In that sense, other communication and information tools are considered more appropriate for both the parties themselves and their followers. Party newspapers, telephone, sms (short message service), fax machines and face-to-face contact are the tools most widely used (Ibid: 84-85). However, concerning Egypt, my data suggests that the picture is more nuanced than that presented by Hofheinz on the whole Arab region, and that internet use among opposition parties seems to be on the rise. I elaborate on this below.

### **5.3.2 Youth and Internet Use within the Party Framework**

All of the seven parties I have been in touch with were connected to the internet, either by party website and/or party newspaper website. This seems to have been a relatively recent development for some, while for other parties becoming "connected" is an older phenomena. The Wafd Party established a website two years ago, a development that was linked to the change of leadership in 2006. The party has however had an online newspaper for a longer time. In addition to the official sites, Facebook was mentioned by most of my informants, including party leaders, as a relatively useful tool for their party. Facebook is a social utility network where individuals can make their own profile, chat, post writings, post pictures and also create groups and event invitations in which people can join. Many of the parties I was in contact with are represented with a group on Facebook. This could be a specific group for their party or a group that supports their ideology. Popular leaders sometimes also have their own groups. In addition, a few parties have their own chat forums, and within the parties it is also popular for members to have their own Blog (all information communicated by party members). A Blog is a personal web diary where the owner can publish writings and receive comments by readers. According to many youth members, Facebook has taken over for various other internet sites, such as Blogs, chats and the like. This because Facebook is a multi-functional network where various types of activities can be carried out on the very same web page.

Most leaders viewed the internet as important for their organization. The parties use the internet to spread information, find information and also to discuss various topics. Some of

the parties have an interactive website in which the reader can leave comments, in this way the flow of information is not only one-way, but rather two way. Discussions, on the other hand, seem to take place on the website Facebook. In the various parties it appeared to be mainly youth who were active on this site, with a few exceptions. One of the leaders of the Tomorrow Party, who had passed 50 years of age, described himself as the only "old" party member active on Facebook. I later found out that he also has a Blog. In general, leaders talked about Facebook in relation to their party in a positive manner. In some of the parties both leaders and youth expressed a satisfaction with all members' sufficiency with computer use in general and the use of internet in particular. While in other parties it was emphasized that youth contributes the most to the parties' work on the internet. In several parties it was stated that 'youth do all/most of the work on the internet'. One of the leaders of the NPUP told me that the old leaders do not know very much about computers and internet and are therefore dependent on the youth members in this area. Of the seven parties, three expressed that they are not dependent on youth to do their formal work on the internet. In the other four parties it was said that youth do all or most of the internet related tasks. The Nasserite Party, represented in this study by one of the leaders and a regular youth member, is the party which expressed the least enthusiasm about the internet. The internet is used to find and spread information, but most of the work is done on an individual basis, not on the more organizational level. However, also here it was made clear that the youth members are doing the existing internet work.

When six out of seven leaders express the view that internet is important for their party that is significant. In my opinion, when related to the information Hofheinz presented in his 2005 article, this can suggest that internet use among political parties in Egypt is on the rise. Hofheinz stated that internet use among Arab political parties was weak on average (p. 85). Considering Egypt's early and widespread internet use, compared to other countries in the region, one could assume that the Egyptian political parties were more active here than parties in other countries. The activity must, however, have been low compared to other parts of the world. According to my informants during interviews conducted in 2008, three years after Hofheinz published his article, it may seem as though the internet has received a more prominent place within the Egyptian opposition parties. Here it is important to emphasize that

this is my view after conducting interviews with a few members belonging to seven different parties.

Hofheinz also explained that sms has been a significantly more popular tool than internet for mobilizing people to political protests in the region. In March 2003 there were mass protests all over the Middle East against the invasion of Iraq. In Egypt, this was the first protest arranged by non-organized political groupings since the famous bread riot in 1977, and sms were said to be instrumental in organizing the protests (Hofheinz, 2005: 85). The 6<sup>th</sup> of April 2008 was also a day of protests and strikes in Egypt. The planning of the strike initially started among factory workers in the industrial city of Mahalla al-Kobra. Facebook activists later engaged in it by creating a group called 6<sup>th</sup> of April. The group ended up with around 70 000 members and seem to have been much of the reason why the protest became as significant as it did (Civil Society and Democratization in the Arab World, 2008, informants). Almost all of my informants mentioned the 6<sup>th</sup> of April Strike with proud and announced that also they had joined in. This incident illustrates that internet mobilization, along with sms, is a mobilization force in Egypt, and can suggest that using internet for political purposes is on the rise in the country.

In many of the Egyptian parties the 6<sup>th</sup> of April Strike seems to have been an eye opener regarding the importance of the internet. Even though little was achieved in the strike, it managed to mobilize support. As one youth informant from the Dignity Party said:

After the April 6<sup>th</sup> Strike the internet is becoming a priority of importance for most political parties (...) after the strike they saw that there are some people that they can't do anything about, that have a vision, a paradigm shift, and they now believe that those people can do something.

According to my informants, the regime had attempted to close the 6<sup>th</sup> of April group on Facebook, and after the strike many of the leaders of the group were jailed shortly. This again, illustrates the growing importance of the internet, as one of the leaders of the Dignity Party stated:

After the 6<sup>th</sup> of April Strike we gained a new power in Egypt, the independent Facebook youth. We discovered them, because most of them are not members in any party, they are just independent youth and they are used to

using the internet as a tool to exchange some social things. On 6<sup>th</sup> of April they emerged as a new power, a new political power.

The April 6<sup>th</sup> Strike and its related Facebook group seem to have excited and surprised many people, also my informants. The timing of my visit to the country two months after the strike, could possibly have affected my data in the direction of a more positive view of the internet. In this sense, if I had visited Egypt before the strike in April I would maybe have received more modest opinions on the various parties' use of and view on the internet.

### **5.3.3 Youth and Internet Use in "The Facebook Community"**

In all of the parties I was in contact with, youth were described as the party members most active on the internet. They were politically engaged on different sites such as Facebook and Blogs. A small majority of the party leaders also confirmed that they were dependent on youth to do all, or most of, the internet related party work. This information suggests that the internet is first and foremost an arena for party youth. In the following, I turn from a discussion on the parties' official websites, to discuss the more individual social forums. I mainly look into Facebook since it, according to my informants, is the most popular website to engage in these days.

On Facebook youth have an independent profile. They are in that sense always representing themselves. However, they also represent their parties by creating party groups, groups for their leaders, event invitations, and participate in discussions with the viewpoint of their parties. This has, according to my informants, had some positive effects for the parties, such as attracting new members. Youth engagement on Facebook, however, seems to contribute more to the build up of a politically engaged "Facebook community" than to party specific contributions. Mahmoud, a youth member from the DFP, explained that he had met many Egyptian non-party affiliated political activists on Facebook. They had created groups together and were also working on an internet based political magazine. Mahmoud further said that they were planning on arranging conferences so that they could meet face to face and not just on the internet. In this way, youth that are members of political parties and active on the internet seem to contribute more to the political development of the general society than to the parties they are members of. As one youth member of the Dignity Party explained:

Youth have an advantage because they can spread their ideas, their goals and aims to people who are not members of the party (...). Because of this, youth have more influence outside the party because they can affect other people's opinions and attract people to join the movement more than they can effect inside the party.

When older party members do not participate in these social forums they, and subsequently the parties, lose out on the contributions that come forth here. On the other hand, the forums lose out on valuable contributions older and more experienced party members may have. A leader in the Tomorrow Party, whom I call Waleed, told me that he was the only "old" party member active on Facebook. Waleed explained that he had participated in creating three political groups in this network. None of them were specifically related to his party, but rather created for the purpose of stimulating political debate. Waleed expressed a satisfaction with the debates that had evolved, and said he had found the topics to be thought provoking. The example of Waleed illustrates how useful engagement on social forums can be for both party leaders and other people engaging on the sites. It further illustrates that Facebook, initially thought of as a place where youth socialize and have fun, also can be a valuable place for political debates and subsequently for political development.

Youth engagement on the internet seems to have strengthened the relations between youth members within the various parties. The internet makes it easier for members to keep in touch, inform each other and discuss various issues and the like. In this way, internet activism seems to strengthen the relations within the various youth committees. Ali, a youth member in the Wafd Party, said that the internet had affected the various youth committees to a great extent, but it had not resulted in more communication with the leadership. He further said that the leaders are elders and that it is easier to communicate with youth. This brings me to another issue. In some of the parties, like the NPUP, the age gap can be an explanation for the fact that mainly youth members are active on the internet. It was quite clearly stated from both the youth member and the leader that I was in touch with. The youth member said:

Most of the leaders in my party are old people so they don't understand how important the internet is. (...) you know, we have problems in the leftist trend in Egypt, we have no [middle aged members, just] youth from my age 29, 26, 24 and my leaders [that are] 60 and 70, understand me?

And the leader said (with the translation from another party member):

The old men that lead the party are not so good with computers so they depend on youth here. Because of that, the youth group does most of the internet work.

In some of the other parties however, the age gap does not seem to be as severe as in the NPUP. A youth member in the DFP said that the leader of his party was "too old" but that others in the leadership were around 40 and 50 years old. He also stated that almost all members used the internet, but that youth were the most active. This can suggest that the age of the leadership makes a difference when it comes to mastering computer related tasks.

Both the leader and the youth members from the Tomorrow Party that I was in contact with told me that their party was built up of relatively young people. The leader, Ayman Nour, was said to be less than 40 when he established the party. Here, almost everyone was said to be able to use the internet, though youth were the most active. These different cases suggest that age matters when it comes to how widely the internet is used within a party. However, no matter the age of the leadership youth members seem to be the true internet activists.

In this part of the chapter, I have presented issues concerning the Egyptian political parties and their internet use. I have suggested that there is a gap in the use of internet between youth members and other members. Youth seem to be the most politically active on the internet. Facebook is a particularly popular forum in which to create political dialogues and discussions, and to simply stay informed. Youth internet activism seems to have benefited the larger internet community and the various youth committees, but since mainly youth members are active on the internet it does not seem to have affected the parties as a whole. I now turn to the process of viewing my data in light of the theoretical framework presented in the preceding chapter.

#### **5.4 Can Authoritarianism and Youth Agency be Balanced?**

So far, this chapter has illustrated that youth are involved in the Egyptian opposition parties. A majority of my youth informants said that youth both participate in dialogues and decision-making, and are active on the internet doing party specific work on the party website and on Facebook. This may suggest that despite the authoritarian structures within the parties, youth members exercise 'agency'. In chapter four agency was described as the ability actors have to

affect the social world, and in that way alter the rules and distribution of resources (Scott, 2001: 76). Youth members affect the parties they belong to by being represented in the higher offices and engaging in dialogues and decision-making, in addition when offering their computer skills to the parties. However, if youth members manage to alter the rules and distribution of resources is more uncertain.

#### 5.4.1 Youth and Agency

Earlier, Mustapha, a youth member from the NPUP, was introduced. In Mustapha's opinion, youth can influence decision-making and participate in dialogues and discussions. The majority of the youth members I spoke with shared Mustapha's view. When he described the relationship between the leaders and the youth members he said:

(...) [[sometimes] we have to fight each other. Maybe we have an opinion, but it's not in the political program (...), something like that we want to make a demonstration, but my party says that it is not a suitable time, so maybe we have to fight each other.

Here it is clear that youth members have some negotiating power since discussions, or fights as the informant described it, do take place. A youth in the Wafd Party said something similar about the process of decision-making within his party:

(...) sometimes there is a difference in the point of views, but this happens during meetings only. Youth try to convince the leaders with their point of view, or the leaders try to convince the youth with their point of view. This is convenient. When a [decision is made] both are committed by the decision. If I succeed in convincing the leader, or the leader by his, we are committed by this.

Both of these examples illustrate that youth have some negotiating power. If they argue well for their opinions their views can win forth in the parties. Their presence and engagement do subsequently affect the parties, in that way youth possess agency. This can be related to Giddens' understanding of power. Giddens sees power as present in the process of interaction and as used to accomplish goals. Related to power in interaction, it suggests that all parties hold power over the other, in that sense power is always two-way (Giddens, 1979: 6). The examples above may then indicate that both leaders and youth members in the Egyptian parties possess power over the other. The leaders are supported by favourable rules and

various types of resources etc., but this does not mean that party youth are powerless. By being members of the various parties, youth possess power. Members are needed and membership from active youth is important. As I see it, actors must hold some sort of power in order to create agency. These concepts can therefore be viewed as interrelated.

Related to the internet, youth members are, among other things, active doing work on the party web page and on Facebook. On Facebook, youth have created party groups and event invitations and the like, and in that way placed their parties in the "Facebook Community". Their computer skills have further assisted some parties in creating and/or upholding a party web page. This again, illustrates that youth members in the Egyptian opposition parties possess agency, they affect their parties. Giddens has also emphasized the word 'actor'. By this he suggests that actors (individuals or collectives) are not "cultural dopes", but that they are knowledgeable on their society and their own situation (Giddens, 1979: 71). Considering the authoritarian nature of the state, many of the youth members I interviewed said that they were active on the internet because this was the best and the safest way to be politically active in Egypt. A youth member from the Tomorrow Party said (translated by another party member):

The internet is now the main driving force behind the whole society in terms of political activation. And it is the easiest way to communicate and also the safest way, because if you go in a demonstration you're maybe liable to being arrested or harassed by the police or the security forces. So the internet is relatively safer than other channels.

A youth member from the SLP stated (translated by external interpreter):

The youth members use the internet the most. (...). The party got frozen as well as the newspaper, therefore, the use of the internet got more common after the government froze the party. We started to market and advertise for our party through the internet.

Both of these examples illustrate that youth engaged in the Egyptian opposition parties have an understanding of the society they live in. They have chosen to use the internet in relation to politics because it has many advantages compared to other political actions. However, some youth members are also aware of the negative effects of the internet, as Hussein from the DFP stated:



[The internet has] helped very much our positioning in a segment of the community, however, it hurt our positioning in another segment (...). We are seen as white collared people with technological things knowing nothing about the ground. Our plan was trying to bridge this gap talking about real cases online.

Moreover, these examples illustrate that the youth members are actors and possess agency. But are these actors with their agency managing to affect the authoritarian parties on a substantial level. This is what I look into in the following.

#### **5.4.2 Youth and Social Change**

So far, Egyptian youth participating in the opposition parties have been characterized as actors possessing agency. However, in structuration theory it is understood that the amount of agency differs between people and societies (Scott, 2001: 76). Authoritarian organizations that are part of an authoritarian state may be viewed as challenging individual agency. In this sense, people may possess agency, but it is held back and not able to alter the rules and distribution of resources, and hence create social change.

Egyptian political life is dominated by an organization of patron-client relations. As illustrated in chapter two, the political parties are incorporated into the patron-client system developed by the authoritarian state and holds the president as the ultimate patron. Such a system of patrons and clients is related to the patriarchal system that is dominant in the region (Barakat, 1993: 175). In a patriarchal system the father is the main authority and has the overall responsibility for the family. The family unit has a prominent place in Arab societies and can be described as a "relatively cohesive institution at the centre of social and economic activities" (Ibid: 23). Its strong positioning in society has resulted in a diffusion of the patriarchal system to other social institutions. Thus, at work, in school, and in associations of both religious and political type one finds patriarchal systems with a father figure that "rules over others, monopolizing authority, expecting strict obedience, and showing little tolerance of dissent" (Ibid). Authoritarianism, as described in chapter four, can be understood as highly related to the patriarchal ideology. Hence, authoritarianism is present in the political system, as well as in interpersonal and social relationships. These different social phenomena of patron-client relations, a patriarchal system and authoritarianism seem to be interrelated and mutually reinforcing.

These three social phenomena, here referred to as patriarchal traits, are an important part of Egyptian institutions, and they must be viewed as contributing in shaping the rules, norms and cultural beliefs that are present in Egyptian society. They must further be understood as affecting the behaviour of people and organizations, as well as the distribution of resources. As described in chapter two, the authoritarian state has developed unfavourable rules termed exclusionary laws. The opposition parties can also be viewed as having exclusionary laws since the leadership is described as acting dictatorial and the system as being undemocratic (Fahmy, 2002: 95-6). Nicola Pratt, the author of the book *Democracy and Authoritarianism in the Arab World* suggests how authoritarianism does not merely have an economic and institutional dimension, but an equally important cultural dimension (2007). The cultural dimension of authoritarianism means that the people (the dominated) believe in the ideology of authoritarianism itself. An example of this is when workers belonging to an authoritarian system have continued to support the ideology of the reciprocal relationship of authoritarianism when the economic benefits have been withdrawn (Ibid: 10). As described in chapter two, the patron-client system provides people linked to the leadership with economic benefits, while it at the same time ensures continued support for the current system, this is then a reciprocal relationship. Pratt seems to view the cultural beliefs as an element outside the institutions themselves. However, as seen in chapter four, Richard Scott understands the cultural as part of the institutions, just as rules and norms. That is also how I have chosen to understand institutions. The cultural aspect, in addition to the rules and norms, illustrate how deeply existing institutions are entrenched in society, and subsequently how difficult they are to change.

Scott has described the rules, norms and cultural beliefs as the symbolic aspects of social life. As described in chapter four, these cannot alone uphold the institutional structures, but need both social behaviour and material resources (2001: 49). As seen above and in chapter two, Egyptian party leaders must be understood as behaving exclusionary and using the material resources they have gained as leaders and as participants in the patron-client system of the regime to uphold the authoritarian structures. In addition, the cultural beliefs have resulted in an acceptance of the patriarchal traits. When such an institutional system, which clearly supports the leadership and the current organizational structures, is dominant in the Egyptian opposition parties one might be sceptical towards youth agency and social change.

As illustrated above, youth members possess agency to the point that they affect their parties by their presence and by their initiatives, as for example through their internet activism. However, I do not see that youth members manage to affect the parties to the point where they alter the rules and the distribution of resources. As I see it, this is because the institutional structures of patriarchal traits are too strong. The patriarchal traits are used to control people and social entities. Actors are therefore limited in their possibilities of affecting the organization they are part of. Hence, the possibilities for social change in authoritarian parties may not be as probable as in non-authoritarian organizations. For example, when Hussein in the DFP was sanctioned because of his opinions on the election pullout, the party secured internal unity but missed an opportunity for critical debate. Such a debate could have resulted in crucial organizational changes, instead a youth member was partially excluded and the status quo was preserved.

Mustapha from the NPUP told me that he and his fellow youth members for a long time had been arguing for their party to take on a more active internet approach. Their suggestions were met with rejections by the leadership. According to Mustapha, the leaders could not understand how the internet could be used for political work, in their eyes computers were only for pleasure. The leaders had only recently started to understand the importance of the internet, but Mustapha stated that he was not yet satisfied, as he said:

They started to understand us, but it is not enough. For example, they bring someone [to the party] and he doesn't understand anything about the internet, he just knows how to send e-mails, he doesn't use the internet like an activist (...). Give us computers with internet access because now we use the internet from our homes. So for example, I stay at my party all day (...) but I have to wait until I come home to use the internet (...). I don't want them [the leadership] to make planning for us, we can make it. But I want them to give us green light to do it.

There are probably many reasons why leaders are sceptical towards the internet. As stated earlier, the leaders of the NPUP were characterized as old by a youth member and the party was further explained as having a generation gap. Older people might not understand the importance of the internet because they are not familiar with it. Many of the parties are also known to have a tight budget. Investing in computers to the youth union may therefore not be prioritised. However, the fact that the leaders had previously been negative towards it, and allegedly changed their opinions after the April 6th Strike is interesting. It suggests that the

advocacy of the party's own youth members were not taken seriously, but rather, a countrywide demonstration was needed for the leaders to understand. As Mustapha explained:

Now they are sure that they were wrong and we were right. Because now they [understand] that many people, many youth use the internet. I don't know if you know what happened in Egypt on April 6th through the internet, through Facebook? So the leaders started to ask us why we don't use the internet. And we said, we told you five years ago to support us, but you refused.

This example suggests that youth members are actors and possess agency, but that their agency, at the same time, is not allowed to come forth within the parties, and subsequently affect and change the organizations. Earlier, the power present in interaction was elaborated on. It was then suggested that both party leaders and youth members possess power. However, Giddens also views power as used to accomplish goals. This can be related to rules and resources. The leaders of the various opposition parties are clearly more powerful than their fellow youth members. Subsequently, the leaders can mobilize resources and take advantage of favourable rules in order to accomplish goals. The goals might be related to ensuring a continuation of the status quo. The great inequality in power between youth and leadership may then seem to devalue the importance of power as present in interaction. Related to the Egyptian parties and the larger picture of continuity and change one might question if such power has any value at all.

Maye Kassem and others have described the Egyptian institutions as well as the political opposition parties as weak (2004: 81-2). How can such weak entities manage to hold back individual and collective agency? As I see it, a possible answer may be the weak state- weak society cycle presented by Fahmy. This is a negative cycle where parts of society influence each other to stay weak. Even though actors possess agency the forces of the cycle are proving too difficult to penetrate, and "the system is preserved in a state of equilibrium" (Fahmy, 2002, 257). Another solution may be that the parties are weak institutions, but that the various parts that make up the institutional structures are strong. In this sense, the patriarchal structures, the patron-client relations as well as the authoritarian ideology and structure may be strong. These social phenomena have a long history in the Middle East region and are deeply rooted in society.

In the previous chapter, James Slevin was introduced. He has suggested how the internet can affect modern organizations. Among other things, internet integration may result in greater vertical integration of an organization (Slevin, 2000: 128). Concerning the Egyptian opposition parties, an authoritarian political structure may suggest hierarchical distance within an organization, but if the internet is used actively by all segments of an organization it might result in increased vertical integration. On the internet, hierarchies are set aside and users act on an equal ground. In my opinion, vertical integration may, among other things, lead to a higher level of youth involvement. This is because people can more easily be in touch with one another, and a diffusion of information can take place. In addition, the internet is a place for dialogues and discussions. Regarding the Egyptian parties, if such a development takes place that could result in youth occupying a larger space from where to exercise involvement. This because the internet offers youth a larger room in which to act, to present their concerns, and to be heard.

As seen above in 5.3, mainly youth are active on the internet. In a few parties it was stated that other members also are able to master the technology and the parties are therefore not dependent on youth in order to be visible on the internet. In others, it was expressed a dependency on youth in this arena. Facebook is a place for dialogues and discussions, and in general for a more informal relationship between people. The fact that youth members are almost exclusively represented here rids the parties of a unique possibility for greater communication and subsequently a closer relationship between members.

As suggested in 5.3, youth internet activism seems to have benefited the larger internet community and the various youth committees, but does not seem to have lead to any party specific advantages in the direction of better vertical integration, and subsequently to higher youth involvement. This is my evaluation based on information received from informants stating that youth members are significantly more politically active on the internet than other members, and that other member often lack knowledge on computer and internet use. The internet engagement found among youth members seems to be valued within the parties as a tool to attract members, but it is still mainly a "youth activity" and can therefore not, as I see it, have resulted in better vertical integration of the parties. In my opinion, if the internet is to lead to higher vertical integration within an organization, all levels of the organization must

be engaged in it. This does not seem to have taken place within the Egyptian opposition parties. However, because of the authoritarian nature of the parties, one might wonder if the parties will ever become better vertically integrated.

A vertically integrated party structure is a contradiction to the existing social traits in the parties. I am here thinking of the patriarchal structures, patron-client relations and authoritarianism. For example, the patron-client relations are a vertically organized system of actors, which does not build on integration, equality and mutual respect. Rather, it is a system based on hierarchy, distance and inequality, in the sense that some actors should be more powerful than others. It is further the stronger part in the relationship that dictates and decides. This would suggest that increased vertical integration of the Egyptian political parties is not something authoritarian leaders would prefer. Hence, vertical integration, which could result in higher youth involvement, will most likely be challenged by party leaders and supposedly by the authoritarian regime. As I see it, youth representation in the formal party structures and their participation in dialogues and decision-making, in addition to youth engagement on the internet contributes to youth involvement and participation. However, in both cases the effects of their involvement are restrained. Concerning the formal party structures, this seems to be done deliberately by the leadership, while concerning the internet, it seems more of a natural outcome of the difference in interests and skills between youth and older members.

Giddens' structuration theory emphasizes continuity and change. Continuity can be understood as represented by the social structures present in society and change by the agency of actors. In Giddens' theory agency and social change seem to be closely related, in the sense that if agency is present, social change will naturally follow. However, as seen above, in the Egyptian case agency seems to be present among youth members, but social change is not the outcome, at least not until now. The social structures of patriarchal traits, the institutional arrangements as well as the weak state- weak society cycle seem to suppress the initiatives for change within the political parties. Hence, as I see it, the theory of structuration is not completely suitable for understanding the forces of continuity and change within authoritarian parties in Egypt and supposedly in the Arab world. But the theory contributes with some important tools for analyzing youth agency; it also gives an understanding of their importance in the parties and the possibilities that actually are present.

Even though internet use does not seem to have lead to any party specific advantages that could affect young people's role within the parties, it does not mean that the youth themselves do not individually take advantage of their own internet activism. By being politically engaged on the internet, youth manage to get a hold of much information. Considering the nature of the state this is information that is difficult to receive without using the world-wide web. Since youth also have many dialogues and discussions on the internet it may suggest that by being active on the internet youth improve their dialogue and discussion skills. Eventually, this may result in youth becoming better political actors, which can possibly give them a better place from where to negotiate their position within the parties.

This study illustrates the gloomy state of negative peace that exists in Egypt. The state represses its people, and political parties that are supposed to fight such acts finds its leaders following the same strategies; repressing its members. The fact that both the state and society are characterised as weak and caught in a cycle that reinforces their weakness further darkens the prospects for a development towards positive peace. In a weak state with a weak society “the establishment of life-affirming and life-enhancing values and structures” (Barash, 2000: 2) seem distant. However, this study has also illustrated how youth involvement and youth agency is practiced to some extent through their involvement in the party hierarchy and their knowledge of and engagement with new technology such as computers and the internet. These are positive signs in promoting positive peace.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has focused on youth members in the Egyptian opposition parties. First, it has been made clear that youth are represented in the upper levels of the parties, though the location and number of youth representatives differ between the various parties. Youth also seem able to participate in decision-making and dialogues. However, a few youth members were of the opinion that youth were excluded from decision-making. The story of one youth member suggests that youth are included as long as they keep inside the boundaries drawn up by the leadership (and indirectly by the authoritarian state), and marginalized if they cross the line. Second, internet use is rising in popularity among Arab youth. This is a trend that can also be found among youth in the Egyptian opposition parties. Youth members seem to be highly politically active on the internet, elder party members however, seem to be lagging

behind. This may suggest that internet engagement among youth members have contributed to the political development of the general society as well as strengthened the relations between the youth members in and between the parties, but not to a vertically integrated party structure. In order for the latter to take place, all segments of a party need to become active users. Third, in total this information indicates that youth members in the Egyptian opposition parties are actor and possess agency. However, the institutional/societal structures present in society and in the political parties, can be understood as holding a lid on the effects of youth's agency. Hence, substantial organizational change that could be initiated by youth is not taking place. This again, strengthens the weak state- weak society model and the understanding of Egypt as in a state of negative peace.



## 6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

I have analysed the role young people hold in the political opposition parties in Egypt. The parties, as well as the state, are authoritarian in structure. I have focused on youth participation and involvement through a few selected arenas: 1) Young people's access to formal positions in the party hierarchy, and subsequently youths' subjective feeling of participating in dialogues and decision-making. 2) The internet as an arena for youth participation in party politics and as an arena for developing the party organization. These areas of inquires may shed light on the current situation of negative peace in Egypt and the prospects for change.

Previous research has illustrated that the opposition parties lack democratic structures and that the leadership acts dictatorial (Fahmy, 2002: 95-6, Stacher, 2004: 219, Albrecht, 2005: 383, Kassem, 2004: 77-9). The role of youth has been described as merely contributing with practical skills on the ground level (Wickham, 2002: 69). The research I have completed illustrates that party leadership is characterized by dominance and authoritarianism, although many youth members are satisfied with their level of involvement, influence, and representation in the party hierarchy. My research also suggests that internet use among the Egyptian opposition parties is on the rise, but the field is controlled by the youth members. This gives youth an additional arena of influence and a possibility to develop their political skills. However, it has so far not lead to organizational changes in the direction of vertical integration, changes that could result in a larger space for youth involvement.

The results of the research indicate that there are arenas present for youth to act politically. However, I suggest that the authoritarian party structures block young people's chances of influencing the parties on a more substantial level. Authoritarian structures, patron-client relations and patriarchal structures contribute to preserving the status quo. On a state level, this condition contributes to the preservation of a situation of negative peace and to a continuation of the weak state- weak society cycle.

This study has been small in scope, and not comprehensive in order to completely understand the role young people hold in the Egyptian opposition parties. How youth members directly

affect party politics has not been explored in the thesis, nor has the issue of how youth engage in the political plays of fractions, alliance building and patron-client relations. Future research on these topics would result in a more comprehensive understanding of the role held by youth members, and subsequently to a better understanding of the possibilities and restraints faced by youth in Egyptian politics.

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