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Urban protest camps in Egypt: the occupation, (re)creation and destruction of alternative political worlds

Adam Ramadan & Elisa Pascucci

Abstract: *In contemporary Egypt, collective political mobilization has often taken the form of urban protest camps. However, while the iconic occupation of Cairo's Tahrir Square during the 2011 uprising has had vast transnational resonance, the history of most of Egypt's camps remains less well known. This chapter examines the urban geographies and material politics of three protest camps: Tahrir Square itself, in 2011, Mustapha Mahmoud, held by Sudanese refugees in Cairo in 2005, and the occupation of Raba'a al Adawiya, in 2013. Involving different actors and unfolding within different political contexts, the three camps are nevertheless characterized by common elements: the reversal of designated usage of public space through 'occupations', especially of squares, the practices of care and social reproduction that informed everyday life in the encampments, and the inherent fragility of the camps' material politics, exposed by their violent evictions. Drawing on recent literature on protest camps and biopolitics, we argue that the politics of Egypt's urban protest camps are not only marked by spatial and temporal 'exceptionality'. Rather, we show, in the three cases examined it was the camps' interconnections with the broader urban infrastructural and social fabric that allowed protesters' experiences of autonomy and liberation. These infrastructural and structural connections, we argue, are the most significant and contradictory element of urban protest camps, one that exposes both the potential and the limitations of this spatial tactic of political mobilization.*

Introduction

2011 was the year activists and scholars around the world (re)discovered the protest camp as a key space of political mobilization. A powerful, non-violent assembly in the heart of Cairo that lasted for several weeks, the occupation of Tahrir Square became not only the iconic symbol of the Arab Uprisings, but also an inspiration and model for social movements around the world, from the Occupy movement to the Spanish Indignados. Reclaiming its exceptional spatial politics, Egyptian protesters showed that the camp – albeit temporary, exceptional and fragile in its material infrastructures – could function as a vehicle for collective liberation.

Of course, Tahrir Square was not the first use of encampment or occupation as tactics of protest: these tactics in fact have a long heritage in political protest. Brown et al. (2017, 3-4)

begin their history of protest camps with those of the 'Bonus Army' in Washington, DC, in 1932, which directly influenced the civil rights movement's Resurrection City of 1968. The volume edited by Brown et al. (2017), which includes a wide range of examples of protest camps in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, the monograph by Feigenbaum et al. (2013) and the collection of short papers edited by Sara Fregonese (2013), represent the key recent contributions to this emerging literature on the protest camp.

Rather than reviewing that literature at length, in this chapter we explore the role of the camp in the recent politics of Egypt. Although little explored in academic and non-academic literature, in the history of Egypt's popular politics many protests involving public sit-ins and the occupation of urban spaces had preceded Tahrir, and many others followed it. In this contribution, we examine three different examples of political protest camps that marked Egyptian public life: the Sudanese refugee sit-in in Mustapha Mahmoud Square in 2005, the Tahrir Square protest camp in 2011, and the 2013 occupation of Raba'a al Adawiya Square in support of President Mohammed Morsi. In doing so, we bring to the fore three episodes of mobilization that constituted important turning points in the politics of the modern Middle East, but also advance a wider argument about the spatial politics of protest camps. While maintaining the fundamentally 'exceptional' nature of this political public space, we highlight the continuities that, both through protesters' tactics of appropriation and reversal and through the security measures and the violence deployed by state apparatuses, link protest camps to the biopolitics and governmentality of contemporary Egypt. Protest camps, we argue, are not only 'exceptional' spaces of pre-figurative politics (Pickerill and Chatterton 2006; Brown et al. 2017). They are also spatial practices through which the biopolitics of (non)citizenship, urban security, gender and care are both reproduced and challenged, with echoes that reach well beyond the physical and temporal boundaries of the camp.

The chapter thus problematizes the notion of protest camps' 'autonomy from the status quo' (Brown at al. 2017), by highlighting the overlaps between social reproduction and socio-political control and the practices that animate protest camps. Importantly, we also reflect on the continuities between protest camps and other camp-forms – from refugee camps to spaces of confinement and detention. Nevertheless, we maintain these spaces of protest as a fundamental feature of contemporary collective struggles for radical democracy, social justice, asylum rights and freedom of movement. Far from being merely 'other' or 'emerging' manifestations of the space of the camp, these experiments in self-organization

are today an ever more significant – if limited and often contradictory – phenomenon on the global political landscape.

Building on our previous work on refugee camps, humanitarianism, everyday geopolitics and protest camps in the Middle East (Ramadan 2009, 2012, 2013; Pascucci 2017a, 2017b), our analysis proceeds in three steps. First, borrowing Brown et al.'s (2017) definition of 'infrastructures of re-creation', we examine protesters' practices of social reproduction in the Mustapha Mahmoud refugee protest camp as a form of appropriation and reversal of the biopolitics of humanitarian care (Moulin and Nyers 2007). We thus reflect on the relation between the institution of the refugee camp and the experience of political autonomy of a self-managed refugee protest camp, and so on the role of everyday life and social reproduction in 'prefigurative politics' (Pickerill and Chatterton 2006). Second, through the case of Tahrir Square during the 2011 uprising, we discuss the politics of urban camps' strategic and symbolic location, as well as the role of local and transnational connections in forging and sustaining their political tactics and projects. Lastly, we look at the storming of the Raba'a al-Adawiya and al-Nahda Square sit-ins during the (allegedly) pro-Muslim Brotherhood protests of 2013 – linked to the movement known as Tamarod (rebellion) – by security forces as an example of how the policing of protest camps can involve the violent re-assertion of sovereignty. By focusing on these three phenomena – refugee communities, occupation of public spaces, and repressive political violence – we also consider the ways in which urban life and urban spaces both facilitate and render temporary and constrained the political experiment of protest camps.

That Egypt would be the focus of such exploration of camps as spaces of 'biopolitical solidarity' (Hannah 2011) should not come as a surprise. Decades of neoliberal 'structural adjustment', an ever more repressive military regime, and an increasingly prominent role as a transit and first-asylum country in cross-Mediterranean migration routes, make Egypt a place where 'life' itself is a terrain of struggle, and contestation arises from everyday life. As anthropologists Julya Elyachar and Jessica Winegar (2012, 1) have argued, in Egypt 'the revolution was rooted in long-standing day-to-day struggles for food, jobs, security, and dignity, as well as in years of organizing and activism among various groups--most notably labour and Islamic collectives'. Our focus on the Egyptian case highlights the continuities between the government of life through exception, abandonment and negative governance (Rose 2014), and the 'exceptional' spaces of emancipation and care that heterogeneous political subjects have achieved through the experience of the protest camps. As 'exceptional'

forms of violence and control are increasingly part of encounters with political power in Egyptians' everyday lives (see Ismail 2006), the practices of social reproduction, care and sociality that sustain life in the everyday are re-appropriated through the space of the protest camp. In the next section, we shed light on the relation between mobilization and everyday life by expanding on geographical work that has theorized biopolitical solidarities, as well as reproduction and re-creation in spaces of protest (Hannah 2011; Frenzel et al. 2017).

Protest camps in Egypt: occupying and re-creating

As explored elsewhere in this volume, the 'return of the camp' (Minca 2005) in post-9/11 geopolitics has been studied mostly through the conceptual categories derived from the work of Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben (1998) on European concentration camps. For Agamben (1998), the camp is a space where sovereignty is asserted through the suspension of the law, and human life becomes 'sacred': it can be killed without sanction. For political geographers, relying on this conceptual apparatus has meant exploring the camp as a space of biopolitical exception, in the form of violence, confinement and abandonment – from detention in the 'war on terror' to the violent policing and militarization of refugee camps in the Middle East (Minca 2005; Ramadan 2009). However, particularly in the aftermaths of the Arab Uprisings and the Occupy movement, these readings have been complemented by the global emergence of the camp as a 'political public space' (Ramadan 2013a; see also Fregonese 2013, Pickerill and Krisky 2012; Halvorsen 2015). A similar shift has occurred across the social sciences. If social movement literature has traditionally overlooked spatialized tactics of political mobilization including sit-ins, occupations and encampments, recent research in the field has identified in protest camps and their infrastructures, as well as in protesters' experiences of everyday life in them, a significant object of inquiry (Brown et al. 2007).

This body of work has shown how the forms of social reproduction that take place in camps - including cleaning, building and upkeeping tents and other kinds of shelter, running makeshift kitchens and hospitals, and providing childcare – allow protesters to experience what Hannah (2011) has called 'biopolitical solidarities'. For Hannah (2011), such solidarities are based on a 'care for life' that goes beyond traditional ethnic, national and social allegiances. Moreover, rather than situating political projects, they aim to foster living in the present. Brown et al. (2017) consider the spatialities and materialities of camps – what

they name 'infrastructures of re-creation' – essential in this regard. 'Re-creation infrastructures', they write, 'can emerge spontaneously, as they often do when people gather in protest, bringing together not just material to help occupy a site, but the necessary equipment and provisions to allow them to stay there, safely, healthily, and relatively comfortably, for a period of time' (Brown et al. 2017, 15). These infrastructures are often the most controversial element in the constitution of protest camps. While autonomous, collective 'care for life' can be an emancipatory material practice, the inevitable necessity of social reproduction also poses fundamental problems to experiences that aim to be 'separate and distinct from the status quo' (Brown et al. 2017, 15). In his study of the Occupy camps in London, for instance, Halvorsen (2015) has shown how camps can reproduce gender divisions, with women doing reproductive work and men engaging mostly in tasks such as political and strategic planning and public representation. Looking at refugee protests in Cairo, Moulin and Nyers (2007) have argued that their discursive strategies rely on the appropriation of the very biopolitics of care – including discourses of vulnerability and protection – upon which international humanitarianism is predicated. Our analysis of the refugee protest camp held in 2005 in Mustapha Mahmoud Square, in central Cairo, focuses on similar dynamics. It thus highlights the relation between social reproduction within the protest camps and the condition of refugees in Egypt, defined in humanitarian policies as community self-reliance.

The physical locations of urban protest camps, and the connections to the external world they allow, are another important element in the constitution of these political spaces. As Brown et al. (2017) highlight, protest camps are the most vivid example of how all forms of contentious politics are spatial. Camps' locations are generally chosen because they serve strategic, symbolic or practical purposes. Particular sites can work to 'draw attention to an injustice', or 'have a very significant impact on how (a camp) functions, who can participate in it, and how (and for how long) it can exist', while 'different locations facilitate different degrees of on-site infrastructures' (Brown et al. 2017, 12). Urban protest camps in particular can benefit from their embeddedness in infrastructural networks – from transportation to connectivity – thus positioning themselves in continuity with the local and transnational flow of mobility and communication in cities. But they can also disrupt temporalities and spatialities of urban life that, in the case of Egypt, are the result of colonial orderings of space and reflect the pervasive, disciplinary nature of political power in the postcolonial history of the country (Ramadan 2013a; see also Halvorsen 2015).

The threat of violence and the need for security are other constitutive elements of protest camps around the world. Experiences of forceful eviction are common, and tasks like maintaining 'police liaisons' are part of the necessary security work involved in all social movements (Feigenbaum et al. 2013). The unprecedented violence exerted by Egyptian security forces in the removal of the Raba'a al Adawiya occupation, in 2013, highlights how the emancipatory space of the protest camp can be turned back into a space of extreme biopolitical exception. Often the very elements that made the camp a highly visible and valuable tool of political mobilization make it vulnerable to state-sanctioned violence. The occupation of public space, for instance, exposes the bodies of protesters, while the need for resuming urban economic and infrastructural activities disrupted by the camp provides a pretext for intervention.

The Mustapha Mahmoud refugee protest camp: care and re-production

One of the first significant examples of protest encampment in Egypt's recent history was a large sit-in set up by a group of Sudanese refugees – a refugee *protest* camp. Egypt has almost never hosted refugee camps on its territory. The only documented exceptions were the Palestinian camps created in 1948 and quickly dismantled, and the Salloum camp, at the border with Libya, set-up by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) after the 2011 uprising and closed in 2013. The tendency for refugees in Egypt to settle autonomously in cities – mostly Cairo and Alexandria – is thus not only the result of diaspora networks established in the early years of the country's independence, when its southern borders were far less regulated. It is also the product of state and international institutions' policies that, in the last two decades, have promoted refugees' integration into existing urban environment as a way of reducing dependence on aid and fostering their socio-economic self-sufficiency. Refugees in Egypt are thus exposed both to the rich social, political and cultural networks, and to the material destitution that characterize life in cities. As a result of this contradictions, a country that hosts no refugee camps (and is one of the few in North Africa and the Middle East to have signed the Geneva Convention on refugees) became the location of one of the biggest refugee protests ever documented in the global south.

The Mustapha Mahmoud camp started off in September 2005, following the initiative of a small local non-governmental organization, *Refugee Voices*. The initial reason for the sit-in was the decision by the UNHCR, which is in charge of processing asylum applications in

Egypt, to suspend individual status determination procedures for Sudanese applicants, following the 2005 Sudan peace agreement. Initially the camp was a tactical tool for mobilization and political visibility. In the space of a few weeks, however, the protest – named after the square and the adjacent park in which it was strategically located, in front of the UNCHR building – grew into a much larger and more complex movement. Although its violent evictions caused dozens of deaths and led to a large number of refugees being detained – figures are uncertain and contested by the government and police – Mustapha Mahmoud remains one of the most significant examples of refugee and migrant political mobilization in recent times.

We have explored elsewhere the dynamics and causes of the Sudanese refugees' protests, as well as the consequences of self-reliance as a humanitarian policy in urban Egypt, and its contestation by refugees (Pascucci 2017a, 2017b). Here we want to focus primarily on the role social reproduction played in the protest camp. Indeed, re-creation was essential for the sustainability of a protest action that lasted for over three months. However, it also reproduced some of the divisions, inequalities and power dynamics through which Sudanese communities are differentially included not only into Egypt's social and political life, but also into the global refugee regime.

A report published in 2006 by a group of Cairo-based researchers who visited the protest site describes a well-organized camp, with the ground 'covered with a layer of mats and blankets', carefully partitioned living spaces that kept women and children separated from men, communal kitchens, and small market areas (FMRS 2006, 26). Communal living spaces within the camp provided some essential temporary relief from the severe housing and homelessness issues experienced by many Sudanese in Cairo, also as a result of cuts to humanitarian budgets. However, they also led to highly gendered patterns of socialization and division of labor, reproducing an experience of segregation that was not unknown to Sudanese migrants in Egypt. The need to provide food and drinks to the nearly 3,000 people who are estimated to have taken part in the camp led to the inclusion into its space of small shops and businesses. This is a common way to attempt to secure a livelihood for Sudanese refugees in Cairo, especially for the poorest among them. However, it is also a very precarious one, and one that can be ridden with exploitation.

'Social reproduction', Frenzel et al. (2017, 15) write, 'is ultimately linked to the ability of the camp to function as an alternative world in that it provides safety, care, shelter and food for

its participants'. Nevertheless, camps in which protesters appear overly preoccupied with reproduction and everyday tasks can become isolated and self-referential (Halvorsen 2015). Paradoxically, social reproduction can also reproduce some of the oppressive relations that the camp aimed to contest in the first place. In the case of Mustapha Mahmoud as in other migrant encampments, however, infrastructures of care also acted as a substitute for inadequate social services and humanitarian assistance (see Sigona 2015). Far from being a mere distraction, and despite being ridden with gender and social inequalities, reproduction was thus a fundamentally political act. It exposed the many fallacies of the refugee system and provided a powerful illustration of protesters' bold claim that urban self-reliance can cause even more destitution than the limited material relief and assistance provided in refugee camps (Newhouse 2015).

Finally, in Mustapha Mahmoud the biopolitics of solidarity of the camp (Hannah 2011) was limited by the national character of the gathering. The camp was managed by Sudanese community leaders, and aimed at reclaiming the rights of Sudanese refugees only. Rather than the result of politicized national identifications or nationalistic grievances, however, this was a reflection of humanitarian classifications and policies, such as giving temporary protection, instead of full refugee status, to all Sudanese based on their nationality after the 2005 peace agreement. Far from being completely autonomous from it, the camp re-appropriated the biopolitics of refugee governance. In fact, the refugee protest camp emerged as a spatialized political actor precisely through and within such biopolitical governance, and its material practices reflected these continuities. Rather than contesting their legitimacy, the written requests advanced by the protesters thus reproduced categories such as refugee, protection and aid. At the same time, by exposing the extremely precarious living conditions of people who, not having any other adequate accommodation, had moved to the encampment taking all their belongings with them, the act of public protest politicized the extreme vulnerabilities that are the object of humanitarian policies.

As noted, Mustapha Mahmoud was one of the most significant moments in the recent history of migrant and refugee mobilization (Moulin and Nyers 2007). However, protesters' tactics in occupying, making visible, and keeping the place, while maintaining relations with international organizations and state authorities, and eventually facing the extreme violence of forced eviction, also constituted an important precedent in Egyptian street politics, and in their urban geographies. Less than 6 years later, Egyptian activists taking part in the public protests that led to the ousting of Hosni Mubarak would remember and commemorate the

Mustapha Mahmoud protesters, identifying – despite their status as refugees – with their act of public occupation (Pascucci 2017b).

Tahrir Square: the urban geographies of protest camps

Few protest camps could have been as iconic or as quickly successful as the one at Tahrir Square, Cairo, in January-February 2011. In the aftermath of the overthrow of President Ben-Ali in the face of popular protests in Tunisia, protests were called in Cairo to coincide with Police Day on 25 January. These protests quickly became far larger than any other recent anti-government protests, and as they converged on Tahrir Square in the heart of Cairo, Egyptian police forces struggled to prevent protesters breaking through (see Trombetta 2013). But they did, and to occupy this space, the protesters had to camp, to create a spatial anchoring of opposition by constructing an enduring (but temporary) infrastructure for survival and political mobilization. The Tahrir camp was exemplary for its infrastructures of social reproduction, and the protection they offered to protesters. Like the refugee protest camp in Mustapha Mahmoud, it was ordered and organized, with stages for political speeches, an internet and blogging hub in the center, a clinic, a newspaper wall, a wall of images of the revolution's martyrs, a kindergarten, food stalls, water point, toilets, and lines of barricades defending the inside from the hostile forces of the regime's police and hired thugs.

Tahrir Square was not an accidental focus for the protests; surrounded by government buildings, the national museum, the headquarters of the ruling party and the Arab League building, the protest camp occupied the heart of Cairo's machine of power. And Tahrir Square had been a site of public protest since at least 1946, when demonstrations demanding the withdrawal of British troops were violently suppressed; after the 1952 revolution, the square's name was officially changed to Tahrir, meaning 'liberation' (Gregory 2013, 238). As Pickerill and Krinsky (2012, 281) highlight, as a tactical choice occupation is a 'powerful language'. The location of protest camps in itself exposes the appropriation and securitization of urban space by the state and capitalist development. Spaces that are supposed to be 'public', such as a central square like Tahrir, can be made de facto exclusionary. Building a camp in Tahrir was about contesting these exclusion by creating an exceptional space that could be shared by the many.

Yet, although exceptional, the Tahrir camp was also embedded in the multiple social and infrastructural networks of Cairo, drawing together people from across the social spectrum, closing off major transport routes in downtown Cairo and interrupting the order of the city. And it was embedded too in global networks of communication, with satellite news channels broadcasting rolling coverage of the protests, and young activists 'tweeting' and blogging from the heart of the camp. Images of courage, freedom and defiance in the square, and the possibility of a new political order based around economic and social justice, inspired people across the country and around the world. Ultimately, the protest camp was *embodied*, filled with hundreds of thousands of Egyptians. These were protests of the masses, with millions protesting around the country and facing up against the state's violent backlash. It was this combination of bodies, bloggers and the camp that was so politically potent (Ramadan 2013a).

The importance of the camp's connections to the external world are highlighted by the Egyptian regime's increasingly cynical attempts to retain power. Besides flying helicopters and military jets low over the protests and firing rubber then live bullets into the crowd, security forces shut down internet and mobile phone networks, harassing and attempting to shut down foreign broadcast media. Daily curfews were declared as the state sent in the *baltagiya* – plain-clothes police and thugs masquerading as 'pro-regime supporters' a state-sponsored militia armed with sticks and stones and petrol bombs to attack the protesters. Each strategy failed to dislodge the protesters from the square and further undermined the regime's legitimacy to rule. Each new day of protests, each day the protest camp endured, brought the end of the regime closer.

For 18 days, as protesters held and defended the square against the attacks of regime forces, the Tahrir Square camp was the focus for oppositional mobilization and organization. As highlighted by the violent eviction of the refugee protests of 2005, for the Egyptian regime political survival had always worked by denying political opponents any spaces of expression and mobilization. This space of opposition in the heart of the capital was thus intolerable. The occupation of this space, its liberation from totalitarian state control, and the creation and performance within it of an alternative political order through the shared re-appropriation of practices of social reproduction, was transformative. The camp was itself, therefore, a vehicle for making political change that undermined the very order of the state. Every attempt the state made to reassert control and to suppress protest was characterized by heavy-handed

violence, and its repeated failure demonstrated its own impotence and illegitimacy before the people of Egypt and the world.

Raba'a al Adawiya: the violent destruction of protest camps

The end for Mubarak came after 18 days of protests, when the army took over promising to oversee the process of democratic reform. But the liberal youth movements of the revolution were sidelined as the old order reorganised itself under the interim military regime. In 2012, voters faced a presidential election run-off between Mubarak's former prime-minister Ahmed Shafiq and Mohammed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood, Mubarak's old adversaries. It was Morsi who won, narrowly, and his symbolic unofficial swearing in before crowds of activists and supporters at Tahrir Square sought to invoke the power of the revolution as the source of his own legitimacy.

Morsi's regime failed to live up to the great hopes and promises of the revolution. Tahrir Square continued to see protests, first against the interim military regime, then against Morsi as his popularity collapsed. The alliance between the Muslim Brotherhood and youth-led revolutionary movements that had driven events in 2011 broke down. Amid large-scale protests on 30 June 2013, the military saw an opportunity to move against Morsi, and encouraged protesters to return to Tahrir Square. A military coup followed on 3 July – claimed as a further revolution by its supporters – and Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood leadership were arrested.

In the aftermath of the coup, supporters of the deposed president Morsi gathered to protest in Raba'a Square and the adjacent Rabaa al-Adawiya mosque in northeast Cairo, near to the Republican Guards' Club where protesters believed Morsi was being held. This mosque was also significant for having held two funerals: those of President Sadat, after his assassination by an Islamist gunman in 1981, and Ma'moun al-Hudaybi, the Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, in 2004 (Richards, 2013). A smaller protest camp was formed at al-Nahda Square in front of Cairo University, across the Nile in Giza, while further protests took place across Egypt. Like in Tahrir Square, protesters constructed an enduring infrastructure of survival and political struggle. Like Tahrir, the larger camp at Rabaa Square had stages for speeches, a media centre, a field hospital, tents, street art, and security around the square (BBC 2013). Protesters vowed to stay until the reinstatement of Morsi, and the camps

endured for six weeks, becoming 'potent symbols of Egypt's impasse' (Fahim and Gladstone 2013).

The military regime threatened repeatedly to clear the squares, but protesters held on. Mediation efforts involving foreign powers failed. Eventually, at dawn on 14 August 2013, after a hasty warning to protesters, security forces began their clearance operations against both protest camps using 'armored personnel carriers (APCs), bulldozers, ground forces, and snipers, police and army personnel' (HRW 2014, 5). Why did the state violently clear the square in ways it did not two years before? For one, the authorities had learned their lesson from 2011, when holding back from all-out violence resulted in the fall of the regime. Secondly, the protests were made up largely of supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood, and for this reason did not capture the attention and imagination of the world's media in the same way. Without round-the-clock coverage being broadcast on news channels around the world, and without the transnational solidarities and local connections that protesters in Tahrir had been able to build, a violent crackdown would be less visible to the world. Thirdly, after a revolution and a coup, and two years of political instability and economic uncertainty, many Egyptians were disillusioned with further protests, and there was some popular nostalgia for the strong state. With the stars aligned differently from 2011, the Egyptian authorities clearly felt they could act decisively without offending domestic and international opinion to too great a degree.

One of the most detailed investigations into these events was conducted by Human Rights Watch. The publication of their report, *All According to Plan*, in August 2014, led to the detention and deportation by the Egyptian authorities of the group's executive director and another senior official. The report, based on a year's research into the events of July and August 2013, found that Egyptian police and military forces had killed more than 1,150 protesters, including 'at least 817 and likely more than 1,000' (Human Rights Watch 2014, 6) as they stormed and dispersed the protest camp at Raba'a Square. The result was 'one of the world's largest killings of demonstrators in a single day in recent history' (ibid.), more than those killed by Chinese authorities during the Tiananmen Massacre of June 1989, and by Uzbek authorities during the Andijan Massacre of 2005. HRW described 'grossly disproportionate and premeditated lethal attacks on overwhelmingly peaceful protesters' and concluded that these killings 'not only constituted serious violations of international human rights law, but likely amounted to crimes against humanity, given both their widespread and systematic nature and the evidence suggesting the killings were part of a policy to attack

unarmed persons on political grounds' (ibid., 5). As evidenced by its title, the report concluded that such large-scale destruction had been anticipated and planned by Egyptian security forces. An Egyptian source cited by HRW confirmed that 'in a meeting with human right organizations nine days before the dispersal, Interior Ministry official revealed that the ministry anticipated a death toll of up to 3,500' (ibid., 6). Immediately before the removal, two major Egyptian newspapers also reported how, according to their sources within the security apparatus, the Ministry's anticipated several thousand deaths (ibid.).

The planned character of the military and police intervention highlights how the physical destruction of a protest camp functioned here as a tool for the calculated annihilation of a collective political project. The destruction of Raba'a extinguished a sustained, 'exceptional' political movement, an uprising which, encompassing different subjects and values, but often taking the form of urban protest camps, had lasted since 2011. In this regard, it is particularly significant that the government's reasons for forcefully evicting the protests were, beside the allegations of terrorism usually moved against the Muslim Brotherhood, that the camp 'disrupted residents' lives' and 'increased traffic congestion', damaging Egypt's economy (ibid., 4). Paradoxically, the transformation of an urban square and its adjacent mosque into a site of large-scale, exceptionally violent military intervention served to restore political stability and the normal flow of social and economic life. At the same time, the hasty and brief warning security forces claimed to have given to protesters before the start of clearance operations worked to place responsibility on the victims of such unprecedented state-sanctioned violence for their own killings, reinforcing the narratives that portrayed them as dangerous, extremist militants. A thanatopolitical tactic of individualization that characterizes contemporary neoliberal warfare was thus transferred into the policing of urban protests (Joronen 2016).

The massacre at Raba'a Square bookended the era of Egypt's revolution that had begun with such hope at Tahrir Square in January 2011. The protest camp at Raba'a, set up to oppose the ousting of the elected Muslim Brotherhood president Mohamed Morsi, was extinguished with a level of violence that the Mubarak regime had not dared deploy. The military-led regime overthrown by the 2011 revolution and 2012 election had reasserted its primacy in Egyptian political life. General Sisi, the leader of the coup against Morsi, was elected President in June 2014, sealing the return of the old regime, as Muslim Brothers filled Egypt's jails once more.

Conclusions

In this volume, contributors have discussed a range of camp times and cases. From the refugee camp to the protest camp, camps have assumed a key place in contemporary political relations. These types of camp might seem to be entirely different things, but we want to suggest that they are not so fundamentally different. In fact, there are at least three ways in which we might make sense of this similarity.

Firstly, camps are exceptional. By this we mean that camps lie outside the normal order of politics and space, while at the same time remaining vitally connected to some of the actors, infrastructures and social relations that are part of that order. The prison camp or concentration camp is a space of exception within which the law is suspended and detainees are subject to an absolute biopolitical relation with the Sovereign. The refugee camp is a space of blurred sovereignties, where international humanitarian agencies, NGOs, political movements and militant groups might seek to govern, exercise power, and shape refugee subjectivities. The protest camp is a space captured from the authorities of state or quasi-sovereign actors such as UNHCR, a self-governing enclave set apart from its surroundings and embodying its own value system. However, as this chapter has shown, modalities of neoliberal governance bases on community responsibility, gendered inequalities, the need for security and the experience of violence also locates camps on a continuum with many of the forms through which power manifests itself in the ordinary 'everyday'. Although it can undermine protest camps' emancipatory potential, this co-existence of radical exceptionality and biopolitical continuities also makes protesters' claims, articulated through acts of occupation and reversal, visible and intelligible.

Secondly, camps are tactical. By this we mean that the camp is rarely a project for its own sake, but it serves a function, and achieves certain ends: for states, international agencies, refugees, armed movements, protesters and revolutionary movements. The concentration camp interns and controls undesirable peoples, prisoners, political opponents, terrorists: people cast out of the normal order of legality and inclusion, or the domain of rights and freedoms. The refugee camp controls and provides emergency relief to displaced peoples, those cast out of the 'normal' order of states, nations and citizens. The protest camp is a project not for its own sake, but a tactic to bring about change in the national and international – as in the case of refugees protesting against the UNHCR – political order itself.

Yet, as shown particularly by the case of Tahrir Square, the camp allows protesters not only to articulate political claims but also to imagine alternative worlds and *enact* new forms of politics – tactical choices thus engender and encompass pre-figurative politics (Feigenbaum et al. 2013, 1-2). The occupation of urban space, and subversion of the normal political order within it, is a key strategy for protesters to articulate and make real an alternative political future. The protest camps discussed in this chapter represented different futures and liveable, shared presents; an alternative political order that directly undermined the order of the state or of the actors of governance that sought to oppose them or suppress them. The camp was not as an instrument of sovereign power and intensified biopolitical control. Quite the opposite: it was a space of freedom, resistance and liberation; a space *beyond* the control of the state and outside the normal political order. It was a space in which a different kind of politics was forged and made real through the 'biopolitical solidarities' that emerged from the experience of attending to each other's needs in a shared space. Through everyday acts such as sleeping, preparing food, and caring for children and the sick, the camp turned ordinary acts of social reproduction into expressions of radical solidarity that politicized life in its most mundane manifestations. These forms of shared "care for life" (Feigenbaum et al. 2013) are essential to the collective political subjectivation that takes place through protest camps. These temporary biopolitical solidarities have an intrinsically ambivalent relation with the infrastructures and practices that sustain the social and political order, one in which entanglements and radical disruptions coexist. This makes protest camps at the same time powerfully symbolic and inherently limited – by the fragility of temporary infrastructure and exposed bodies – spaces of contestation.

Thirdly, protest camps might endure, and their capacity for existing longer term, secured by their spatial tactics and their infrastructures of communal living, social reproduction and security, might well be what distinguishes them from simple protests and sit-ins (Pickerill and Krinsky 2012). However, as shown by the violent suppression of Raba'a al Adaweya, ultimately, they are temporary. They serve their function, and then come to an end. The suspension of the rule of law in the concentration camp is a temporary emergency procedure to inter those seen to be threatening the state. The refugee camp ceases to exist when refugees are *normalized* into citizens (or more often deported, incorporated into precarious urban environments, or simply move on elsewhere). The protest camp is disbanded when the desired political change is achieved, or when state authorities prevail.

We might, therefore, posit a continuum of camps. The space of exception, of Agamben's formulation, is at one end: an absolute biopolitical space in which the Sovereign exercises power directly over the bodies of those detained there. At the opposite end, a space of freedom, anarchy perhaps, liberated from the state by the people, in which an alternative order (even one with all the ambivalences and limitations we have highlighted) can be forged and made real. The key point is that the camp is here and everywhere; whether it be a prison, a refuge or a site of protest, the camp as an exceptional space for exceptional political acts has increasingly become the *normal terrain* and *tactic* for both state action *and* popular resistance. The camp is perhaps *the* key space through which contemporary power struggles between states and peoples are being and will be articulated. If the political order of the 20th century reached its logical conclusion in *Auschwitz*, will the paradigmatic space of 21st century politics look more like *Guantanamo Bay* or *Tahrir Square*?

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