

Comment:

Global Story

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Abstract

Hiphop has long been described as a quintessentially globalized music. Similarly, it has been understood as a unique window into the lives', fears and dreams of young people across the Arab and larger Muslim worlds for most of the post-September 11 era. Since young Tunisians revolted against long time dictator Zine El Abidin Ben Ali to the music of El General (or so the story goes), the music has been considered equally central to understanding the dynamics underlying the revolutionary upheavals that have shaken the Arab world during the last three years. This article reviews the history of hiphop across the region and attempts to provide a theoretical grounding for the role of artistic production in the revolutions using the work of Frankfurt School theoreticians Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin on the production, circulation and consumption of culture.

Keywords

Internet, mobile phones, satellite TV, cultural studies, Middle East, music, Arab Spring, rap music

It would be easy to imagine that hip-hop was the first truly globalized musical genre, or has at least become the most ubiquitous. Certainly today rap seems to be the ubiquitous avatar of youth culture across the world, “from Shanghai to Nairobi to São Paulo,” as hip-hop historian and commentator Jeff Chang described it in a 2007 Foreign Policy article, titled “It’s a Hip-Hop World.”¹ The fact that Foreign Policy featured an article with that title tells us something about how elites have perceived hip-hop and its potential impact on their policy agendas.

In one of the longest pieces in the annals of the journal Middle East Report (a full 15 pages), Hishaam Aidi points out that how since the 1990s governments world-wide, from the US to the MENA, have surveilled and attempted variously to coopt, control and repress rap music precisely because

of its immense social power. Of particular concern to those in power is hip-hop's ability to speak to "young people," who were increasingly seen as both the demographic future and threat to existing systems.² From the start, rap music and hip-hop culture more broadly has simultaneously been at the vortex of various struggles over identity (for example, between religious and secular world-views, supporting or opposing existing regimes, calling for revolution or supporting mindless consumption, respecting traditional values and flaunting hyper consumerist and sexualized stylings associated with the increasingly popular sub-genre of Gangsta Rap) and itself a mechanism to penetrate and hopefully control the most fateful generation of the last half century.

It might receive the lion's share of attention today, but hip-hop is neither the first nor even necessarily the most globalized form of music or pop culture. The parents and even grandparents of today's Arab or Iranian (or Turkish and even Pakistani) rappers danced to Elvis and the Beatles, grooved to Miles and Coltrane, headbanged to Black Sabbath, recorded some of the best psychedelic and funk music of the sixties and seventies (sometimes in the same song), and tuned out machine gun and mortar fire to Pink Floyd and Bob Marley. Today's generation of hip-hop heads is joined by punkers, alt-rockers and, of course, some of the fiercest and most devoted metalheads the world over.

Moreover, we have not mentioned the powerful impact of Euro-American commercial pop and dance music styles and musical production technologies on the development of "Arab pop," although these particular exemplars of cultural globalization are not nearly as discussed or celebrated by critics and commentators as are hip-hop, rock, or metal. Even the most electronicized Arab pop is, like rap, metal and rock, still rooted in an historical aesthetic that returns to Africa and, in good measure, to Islamic aesthetic (melodic and rhythmic) idioms, and have made several circuits back and forth across the Atlantic during the modern era before emerging in their more contemporary forms in the latter part of the 20th century.

Simply put, music has been a quintessentially globalizing, or at least hybridizing, form of cultural expression and communication, as long as

humans have communicated with each other in any meaningful sense. In this context, hip-hop's creation owes to the democratizing advances in technologies of production, distribution and consumption brought on by technological globalization. At the same time, it has from the start – and particularly early on in its evolution – powerfully reflected and spoken to the challenges and injustices of life for the masses of humanity under the conditions of late capitalism/neoliberalism.³

There is little surprise, then, that rap music would find a welcome audience among the youth of the MENA, who until quite recently have been among the segments of global society most marginalized by and from the changes associated with the emergence of the contemporary phase of global capitalism known colloquially as “neoliberalism.”⁴ Of particular importance here is the dynamic between hip-hop's early “Do-It-Yourself” (DIY) ethic, which emerged out of necessity when the genre was still a cultural outlier and which afforded culture emerged among the first generation of rappers that promoted the kind of experimentation and risk-taking that allowed rap to flourish in and then graduate from the underground. This same trait, which became a hallmark of hip-hop's “entrepreneurial spirit,” was a vital for survival for underground forms of music in the MENA and other societies where hip-hop, heavy metal and other forms of music have been banned or repressed.

The question is, did hip-hop move from merely an alternative or subculture to a counter culture and eventually part of the larger revolutionary culture initiated the uprisings of the last three years, and did the DIY skill set that is at the heart of hip-hop's rise also play a part in developing a revolutionary attitude and capabilities among the cultural avant-garde of today's youth?

Satellite TV, Mobile Phones and the Internet – Hip-Hop's Techno Roots

Hip-hop is not a child or even sibling of the Internet, even if today the two are inextricably tied together. It was, however, a product of the same revolution

in computer and communications technologies that ultimately gave rise to the Internet, and was a primary driver of contemporary globalization more broadly. For musicians, this revolution enabled technologies such as sampling and increasingly cheap but professional-grade recording equipment. These advances were crucial to shaping hip-hop, as they freed artists from having to rely on traditional instrumentation, arrangements, performance venues and ultimately record labels to record and distribute their music.

A comparable if not completely similar situation occurred across the Arab world during the last generation, in which the region has itself experienced the increasing unemployment, poverty and inequality associated with neoliberal structural adjustment in most places in which it is pursued, including the US of the early 1970s.⁵ Not surprisingly, when young Arab fans of rap first listened to the stories of their American heroes and then watched videos shot in the poor urban neighborhoods most called home, the similarities in their two situations was abundantly evident.

One of the most powerful exemplars of this similarity comes from the song “Born Here,” by the Israeli-Palestinian (in their self-description, “1948 Palestinian”) hip-hop group DAM, perhaps the first world renown Arabic-language group, which was filmed on location in the ghetto of Lydda and whose lyrics and visuals clearly evoke the Compton of NWA in its seminal songs like “Straight Outta Compton.” DAM’s other early hit, “Min Irhabi” (Who’s the Terrorist), is considered to be the first Arabic language rap song to have one million YouTube views, but like most Arab rappers, their most important inspirations – 2Pac Shakur, NWA, Public Enemy, chief among them – were the kind of political rappers that these groups sought to become, precisely because they were able to use popular cultural idioms which at least at the start were hard to commodify and coopt, to make a critique very similar to the ones most Arab rappers had of their societies.

But here, as with another popular Western musical import, heavy metal, it would be inaccurate to claim hip-hop’s success as owing to the Internet. Mobile phones and satellite television played an equally important role in its spread. Wael Ghonim famously said, “If you want to liberate people,

give them the Internet.”⁶ But the revolution would not have been possible without the “electronic infitah,” or “opening,” made possible by satellite television, which “even more than the Internet, however, satellite TV has played an increasingly important role in creating more open societies in the Middle East.”⁷

Both mobile phones and satellites became ubiquitous in the 1990s across the region, although before satellite television spread in the 1990s the use of satellites to print international pan-Arab newspapers like al-Hayat was crucial to creating a real-time public sphere across the region already in the 1980s. They became central to the lives of even working class and poorer urban youth by the turn of the century (to cite one of innumerable example, rappers in Iran would keep beats on their cell phones and play them for ad hoc freestyle competitions at local parks, which could easily dissipate if the police suddenly appeared). They constituted the first wave of the communication revolution in the Arab world, which laid the groundwork upon which the rise of the Internet, and ultimately social media, so profoundly shaped the personal, social and political horizons.

Government and private satellite channels came to the MENA between 1991 and 1993, and from the start included a significant amount – legally or pirated – of European (primarily French, English, Italian and some German) channels as well. Of these channels it’s no surprise that MTV was crucial for the first generation of aspiring Arab rappers, for whom watching music videos and shows like “Yo! MTV Raps” (metalheads would watch “Headbangers Ball”) was a key way to begin to absorb rap music and the broader hip-hop culture.

The influence of MTV has received relatively little attention by scholars compared, for example, with the importance given to Al-Jazeera.⁸ Certainly from a broader socio-political context there is good reason for the focus on Al-Jazeera. Its programming quite literally “revolutionized” television viewing in the Arab world both by allowing relatively uncensored reporting of news and opinion on many sensitive subjects, and as important, by

allowing viewers to participate in previous taboo discussions through calling in and otherwise contacting discussion shows like “al-Ittijah al-Mu’akis [The Opposite Direction],” which gave citizens around the region a direct and unfiltered public voice in what quickly became the most important public sphere in the region.

But Al-Jazeera is only one of hundreds of channels that are available to viewers across the Arab world, with many of the countries of the region having penetration rate of well over 80 percent of household, much higher than that of the Internet. At the same time, Al-Jazeera’s Arabic flagship channel did not devote any significant attention to popular music, and even less to emerging youth music such as hip-hop. Instead, MTV – its European as well as American stations – played an outside role in bringing hip-hop, metal and other popular genres to the younger generation (MTV Arabia, the Arabic-language franchise, was started much later, in 2007 and didn’t play a prominent role in this regard) in a manner that the dozens of Arabic language video channels, which focused much more exclusively on highly commercialized Arab pop, did not.⁹

As one of the members of Egypt’s most famous rap group Arabian Knightz, Karim Eissa, explains, “I first started watching MTV around 1997, when hip-hop started getting more play on MTV. New York rap was all over MTV then, including favorites like Nas and Wu Tang. The problem is however that it was precisely the era that MTV started playing rap all the time that fucked hip-hop up. When corporations started playing the rappers, they started doing only the type of music they would play and the type of videos they want to get on MTV. So it affected the music and message, as too much of it too much it went ‘bling bling.’”

At the same time that MTV became focused on commercial hip-hop in the later 1990s the Internet began rapidly to expand across the region. It was not until the latter part of the 2000s that users at home could hope to have access to broadband Internet. Before then, despite an explosive level of growth – upwards of four times the global average – most Internet users

had to settle for dial-up access, which in the words of Eissa, meant that “it would take me a day to stream a [2]pac video but I did wait cuz it was songs we didn’t get on TV.”

Satellite television opened new vistas for audience participation and choice; indeed, before the ubiquitous practice of emailing or tweeting comments to video channels viewers were encouraged to text their messages, which helped determined not merely which videos were aired but the winners of massively popular programs such as “Star Academy.” But the Internet did something even more important than giving average citizens a public voice (or, in a euphemistic/sarcastic jibe at the lack of political democracy, a “vote”), which satellite shows and networks like Al-Jazeera and the many call-in discussion and reality TV shows provided. It offered literally the world at their fingertips, allowing young artists to take complete control of their own musical education – from guitar players learning how to tap or solo over jazz changes on YouTube, to beatmakers searching the online archives of the Smithsonian Institution to find field recordings of genres of music they would have quite possibly never even heard in the pre-Internet era. In a sense, for Arab rappers the Internet became the substitute for the massive record collections that Djs and beatmakers in the USA and Europe would spend years and huge sums of money collecting.

And yet, interviews with dozens of rappers, producers, Djs, musicians and singers from the rap and other hard pop music scenes have demonstrated conclusively that the Internet ultimately can play a facilitating role in the creative process. It can inspire, channel, “catalyze,” augment and amplify creativity. But it is not the source of creativity; nor is it a sufficient or even necessary component of aesthetic movements towards broader social and political change.¹⁰ For this to occur, the virtual realities created and honed during endless hours online trading beats, searching out grooves, studying history and channeling inspiration have to be concretized in face-to-face interactions with other artists and fans, and through them the broader public.

What Breytenbach has described as the “global village nomads” and Anderson describes as the “postmodern nomads” are in fact the social actors best trained, attuned and positioned to challenge and weave around the striated and hardened political, cultural and economic networks under the control of governments and dominant religious movements the region over, creating and spreading through their art the kind of representational spaces of every day, often “clandestine life” that governments are increasingly desperate to control in the era of neoliberal globalization.¹¹ Most crucial in this regard is how in following such behavior patterns the hip-hop and other scenes were laying the groundwork for revolution. What began as small subcultures composed of youth who’s primary interest was in creating autonomous spaces to develop their art and explore hip-hop culture gradually, at least for some, became increasingly countercultural, challenging the very legitimacy of the system through the creation of highly politicized art.¹²

Finally, for a few crucial artists, the music captured the prevailing mood of an entire generation of protesters, synthesizing their complete dis-allegiance to the existing regime and supporting the mobilization by tens of thousands of people against the “system.” To borrow the title from Fela Kuti’s last album, music became not merely the “weapon of the future,” it became a spark, and the aura, of the revolutions that swept the Arab world beginning in late 2010.

Of Auras and Sparks – Rap and Revolution

One of the primary transformations of artistic creation during the 20th century was the process of industrialized and commodified production and circulation. One result of this transformation was the loss of the “aura” of art, which for centuries had provided it with its ritualistic power. This dynamic was the subject of one of the seminal debates in critical theory, between Walter Benjamin and his good friend Theodor Adorno.

Benjamin believed that the loss of the aura was a positive development because it allowed for artistic production that no longer ritualistically served

existing power structures and thus could enable new and even revolutionary visions of the future. In contrast, for Adorno mass-produced, commodified cultural production led to the creation of a “culture industry” that imposed an artificial aura, the “aura of style” upon cultural production, which reinforced rather than challenged the hegemonic ideology of the system (in this case the emerging consumer capitalism).

What neither Benjamin nor Adorno could anticipate was the rise of new digital technologies associated with satellite television, mobile phones, low-cost personal computers and software and the Internet. These technologies encouraged a true revolution in the production and distribution of artistic production, enabling the growth of largely uncommodified, limitlessly distributed artistic production, especially music. Together, these developments have enabled a return of the aura to artistic production, in particular to music (the genre that most easily could take advantage of the technologies) but to other forms as well. They also rendered most attempts at censorship moot, whether by governments or socially conservative forces.

The aura both enabled and resulted from the simultaneous function of art as immanent critique, as a training ground for the kind of do-it-yourself ethos and skill sets that would prove crucial to underground organizing under authoritarian systems, and as a way of creating solidarity and community (both virtually, and ultimately – and most important – by meeting physically) that are the key to transforming subcultures into countercultures and ultimately into revolutionary movements. Such dynamics helped transform the attitudes of artists and activists alike from what Manuel Castells describes as “resistance” to “project” identities.¹³ The creation of “auratic” spaces, usually clandestine or at least not officially sanctioned, were crucial for creating the solidarities that would allow for the emergence of networks of artists, activists and finally revolutionaries in subsequent years. The precise interaction between the growing virtual and physical presence in various public spheres remains to be studied, but it is clear that the two forms of publicness acted synergistically on each other.

Stages of Emurgence – From Anger to Joy and Back Again

In my work with and research on hip-hop and rock artists across the MENA the importance of constant movement between virtual and materials worlds, between home and “foreign” cultures, was crucial to the development of hip-hop in the region and of activist cultures as well. These dynamics constitute a “new hybridity” – that is, a form of hybridization that truly produces new wholes – identities – that cannot be reduced to the sum of their parts and which enable ever greater creativity and innovation.

Not every group embodies the intersection of digital and material interactions in the same manner. For example, for Egypt’s Arabian Knightz the two major goals from the start were to incorporate traditional live Arab instruments into their arrangements and to make “club banging” music. Their work with the American-Palestinian producer Fredwreck was crucial to realizing these visions. But here it wasn’t the Internet that facilitated their collaboration, but rather the producer’s physical presence in Cairo, which allowed them to meet and develop their sound. This relationship allowed them to share artists like Abdel Halim and Muhammad Mounir with Fredwreck, while Fredwreck shared Led Zeppelin and Outlandish with them.

Somewhat contrasting to this working dynamic is the group Amarada Bizerta, one of the revolutionary hip-hop groups from Tunisia. Though closely connected to the French and French-North African hip-hop scenes which played a pivotal role in the emergence of Francophone rap, Armada Bizerta has its own masterful beatmaker, Gela’i Ahmad, whose skills rival any top European or American producer. Whereas Arabian Knightz has people sending them beats from all over the Arab world and Europe (“Fredwreck does beats on official albums, also we have club wreckers from Morocco and Holland [Amrani] and Iron Curtain from Germany and Mohammed Bittar from Palestine,” explains Eissa), Ahmad derives most of his beats from endless hours spent searching the Internet, moving back and forth across genres from jazz to blues to roots music to find just the right sound for a new groove over which he and the rest of the band can rap.¹⁴

The creative process might be different for every artist and the collaborative networks diverse, but there are crucial dynamics within the creation of hip-hop songs that are the same for most groups. The first is a good knowledge of a European language that links them to global networks, in particular English and French. The second is the development of dense networks of comrades and collaborators both within the Arab world and globally, primarily through the Internet but also through increasing face-to-face meetings at festivals, concerts, and the growing number of workshops and conferences on issues related to Arab youth and the uprisings that have been sponsored by Western governments, universities and NGOs beginning in the latter half of the 2000s.

Based on conversations with many of the more well-known revolutionary artists from Tunisia and Egypt, a basic typology of the changing creative process during the last three years can be pieced together: (1) The pre-revolutionary “shadow years,” (2) rising anger, (3) the Woodstock moment, (4) joy, and (5) the post-revolutionary grind. I have described these stages in greater detail elsewhere;¹⁵ here I will just summarize them. The pre-revolutionary years were the years of subcultural existence, and comprised for most rap, rock and metal artists a period from the early 1990s through the mid-2000s. During this period they and their music were often if not largely marginalized from their mainstream cultures. Although hip-hop did not suffer the indignities that heavy metal did in most countries in the Arab world (there were no mass arrests and trials for Satan worship), the music was still viewed with suspicion and there was little space for rappers to come together openly and perform.

The second period, beginning in the later part of the last decade, at the same time youth-led opposition movements like Kifaya in Egypt and the networks behind Lebanon’s “Cedar Spring” began to gather steam. By this time hip-hop had become increasingly public. Groups like DAM in Palestine, Akkser and Rayess Bek in Lebanon, H-Kayne and Bigg Da Don in Morocco, and Iranian rappers like Salome and Hich Kas, all moved to the forefront of an emergent genre of American gangsta rap inspired, socially conscious

songs that were known both for their lyrical content and their unique and innovative Arab-gangsta sound. It was during this period that some groups would begin straddling the line between sub and countercultures as the music became more critical of their governments (or in the case of a group like DAM and the growing Palestinian rap community, more critical of the Israeli occupation).

The third period encompasses the lead-up to the revolutions and the explosion of political and musical enthusiasm of the revolutions themselves. It was then that hip-hop became truly “auratic” and, as I and my colleague Bryan Reynolds have termed it, “emurgent” (that is, both politically urgent and also developing very rapidly).¹⁶ As epitomized most famously by the song “Rais Lebled” (President of the Country) by Tunisian rapper El Général, the music galvanized and, as important, mobilized large numbers of citizens, especially young people, at the moment their countries were beginning to explode politically. In whichever country, most of the songs shared certain sonic and lyrical similarities – minor key patterns, sparse yet intense arrangements, and plainspoken lyrics that were highly critical of the government and even the leaders themselves. Songs like Lak3y’s “Tounis Bikhair,” Armada Bizerta’s “Touche pas a ma Tunisie,” Arabian Knightz “Prisoner” and “Rebel,” heralded a wave of songs made right before and then during the revolutionary waves in countries across the MENA, from Morocco to Syria.

The fourth period I term “joy.” Coming in the midst of the revolution and its wake, it was the product of a psychological break experienced by millions of people across the region, artists and fans alike: This break with fear that had ruled their lives for generations. I saw the joy on the faces of artists across the region during and after the initial faces of the revolutions. In Tahrir Square the joy appeared around February 4, 2011, when protesters finally one control of the Midan and victory, however difficult, seemed ultimately certain. In Tunis it occurred towards the final days of the protests against Ben Ali’s rule, when it was clear that the hacktivists and revolutionaries had the upper hand against a disintegrating state. This is a state, not surprisingly,

that has been far less in evidence in other so-called Arab Spring countries, although the entire cycle can develop incredibly rapidly in countries where there was very little hip-hop before.

This in fact occurred in revolutionary Libya, where, according to one report written after most of Libya was liberated but Gaddafi had yet to be killed, “studios have been popping up in homes and apartment blocks across Free Libya, rebel fighters have been listening to Tupac on the front line, impromptu gigs have sprung up in backyards, and aspiring rappers have been selling their demos on the street corners of Benghazi. Even the National Transitional Council has taken to sponsoring the emerging young artists whose music is so popular with the young revolutionaries of Libya. In only a few months a vibrant music community has appeared from almost nowhere.”¹⁷ On the other hand, Bahrain, which had a more established rap scene, has seen almost no political, never mind revolutionary rap, as the government has retained a considerable hold over most every genre within the island’s small but well-known music scenes.

The joyful aesthetics of groups such as Amarda Bizerta who are at the heart of youth-inspired revolutions challenge Adorno’s belief that critical music in the age of mass reproduction and consumption has to be, essentially, hard to listen to (like his mentors and inspirations, Schoenberg and Berg – in order to make the listener think critically and perhaps even motivated to take some form of action. Instead, the music can be quite joyful, a kind of gospel of or at least call to revolution. Armada Bizerta epitomize what could be termed this “ferocious joy” that lays at the heart of the music of the explosive phase of the revolution. It was a sentiment that was visible on artists such as Ramy Essam and Emel Mathlouthi – quasi official “singers” of the Egyptian and Tunisia revolutions – as well

In the months after the successful denouement of the first phases of Tunisia, Egypt and Libya’s revolutions one could feel the joy in the explosion of music and, quite literally on the smiles of the faces of the artists. But such a state of musico-political tarab, or ecstasy, can no more last indefinitely

under conditions of long-term political struggle than it can in a traditional song. And so by the first anniversary of the revolutions, as even the “success stories” were experiencing ongoing political conflict and violence, most of the revolutionary artists in whatever genre they worked, had moved from the stage of joy to that of the grind. Faced with challenges ranging from severely challenged economies to outright counter-revolutions, artists have had to adjust to realities in which the promises of the revolutions, in which they’d invested so much (and been so invested), will come far more slowly if at all, than had previously been hoped.

Rappers have faced myriad challenges. In Tunisia, El General moved almost as soon as Ben Ali was gone towards the rapidly developing Islamist parties, out of conviction or fear few have been able to say with certainty. Armada Bizerta, who achieved sudden international renown because of their sophisticated beats and upbeat vibes, literally split in half as two of the band’s four members disappeared in the middle of their first European tour, deciding that even with their success they’d rather live as illegal migrants in Italy and France than return to Tunis. In Egypt artists like Arabian Knightz and Ramy Donjewan saw their recognition grow but while Arabian Knightz has continued writing music throughout the transition period (focusing increasing attention on criticising the Brotherhood and supporting the military as of the summer of 2013), Donjewan became increasingly frustrated to the point of being unable to write or record any new material in over a year. Meanwhile Syria’s burgeoning hip-hop community exists in good measure in Lebanese exile, using their music to keep the conscience of the Arab world and the broader global hip-hop public, on the ongoing catastrophe in their country.

The present struggles of so many artists across the Arab world should not suggest that the revolution is over; it most definitely continues, and as it does new forms of music written by artists who no one has previously heard of will no doubt come to define the coming phase in their countries’ political evolution. If, despite the grind of the revolution, the Arab world’s revolutionary rappers are able to keep the music honest and innovative, and

point people's attentions towards thoughtful political critique while also giving them something to shout out to, there's every likelihood that hip-hop and other forms of revolutionary popular movement will continue to play central cultural roles in the unfolding political transformations in the Arab world.

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Notes

¹ See Chang 2007.

² See Aidi 2011.

³ Specifically, it was born in the cauldron of American neoliberalism – the decaying inner cities of the early “structural adjustment” era of the 1970s. The growth of unemployment and deindustrialization in working class minority urban areas left many an un(der)employed young black men with vocational skills that allowed them

to develop or adapt various instruments – turntables and DJ mixers among them – that are at the heart of hip-hop creativity.

⁴ I explore many of these themes in my *Heavy Metal Islam: Rock, Resistance and the Struggle for the Soul of Islam* (See LeVine 2008).

⁵ For an analysis of the various statistics related to youth, see chapters 3–4 of LeVine 2005 and the Arab Human Development Report 2009, World Bank and UNDP annual statistics.

⁶ Wael Ghonim, quoted in NPR.org 2010.

⁷ Middle East Outreach Council 2010.

⁸ The most updated bibliography of works on al-Jazeera and the broader impact of satellite television in the region is available at the al-Jazeera Center for Studies (AlJazeera.net 2013).

⁹ See Hawkes 2011.

¹⁰ Cf. Anderson 2013.

¹¹ For Breytenbach's notion of global village nomads, see chapters 7–8 of LeVine 2005. For the discussion of various types of spatial practices see Lefebvre 1990.

¹² This assessment of the process of politicization is drawn from interviews with rappers in Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Palestine, Israel, Lebanon, Syria and Iran.

¹³ Castells 1996.

¹⁴ These conclusions and quotations are based on numerous interviews with members of both groups from 2011–2013 in Tunis, Bizerta, Cairo and through online conversations/interviews.

¹⁵ See LeVine 2011 and LeVine forthcoming.

¹⁶ LeVine and Bryan forthcoming.

¹⁷ The Phonograph 2011.