

# The political crisis in Egypt and its influence on Egyptians in the Netherlands



## *Changing identity?*

Tobias Geerdink

Bachelor thesis Human geography  
Faculteit der Managementwetenschappen  
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Ph. D. Lothar Smith  
S4076923

# Summary

Around the end of 2010 protests started up in several countries around North Africa. The civilian population started peaceful protests against the authoritarian regimes. They wanted to end the oppression and corruption and improve living conditions.

The objective of this research is to find out whether the political crisis in North Africa and the Middle East influence migrants living in the European Union with their home country in North Africa or the Middle East. Does it change their identity? Does it influence their daily living conditions and if so, how? The scale of the crisis is enormous, thousands of people protest active. Besides the active protesters, millions of people living in the countries where protests take place/toke place are involved. Administrative changes as a result of the protests will affect them immediately or in the near future.

On January 25<sup>th</sup> 2011 massive protests started in Egypt. Thousands of people gathered together at the Tahrir square in the centre of Cairo. Their demand was the resignation of president Mubarak and administrative changes. Days and nights of peaceful protests finally led to the resignation of president Mubarak on February 11<sup>th</sup>. A better Egypt with future perspective for everyone is what was hoped would follow from this.

In the Netherlands there are approximately 19,000 Egyptians. What has the political revolution in Egypt meant to them? This is the focus of this research which addresses the possible changing identity of Egyptians in the Netherlands as caused by the political revolution in Egypt.

Through the concepts of transnationalism and identity the possible changing identities of Egyptians in the Netherlands are studied. The concept of transnationalism will be used as an instrument to study the possible changing identity of Egyptians living in the Netherlands. To produce an insight of the possible influence changing identity of Egyptians might have for the Netherlands the concept of identity is linked to the structuration theory of Giddens. The structuration theory of Giddens assumes that a changing identity of an actor will influence the social structures this actor is living in. This means that if the identity of Egyptians changes this will not only influence the Egyptians themselves but also the Dutch society they are part of.

To use the concepts of transnationalism and identity in practice a case study is part of this research. First the current affairs are investigated, second the practical and thought changes are analyzed and from there the intentional and actual behaviour is studied. These three aspects together give an answer on the research question.

In the Netherlands the biggest Egyptian population is located in Amsterdam. Around 75 percent of the Egyptians in the Netherlands is Muslim and the other 25 percent is Copt. In the Netherlands Egyptians often have mutual contact especially in regions where relatively many Egyptians live within the same vicinity. The many mutual contacts have resulted in several Egyptian foundations in the Netherlands. These foundations are organized as an umbrella organization.

Egyptians in the Netherlands have a strong connection with their home country. Egyptians in the Netherlands still keep in touch with their family and friends in Egypt. Besides contact by telephone and internet the connection sustained through regular visits to their home country.

Egyptians in the Netherlands are positive about the political revolution. According their nationals in Egypt they see the political revolution as essential for the future of Egypt; an honest regime and future perspective for everyone. During the interviews it became clear that there is a dichotomy between Muslims and Copts. So far the Muslims are very positive about the achievements, but the Copts are less certain about the outcomes of the massive protests, which relates to the fact that events took place in which Copts were victims. This makes the Egyptian Copts in the Netherlands

sceptical about future developments. They fear the enormous Muslim majority. They fear that a political Muslim majority will make life difficult for Copts in Egypt.

Egyptians in the Netherlands follow the political revolution actively through contact with family and friends and media (Dutch, Egyptian and others). Concerning identity especially contact with family and friends is important. These contacts are frequent and with trusted people. It appears that Copts in the Netherlands mostly have contact with Copts in Egypt and Muslims in the Netherlands often have contact with Muslims in Egypt. The different experience of the Muslims and Copts about the political revolution in Egypt makes that the information Copts and Muslims in the Netherlands gain are different and by this different opinions are formed.

In practice the contacts with family and friends increased since the beginning of the political revolution. During mutual contact in the Netherlands the main conversation subject is now the situation in Egypt where before it were the daily events in the Netherlands. According the way thoughts have changed an important aspect is the difference between Muslims and Copts. Muslims are very positive and have faith in positive developments that will lead to a better future. Caused by some negative events that happened lately the Copts fear the possible future situation in which a political Muslim majority turns Egypt into a strict Muslim state. Another mental aspect that has changed is about remigration. Since their arrival in the Netherlands many Egyptians have the wish to return sooner or later to Egypt. More or less they all believe that finally a better Egypt will be the outcome of the political revolution. This mental aspect makes the wish to remigrate stronger than ever before. As mentioned the Egyptian population in the Netherlands can be divided into two groups namely Muslims and Copts. According the ideas about the political revolution and its outcomes and possible future developments a dichotomy exists. For the Muslims the outcomes so far are positive. This makes that they have faith in the future developments. The Copts on the other hand have experienced negative events caused by the political revolution. Because of this their idea about future developments is not as positive as that of the Muslims.

Practical and mental changes are transformed into intentional and actual behaviour. Unlike intentional behaviour actual behaviour transfers into actions of an individual. During interviews with Egyptians living in the Netherlands it became clear that intentional and actual behaviour has changed since the beginning of the political revolution. Egyptians in the Netherlands actively follow the political revolution through contact with family and friends and media (Dutch, Egyptian and others). When financial possible they visited friends and family or have the intention to visit friends on short notice. What they all want is to help 'rebuild' Egypt. At this point the difference between intentional and actual behaviour clearly comes forward. They do not know how in practice they can help, which actions will help develop their home country. That means that until now, despite all their intentions, they have not been able to do much. Intention of many Egyptians in the Netherlands is to support family and friends financially because of their financial capability they are not capable to give structural forms of support.

Remigration is a wish of many Egyptians, but again intentional behaviour can not be transferred into actual behaviour.

The key focus of this research is on the possible influence of the political revolution in Egypt on the identity of Egyptians living in the Netherlands. What emerges from this research is that the identity of Egyptians in the Netherlands is influenced by the political revolution in Egypt. Several changing aspects regarding intentional behaviour are mentioned. Changing actual behaviour is until now limited. Actual behaviour that has changed since the beginning of the political crisis is the increased contact that Egyptians in the Netherlands have with family and friends in Egypt. Another aspect is that subject of conversation has shifted from daily events to the current situation in Egypt.

Actual behaviour (actions of an actor) constructs identity. Until now the actual behaviour has changed limited. This means that the impact of the political revolution in Egypt for the identity of Egyptians living in the Netherlands is limited. Despite this it keeps interesting to follow this situation. Intentional behaviour can transform into actual behaviour. This hypothetical change of actual behaviour would mean a changing identity of Egyptians in the Netherlands. Regarding to the structuration theory of Giddens changing identity influences social structures. Changing social structures can influence the identity of the actors that are part of these social structures. These social structures are part of the Dutch society this would mean that not only Egyptians are influenced by the political crisis but also non Egyptians living in the Netherlands. Related to integration policies in the Netherlands it can be interesting to monitor further developments regarding identity changing of migrants. The new integration policy contains a general policy for all migrants in the Netherlands. Looking at the possible identity change of Egyptians caused by the political revolution in Egypt and its possible consequences for the Dutch society it is doubtful whether this has been the right decision.

# Foreword

This report contains the research I performed in order of the bachelor thesis. The bachelor thesis is performed as part of the bachelor human geography. An answer is given in light of the possible changing identity of Egyptians living in the Netherlands as an outcome of the political revolution started in the beginning of this year and still going on today.

My thanks go to the Egyptians who were willing to inform me about their thoughts and activities. For all his effort I want to express my special thanks to my supervisor Ph. D. Lothar Smith.

Deventer, August 2011

Tobias Geerdink

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# 1 Introduction

Since the end of 2010 the world news is dictated by political events in North Africa and the Middle East. Events that can be best described as an outburst of discontent after decades of oppression. It all began in Tunis and soon in several countries of North Africa and the Middle East thousands of people were peacefully demonstrating to gain more freedom and democracy (R. Meijer, pers. comm., February 11<sup>th</sup> 2011). The achievements of the protesters differed: in some countries the government was overthrown, whilst in others people are still demonstrating today. One of two countries where the government was finally overthrown is Egypt. From the moment the protests in Egypt started on January 25<sup>th</sup> the whole world was able to follow the developments in Egypt by the media. During the news broadcasts of February 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> in the Netherlands, besides the massive blissful crowd on the Tahrir Square, we saw cheering 'Dutch-Egyptians' gathered together in Amsterdam (Nieuwsuur, pers. comm., February 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> 2011).



(Figure 1, Egypte, Christipedia.nl, Februari 11<sup>th</sup> 2011) (Figure 2, Veel steun voor Egypte op manifestatie in Amsterdam, mrwonkish.nl, Februari 6th, 2011)

But what were they cheering for? What does a (possible) changing administrative situation in their home country mean to Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands? Does a changing situation in their home country influence the living conditions of Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands? Or perhaps they want to return to their home country now?

The objective of this research is to find out whether the political crisis in North Africa and the Middle East, and Egypt in particular, influence migrants living in the European Union, and the Netherlands in particular, with their home country in North Africa or the Middle East. Does it change their identity? Does it influence their daily living conditions and if so, how? The scale of the crisis is enormous, thousands of people protest active. Besides the active protesters, millions of people living in the countries where protests take place/took place are involved. Administrative changes as a result of the protests will affect them immediately or in the near future.

In case the political crisis in Egypt influences migrants from Egypt living in the Netherlands, this influence will also affect the overall situation in the Netherlands. A changing situation for a certain group of inhabitants can have influence on the whole population or at least have influence on other inhabitants in the direct environment. All these possible changes can lead in one way or another to a changing identity of Egyptians in the Netherlands. As will be mentioned and explained later a changing individual identity can have influence on the surrounding of this individual. Because of this it is likely that when the identities of Egyptians in the Netherlands change this will sooner or later also have influence on the population in their surroundings. And by this will have influence on the identity of the people living in these surroundings.

An interesting aspect for Dutch policy makers, regarding the situation described above is the current debate about the most recent integration note. Most important outcome of this note is that there should be one general integration policy (Rijksoverheid, 2011). The situation in which a general

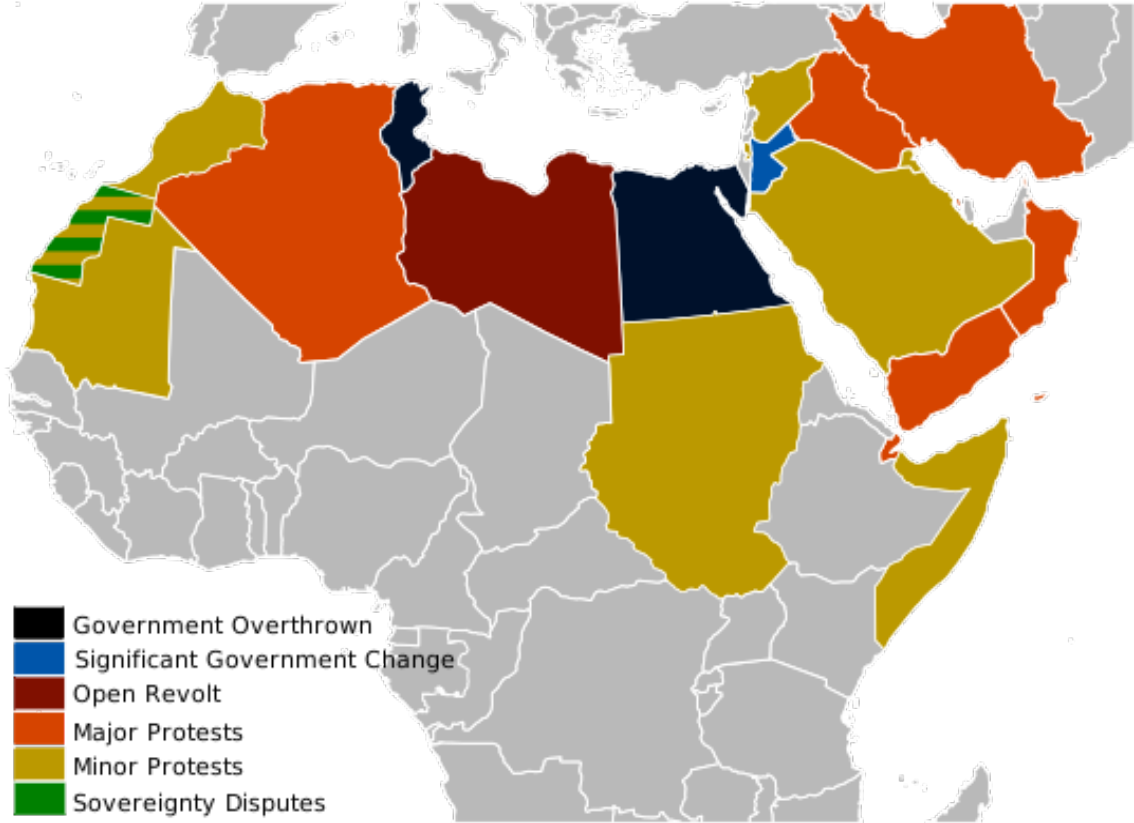


integration policy can function is almost the complete opposite of a situation in which migrants are influenced by events happening in their home country.

In this chapter an introduction, the societal background, and the strategy of this research will be given. Most of the information in this chapter derived from the research plan or is an outcome of the research plan made as preparation for this research. The information in this chapter can be seen as the foundation for the rest of this report.

### 1.1 Societal background

What started as an individual protest from a Tunisian young man at the end of 2010 developed into an enduring political crisis in North Africa and the Middle East. This Tunisian young man was frustrated about the treatment he got from the local authorities. This act of protest was quickly followed by other forms of protest in which the population in North Africa and the Middle East showed their discontent. A more general view of the displeasure shows a situation in which the people are frustrated about their living conditions. Living conditions are strongly determined by a non developing economic situation, oppressing authoritarian regimes and corruption. The protesters in North Africa and the Middle East see the leaders of their country as the perpetrator of their discontent (R. Meijer, pers. comm., February 11<sup>th</sup> 2011). Figure 1 shows the countries in North Africa and the Middle East where since the end of 2010 massive protest have occurred.



(Figure 3, Middle East and North Africa Unrest, Global Issues, March 6<sup>th</sup> 2011)

Protests occurred in the following countries and regions: Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestinian Territories, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Western Sahara and Yemen.

As long as written history exists there have been conflicts between people in this world. Two main reasons from earlier on till now that caused conflicts are the possession of land and a different idea about how to live. Different norms and values between groups of people led to many (armed) conflicts. The ending of a conflict often creates a situation in which there is one party that achieved

their goals and one that did not. This expresses continuing tension between parties and a constant potential for new conflicts (B. Bomert, pers. comm., November 18<sup>th</sup> 2011).

The conflicts that arose in North Africa and the Middle East at the end of 2010, and that is still continuing today, have a different motive. Main cause of these conflicts is decades of oppressing by authoritarian regimes. The protesters want an administrative change from authoritarian regimes to some sort of democracy (Fingerland, 2011). Protesters often refer to democracy in western countries. To give a general definition of a western democracy the following quotation can be used:

*“Institutionalizes a way of solving without violence disagreements over fundamental questions. Democracy promotes a culture of negotiation, bargaining, compromise, concession, the tolerance of differences, and even acceptance of defeat...And it unleashes forces that divide and segment of violence. (Rummel: 1997:101)” (Carey, 2009, pp4).*

As shown in the image on the previous page Egypt is one of the two countries where the government has actually been overthrown. Egypt is located in the North East of Africa. There are living around 84 million people in Egypt 90 percent of them are Muslim and the other ten percent is Christian. The capital of Egypt is Cairo and the official language is Arabic. 90 percent of the total land surface of one million square kilometres consists of dessert. Egypt has the biggest economy in North Africa and the second largest economy of the Arabic world (R. Meijer, pers. comm., February 11<sup>th</sup> 2011).

The overthrow of the government on February 11<sup>th</sup> after 18 days of protests also meant the resignation of Hosni Mubarak. Hosni Mubarak was president of Egypt for almost 30 years. In 1975 he became vice president and in 1981, after president Sadat was killed by Islamic extremists, he became president. Since 1991 Mubarak has conducted a progressive economical policy to decrease the governance sector and to increase the commercial sector. The political development in Egypt the last 30 years is almost zero. The opposition parties were not serious opponents for Mubarak's party NDP and the Muslim brotherhood was even forbidden by Mubarak. This was answerable because political parties based on religion are forbidden in Egypt (R. Meijer, pers. comm., February 11<sup>th</sup> 2011).

The discontent a lot of people in Egypt experience derives from the unjust, corrupt and oppressive regime. Besides these administrative discontents a lot of people are worried about the deterioration of the economic situation. The people in Egypt think their living conditions can improve with administrative innovation. What the protesters want is some sort of democracy in Egypt.

After Mubarak resigned a military board became the temporarily leader of the country. A commission will now hold a referendum to adept the constitution so in September 2011 elections can be hold and the people of Egypt can choose a new president and a new parliament.

The reason the whole world is watching the situation in North Africa with above average interest is the fact that a changing situation in these North African countries will also affect countries outside this region. It can lead to a physical instability that will be globally damaging economic terms. Concerning international world politics, especially those in the western countries, it is interesting to look at the developments taking place in North Africa right now. This because of the possible influence it might have.

As always one very important aspect that might influence the world politics is the international oil trade. Oil is by far the most important export product North Africa has and the other way around the most important import product for western countries. The last decade the oil export from and through North African countries was stable. Despite the questionable norms and values from the North African authoritarian regimes, they did succeed in creating a continuing stable situation in the region (Jenkins, 2011). Because of the political crisis in North Africa the stable situation disappeared and with this also the stable situation regarding the import of oil by western countries. A continuation of an unstable situation in North Africa might influence the economic situation in western countries negatively, because of their liability of oil (Tageszeitung, 2011).

Concerning Egypt another important aspect is the fact that Mubarak had an important role in the peace keeping between Israel and Palestine. The fact that Mubarak is no longer at the head of the Egyptian regime might influence the stable situation between Israel and Palestine negatively. In a wider context this sets out another fear western countries have. The Muslim Brotherhood was forbidden by Mubarak, but now democracy can become the new administrative structure it is possible that they will be one of the political parties in the near future. Western countries have created a fear for this kind of parties. One of the reasons for this fear is that conservative political parties in western countries do not believe in the possibility of a democratic Islamic state (Jenkins, 2011).

The possible consequences that are mentioned above are important at an international level. To be able to concretize this research and achieve some tangible possible outcomes, the choice has been made to specifically look at the situation in Egypt in relation to Egyptians living in the Netherlands. It is most likely that if the situation in Egypt has influence in the Netherlands this initially applies for Egyptians living in the Netherlands. There are around 19,000 Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands (CBS, 2010). Question is whether and how the situation in Egypt will influence the Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands. Social transnationalism will be used in this research to investigate the influence.

*“Social Transnationalism explores new forms of cross-border interactions and mobility which have expanded across physical space by looking at the individual level. It asks whether we are dealing with unbridled movements and cross-border interactions which transform the lifeworlds of individuals fundamentally” (Mau, 2010).*

In Chapter two of this research an extensive explanation of the concept social transnationalism will be given. The explanation makes clear how social transnationalism will be used as a tool to investigate how the situation in Egypt influences the Egyptians living in the Netherlands. The main subject that will be addressed in this research is the possible changing identity of Egyptians living in the Netherlands caused by the political crisis in Egypt. Because of the assumption that identity can change (constantly is changing?) a quotation of identity by Gauntlett is given:

*“We often talk about people as if they have particular attributes as 'things' inside themselves – they have an **identity**, for example, and we believe that at the heart of a person there is a fixed and true identity or character (even if we're not sure that we know quite what that is, for a particular person). We assume that people have an inner **essence** -- qualities beneath the surface which determine who that person really 'is'. We also say that some people have (different levels of) **power** which means that they are more (or less) able to achieve what they want in their relationships with others, and society as a whole. Foucault rejected this view. For Foucault, people do not have a 'real' identity within themselves; that's just a way of talking about the self -- a **discourse**. An 'identity' is communicated to others in your interactions with them, but this is not a fixed thing within a person. It is a shifting, temporary construction”. (Gauntlett, 2008)*

The quotation of Gauntlett derived from the theory of Foucault on identity. In this research this quotation is used to describe identity instead of a direct quotation of Foucault, because this quotation is directly applicable in this research, namely in the following manner:

An assumption based on this definition of identity can be that if the current situation in Egypt influences the Egyptians in the Netherlands it also influences the world they live in. In practice this means that the more Egyptians living in a certain environment the more influence the situation in Egypt might have on this environment. So in this case the influence not only affects the Egyptians, but all the people in the environment the Egyptians are living in, and so on and on. An extensive explanation of identity and the way it will be used in this research is described in Chapter two.

In this research transnationalism is divided into two aspects: the intentional behaviour and the actual behaviour. The first aspect, intentional behaviour, is about opinions, meanings and ideas. The second aspect, actual behaviour, is about actions that actually take place in practice. These actions are often, if based on rationality always, an outcome of the first aspect. However in practice it often happens that one does not do what he/she says thinks or wants (L. Smith, pers. comm., March 7<sup>th</sup> 2011). Special attention in this research goes to migration with respect to the actual behaviour. Migration stands for remigration of Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands to their home country Egypt in this case. The expectation is that in the future (years more likely than decades) labour migrants are necessary to realize economic growth in the European Union. One of the main reasons is the fact that the population in the European Union is aging (Employee European Union, pers. comm., January 6<sup>th</sup> 2011). Possible remigration will increase the problem of population decline. Because of this it is interesting to find out why Egyptians will or will not show actual and/or intentional behaviour concerning remigration.

Concerning possible remigration it is important to know why Egyptians migrated to the Netherlands in the first place. As mentioned before around 19,000 Egyptians are currently living in the Netherlands.

Until 1950 Egypt was an immigration country, but as of the 1950s Egypt became an emigration country. Both push and pull factors caused this migration switch. Push factors were an increasing economic pressure and an increasing population growth. Pull factor was the oil boom in Arab countries and because of this an increasing demand for labour migrants (DRC on Migration, Globalization & Poverty, 2010). In the period 1950-1970 the emigration from Egypt grew to 70,000 Egyptian international migrants in the year 1970. An emigration expansion phase started after the war in 1973. According to Zohry and Harrel-Bond during this period the government eased migration procedures for the following reasons: to solve unemployment problems, to use remittances to supply payment deficits and finance private projects, to supply Arab countries with required labour and to relieve pressure caused by political and economic factors. During the period after the war in Iraq started in 1983 the number of Egyptian migrants decreased for the following reasons: end of the Iran-Iraq War in 1988, fall of oil prices, declining demand for construction workers in Arab countries, policy of replacing foreign labour with nationals in the Arab Gulf states. The period from 1988 till 1992 is characterized by an increasing number of return migrants from other countries in the region around Egypt, which intended to decrease the number of immigrants. (Zohny and Harrel-Bond, 2003). Around 3.9 million Egyptian nationals live abroad, almost five percent of the total population (International Organization for Migration, 2008).

Most of the 3.9 million Egyptians are living (temporarily) in countries in the region (mostly Arab states). Migration of Egyptians to other countries was mostly intended to be permanent (Zohny and Harrel-Bond, 2003). The following table is acquired from a research by Zohny and Howell-Bond in 2003 and shows the estimated number of permanent Egyptian migrants by the country of destination:

Country of Destination	Number (in Thousands)	Percent
U.S.A	318	38.6
Canada	110	13.3
Italy	90	10.9
Australia	70	8.5
Greece	60	7.3
<b>The Netherlands</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>4.9</b>
France	36	4.4
England	35	4.2
Germany	25	3.0
Switzerland	14	1.7
Austria	14	1.7

Spain	12	1.5
Total	824	100

(Table 1, Zohry and Harrel-Bond, 2003)

Remarkably according to the CBS (Dutch central bureau for statistics) there are only around 19,000 Egyptians living in the Netherlands, whilst the table shows that 40,000 Egyptians are living in the Netherlands. The difference will not affect this research, as such because of that no further attention is given to the actual number. In the subsequent parts of this thesis the number given by the CBS will be used.

The diversity in countries where Egyptians migrated to makes it likely that the choice is not specifically made between these countries, but between countries in the region as one group and countries in the so called western world as one group. Nevertheless exceptions are more than likely, for example when one did choose a specific country because family or friends already migrated there.

Main reason for Egyptians to migrate the last 50 years was an economical one. The increasing economic pressure and high rates of population growth lead to an increasing migration. Around 2.7 million Egyptians live abroad, combined with overpopulation and enormous unemployment the Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation & Poverty sees Egyptian migration as a livelihood and survival strategy. The economic pressure in Egypt is so extensive that besides international migrants there are five million Egyptians who move internally to sustain rural livelihoods. As described above this direct economical reason was often indirectly caused by the political situation at the time. To achieve an adequate standard of living for everyone it is essential that population growth is combined with sustainable economical development. Within the political environment in Egypt, these sustainable economical developments have not occurred the last decades (DRC on Migration, Globalization & Poverty, 2010).

## 1.2 Structure of the thesis

In the continuation of this chapter the research approach of this thesis is described. First the objective and main question are given. Derived from these two are the research questions. In Chapter two the theoretical frame is described and the definitions are given of transnationalism and identity, both key concepts of this research and essential for the case study. Chapter three contains the methodology; it gives a description of the way this research is conducted. Chapter four contains the first phase of the case study. The current affairs concerning Egyptians in the Netherlands are described related to the situation in their host country and related to the situation in their home country. The fifth chapter gives an overview of the practical and thought changes for Egyptians living in the Netherlands. Changes caused by the situation in Egypt. Chapter six is derived from chapter four. The intentional and actual behaviour of Egyptians in the Netherlands lead from the practical and thought changes is analyzed. Chapter seven is the final conclusion of the case study. It gives answer to the research question of this thesis. The conclusion is related with the concepts defined in chapter two. In Chapter eight a critical review of this thesis is given.

## 1.3 Research approach

In order to define a sufficient objective first a general problem definition is defined in the original research plan: *How does the political crisis (and the effects in the (near) future) in North Africa and the Middle East influence migrants (with their home country in North Africa or the Middle East) living in the European Union?*

The actual research objective has derived from the general problem definition mentioned above. Together they reflect the scientific and social relevance of this research. The intention of a clear objective is to frame the problem definition in such a way that it is achievable, clear and informative (Radboud Universiteit, 2011): *The objective of this research is to obtain insight of the influence the political crisis in Egypt has on Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands. The instrument to perceive this insight is analyzing the possible changing identity of Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands.*

Derived from the problem definition is the main question of this research: *How does the political crisis in Egypt influence the identity of Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands?*

### 1.3.1 Research questions

Most important aspect of this research is the case study. This case study is based on interviews with Egyptians living in the Netherlands. To be able to process the information collected through the interviews in a scientific responsible way it is necessary to start with research questions concerning the underlying theory. As mentioned in the societal background the possible changing identity will be investigated through the concept of transnationalism. Because of this the following research questions have to be answered before the case study can lead to an answer on the main question: *what is transnationalism and what is identity?* These two preparatory questions will be answered in chapter two of this research.

*How does the political crisis in Egypt influence the identity of Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands?*

To be able to answer this main question three key questions and several sub questions are prepared. The numbering of the questions below is according to the chapter numbering in the continuation of this research.

4 What are the current affairs?

4.1 What is the current identity of Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands?

4.2 What is the opinion of Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands about the

*political crisis in Egypt?*

*4.3 How do Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands follow the political crisis in Egypt?*

The current affairs will be described at macro level. This to produce a general view of the situation Egyptians in the Netherlands are living in.

*5 What does the political crisis in Egypt mean for Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands?*

*5.1 What are practical (physical) changes for Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands due the political crisis in Egypt?*

*5.2 What are the thought (mental) changes for Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands due the political crisis in Egypt?*

The answering to this question will be at micro/meso level, because the answers are based on interviews with individuals or in groups. An answer at micro level is based on an individual response. In case an answer is at meso level, several individuals gave comparable answers. During the answering of the questions this difference will be noted. Meso answers are better useable in creating a general view.

*6 What are the behavioural outcomes of the political crisis in Egypt for Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands?*

*6.1 What are the intentional behavioural outcomes of the political crisis in Egypt for Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands?*

*6.2 What are the actual behavioural outcomes of the political crisis in Egypt for Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands?*

Concerning the micro/meso and macro level of answers, for these questions counts the same as described by the questions 5, 5.1 and 5.2.

*7 How does the political crisis in Egypt influence the identity of Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands?*

## 2 Theory

In the introduction of this chapter the theoretical frame of this research is described; the scientific basis on which this research is conducted.

As mentioned before the main objective of this research is to find out how the Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands are influenced by the political crisis in Egypt, influence regarding their identity. The question that leads from this objective is if and how this identity change of Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands will influence others. By others is initially meant the residents of the direct surroundings of Egyptians living in the Netherlands.

An individual action of a young Tunisian man led to a political crisis in North Africa and the Middle East. Of course there are a lot of indirect motives for the political crisis, but the actual start was initiated by an individual person. This individual action led and will lead to a changing society and this changing society will change individuals. From this point of view it is interesting to look at the structuration theory of Anthony Giddens.

Anthony Giddens is a British sociologist who developed the theory of structuration. In 1984 he developed the theory of structuration which addressed fundamental problems in the social sciences in a unique way. His theory of structure gave new insights in the way social life is/can be constructed. The following quotation gives a brief overview of the theory of structure as developed by Giddens:

*“The duality of structure: The relationship between agency and structure is among the most pervasive and difficult issues in social theory. How are actions of individual agents related to the structural features of society? How are actions structured in everyday contexts? How are the structured features of actions reproduced? To examine the dualism between structure and agency, Giddens departed from the conceptualization of structure as some given or external form. Structure is what gives form and shape to social life, but it is not itself the form and shape. Structure exists only in and through the activities of human agents (Giddens 1989: 256). Similarly, he departed from the idea of agency as something just ‘contained’ within the individual. Agency does not refer to people’s intentions in doing things but rather to the flow or pattern of people’s actions. Giddens deeply reformulated the notions of structure and agency, emphasizing that ‘action, which has strongly routinized aspects, is both conditioned by existing cultural structures and also creates and recreates those structures through the enactment process’ (Walsham 1993: 34). He suggested that while structural properties of societies and social systems are real, they have no physical existence. Instead, they depend upon regularities of social reproduction (Giddens and Pierson 1998). As a consequence, the basic domain of study in the social sciences consists of social practices ordered across space and time.” (Giddens, 1984)*

According to the theory of structure a changing identity of an Egyptian individual will not stand alone. According to the theory of structure the events happened and happening in Egypt will influence individuals. Because of transnationalism it is likely that in the Netherlands Egyptian migrants will be influenced by these events. This aspect of the theory of structure is directly addressed in this research.

To be able to bring the research strategy into practice it is necessary to address the concepts of transnationalism and identity more detailed. In this chapter the concepts transnationalism and identity are explained so that in the case study it will be possible to use transnationalism as an instrument to analyze the cause or motive of possible changing aspects of identity and the identity itself.



## 2.1 Transnationalism

The purpose of this research is to discover how the political crisis in Egypt influences and/or affects the identity of Egyptians in the Netherlands. This implies learning how Egyptians in the Netherlands follow the political crisis in their home country: how do they in practice keep in touch with, and be aware of what is happening in, Egypt and what does it mean to them?

Vertovec gives the following description: "... 'transnationalism' broadly refers to multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation-states" (Vertovec, 1999 pp1). As an outcome of transnationalism, migrants are capable of creating a 'home' in their host countries. They partly reproduce the culture from their home country into their society in their host country. The society in which they created a 'home' in their host countries sometimes is seen as a third space, besides the home country (society) and the host country (society) of migrants (Gowricharn, 2004). A distinction can be made between transnationalism from below (activities of migrants themselves) and transnationalism from above (activities of states and multinational companies). In this research transnationalism from below will be addressed. This research is about the way migrants behave intentional and actual through their own ideas and emotions.

The activities undertaken can be linked to three domains: economical (1), political (2) and social-cultural (3) (Amersfoort, 2001). Van Amersfoort made a schedule of these three aspects that is widely accepted still (Gowricharn, 2004). The schedule by Amersfoort (2001) gives the possibilities concerning transnationalism from a low to a high level:

- (1) The lowest economical level includes informal cross-country traders and the highest level agencies of home country banks in immigrant centres.
- (2) The lowest level of political transnationalism is home town civic committees created by immigrants and the highest level is immigrants elected by home country legislatures.
- (3) Concerning social-cultural the lowest level is amateur cross-country sport matches and the highest level are regular cultural events organized by foreign embassies.

Smith and Guarnizo (1998) describe in their study concerning transnationalism from below four aspects which determine the effects that transnational flows have upon involved societies: the globalization of capitalism (1), the technological revolution in the means of communication and transportation (2), global political transformations such as decolonization and the universalization of human rights (3) and the expansion of social networks that facilitate the reproduction of transnational migration, economic organization and politics (4).

To clarify the four aspects an example of each transnationalism aspect in relation to Egyptian migrants in the Netherlands is given:

- (1) Egyptians living in the Netherlands send money to family and friends in Egypt. In both their home country and their host country this affects the involved societies. In their home country family and friends are able to invest this capital and improve their living situations. For the society in their host country the effect is indirect. Money that is invested elsewhere will not be invested in the Netherlands and this can be seen as a loss of capital and by this possible improvement in their surroundings.
- (2) For Egyptian migrants it is easier to keep in contact with family and friends and it is easier to visit them than the other way around. Especially visiting is easier for Egyptian migrants in the Netherlands, because of financial capability and the fact that obtaining the necessary visas is easier when travelling from the Netherlands to Egypt, as Egyptian migrant living in the Netherlands, than travelling from Egypt to the Netherlands, as an Egyptian living in Egypt. It is likely that this will increase transnational ties and by this all the transnational aspects increase and thus the influence in the host country increases. Effect is that Egyptian migrants in the Netherlands stay part of their former Egyptian society and partly integrate in Dutch society at the same time. In this situation they become members of two societies at the same time. In a case study Mazzucato (2008) describes a (partly) comparable situation and he named this phenomena double engagement. The study was about the contribution of Ghanaian migrants, living in the Netherlands, both in the Netherlands and in their home

country Ghana. An analysis of their spending patterns both in Ghana and the Netherlands showed that migrants are double engaged. In Ghana they invest in housing, business and education and contribute to the daily expenses of family and friends in Ghana. At the same time they participate in the Netherlands at neighbourhood, city and national level. This example demonstrates the double relationship migrants can have (Mazzucato, 2008).

- (3) It is possible that Egyptian migrants see the living situation in the Netherlands as a better one than in Egypt. By convincing family and friends this can lead to the desire in the home country to realize the same living conditions. In the Netherlands Egyptian migrants can have above average interest in the political situation. Another form of influence for Dutch inhabitants can be that through contact with Egyptian migrants they realize that the living conditions in the Netherlands are not self-evident all around the world.
- (4) The fourth aspect has influence on the other three. The role which social media like Facebook played during the revolution in Egypt makes the impact of this aspect clear. Current social media enable people to communicate at any time at any place with anyone about anything. Because of this it becomes easier to involve people. Besides social media, media such as television can also create involvement. The way television broadcasted the revolution in Egypt influenced Dutch, or do you know a Mubarak sympathizer? Egyptians living in the Netherlands can encourage family and friends with their case, at the same time the Dutch can follow what is happening through television and become involved with the Egyptians.

Present day transnationalism highly depends on the possibility to communicate with the home country. In contrast with communication possibilities decades ago, nowadays almost every migrant has access to video, satellite TV, internet and (mobile) phone. Besides these communication possibilities transnationalism is also strongly influenced by the increased mobility and transportation capability. Many migrants regularly visit their home country (Gowricharn, 2004).

As mentioned before, an outcome of transnationalism is that migrants are capable of creating a 'home' in their host countries; they partly reproduce the culture from their home country into their society in their host country. According to this it is likely to assume that changes in the home country of an individual will have influence on the situation of that individual in its host country. From this point of view the link between transnationalism and identity will be made.

Through a virtual example the link between transnationalism and identity is made clearer: in 1990 an Egyptian person immigrates to the Netherlands. This individual accommodates in Amsterdam and meets other Egyptian migrants. The individual lives near these other Egyptians and meets them daily, mutually they communicate through their native language. The moment the political crisis in Egypt start it is their main communication topic. The communication with family and friends in Egypt (transnationalism) increases, because they want to know what is happening. These two changes (I mutual communication, II communication with family and friends) are a direct effect of the political crisis in their home country and the fact that they still have links with their home country. These two changes can influence the identity; the way in which this identity changes will be further explained in the next paragraph about identity.

## 2.2 Identity

The objective of this paragraph is to describe the definition 'identity' the way in which it is used in this thesis. This because of the final objective; conclude if and how identity of Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands has changed/is changing because of the political crisis in Egypt. Identity is not an accomplished fact, but a constant process in a certain place and time (Braziel and Mannur, 2003). A person (actor) creates an identity through its agency with the purpose to identify. The different aspects that determine identity and the combination between these aspects determine the agency an actor has. With the created identity an actor is capable to identify with a group. In the

same way an actor can make choices to be capable to deflect a certain group (The Open University, 2004).

According to Giddens (1984) structures give form and shape to social life, but are not the form and shape itself. Structures exist through the actions of actors. These actions are conditioned by structures and at the same time create and recreate these structures. The agency an actor has determines the actions of this actor. And these actions conducted by an actor determine the identity of an actor (Giddens, 1984).

Concluding to respond to the above to describe the definition 'identity' it is important to look at the agency an actor has because this agency determines the actions and through these actions the identity of an actor. The construction of identity (through agency and actions) is partly determined and partly constructed through choices made by the involved actor (The Open University, 2004).

Determined aspects and non-determined aspects highly influence each other. Especially regarding determined aspects, in the case study it is important to realize the role identity has in the context of how Egyptians in the Netherlands define/redefine themselves and how they are defined/redefined by the society they are part of (Grillo and Mazzucato, 2008). In this case the determined aspects will likely strongly influence the (non-determined) actions of an actor.

In order of this influence the following determined aspects are seen as important in constructing identity (valid for Egyptians in the Netherlands in this thesis):

- (Original) Nationality
- Gender
- Age
- Religion
- Reason of migration

In this thesis more important than the determined aspects are the non-determined aspects. Derived from the theory of Foucault, Gauntlett (2008) says that identity is a shifting and temporary construction. The non-determined aspects that are part of the construction of identity are influenced by the choices an actor makes. The non-determined aspects are not completely non-determined. Non-determined aspects are influenced by the bounded rationality of an actor. Jones (1999) description about bounded rationality is the following: *"People making choices are intendedly rational. They want to make rational decisions, but they cannot always do so."* (Jones, 1999)

A link can be seen between the structuration theory of Giddens (1984) and bounded rationality and its role in constructing identity. Concerning the non-determined aspects that create identity it is important to realize that identity is constructed in a certain social structure. Nowadays it is unthinkable that someone lives completely individually. Although it might theoretically be possible in this research is assumed that an identity is created in a certain social structure. The starting point concerning the way an actor can influence a social structure and the other way around in this research is mentioned in the introduction of this chapter by a quotation of Giddens (1984). In this research by a changing actor is meant a changing identity of that actor through agency. The daily spoken language of an individual provides a good example of a non-determined aspect influenced by bounded rationality: an individual has a native language determined by the place of birth and its younger years, but migration can be a reason to change the daily spoken language from the native language to the language that is spoken in the host country. In this example the identity of an individual is changed through the aspect language. Language can be a strong political tool. It is a possibility to create a group. Individuals can join a group and at the same time other individuals are not able to join the same group (Gibson, 2004).

Another example shows a situation in which a non-determined aspect is partly determined by the social structure an actor lives in. For example two young Egyptians living in the Netherlands want to visit Egypt and participate in the political revolution. They both are financially not capable to organize the trip and stay by themselves. Actor A will financially be supported by his family and make the trip and participate in the political revolution. The family of actor B does not have the financial

capability to support. Despite the intention to make the trip and participate in the political revolution actor B stays in the Netherlands and does not participate in the political revolution.

This difference in the actors surroundings (social structures) in this case leads to different possibilities between these individual actors. In this case the way in which the actors have the capability to make choices according the same aspect is diverse. Caused by social structures one actor can have more financial capabilities than another. In this case this will mean that the actor with more financial capability has more freedom of choice.

In order to this research the difference between intentional and actual behaviour is described. When an actor has the ability to make choices concerning non-determined aspects that determine identity there can be a distinction between the intentional and actual behaviour. Intentional behaviour describes the way an actor prefers to act in the (near) future. Actual behaviour describes what will actually happen in practice. It is important to realize that there can be a clear distinction between these two behaviours (L. Smith, pers. comm., March 7<sup>th</sup> 2011). Intentional behaviour is often based more on emotions instead of rationality. Actual behaviour on the contrary is often based more on rationality than emotions. In case an actor thinks more emotionally instead of rationally it is likely that the difference between intentional and actual behaviour increases.

Three aspects are mentioned in constructing identity:

- Determined aspects
- Non-determined aspects
- Social structures

Determined aspects are given; an actor can not affect these aspects. The non-determined aspects and the social structures are closely intertwined. Linked with the structuration theory from Giddens conclusion is that non-determined aspects and social structures are interdependent. They will always influence each other and by this influence the agency an actor has. And through this agency the identity of an actor is constructed.

For this research this will mean that the events in Egypt will have another influence for the identity of Egyptians living in the Netherlands than for the rest of the population through determined aspects (most important one is (originally) being an Egyptian). In case non-determined aspects (that partly construct the identity of Egyptian actors living in the Netherlands) are influenced by the events in Egypt this also influences the construction of the social structures these actors are living in. At the same time the social structures these actors are living in will influence the non-determined aspects that construct the identity of Egyptian actors living in the Netherlands. Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands are part of the Dutch society. According to Giddens (1984) this society is constructed through social structures. This means that if identity of Egyptians living in the Netherlands will be reconstructed through the events in Egypt this will also have effects for the construction of identities of the rest of the population who are part of the social structures Egyptians are part of.

# 3 Methodology

In this chapter the research methodology is described. The research methodology used for this thesis is bipolar. In the first part the research methodology used to produce Chapter two is described and in the second part the research methodology used to prepare the case study is described, chapters four to six. To estimate the contents of the case study properly, at the end of this chapter a critical review regarding the implementation of the case study research methodology is given.

The first strategy that is used had the purpose to be able to give a clear description of the concepts of transnationalism and identity. In order of the case study a clear description of these concepts is essential. Books and scientific research on transnationalism are used to produce a clear description. Authors with interesting and useful books and/or scientific research are Mazzucato, Grillo, Smith and Guarnizo. The concept of transnationalism will be used as an instrument to do research concerning possible changing identity.

Concerning identity also books and scientific research are used, but sources that are in line with the description of identity as given by Gauntlett (description based on identity theory of Foucault). In combination with the description of identity given by Gauntlett scientific research produced by Giddens will be used. Especially looking at his structuration theory and the way identity is part of this theory. This structuration theory is part of the theoretical frame of this thesis and is processed in the introduction of Chapter two.

This first methodology is an immersion research rather than a width study and is a qualitative approach. This part of this thesis is non-empirical; sources are used that are part of existing research. Intention is to give clear and in order of the case study useable definitions about the concepts of transnationalism and identity.

The second part of this thesis contains a case study. The societal background of this thesis contains information which is important for the case study and in some times is repeated in the case study. To gain information about the past, current and possible future situation in Egypt an interview took place with R. Meijer from the Clingendael Institute and the Radboud University. He is known for his knowledge in many areas about North Africa and the Middle East. A written elaboration of this interview is included in appendix I.

By the preparation of the case study applied in this research the theory concerning case studies designed by Robert K. Yin is used.

The reason to choose the theory designed by Yin is that this research is partly about behavioural events that are not controllable and that it takes place in real life context. The intention of the case study is to find out what the way of thinking of Egyptian migrants in the Netherlands is.

Qualitative in dept interviews with Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands are an important source. The following subjects are part of the question list made as preparation for the interviews:

- Personal (name, age, city, family, religion, occupation, in the Netherlands since)
- Migration reason
- Expectations at the time
- Current thoughts
- Differences with non Egyptians
- Links with Egypt
- How follow(ed) the political situation in Egypt
- Thoughts about Egypt before the start of the political crisis
- Current thoughts about Egypt
- Expectations about the future of Egypt
- The influence the current events in Egypt have for the daily life and how
- Thoughts about remigration.

Important aspect concerning the interviews is that the intention is to give a general view. In order to get a sustainable research conclusion the intention is to choose the interviewees so that they represent the Egyptian population in the Netherlands. The following contradictions are taken into account:

- Gender (man or woman)
- Age (20-40 or 41-60)
- Religion (Muslim or Copt)

The contradictions are based on determined aspects that partly construct identity.

An ideal situation would be that all the eight possibilities (appendix II) would be part of the interviewees. To get in contact with Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands letters have been sent to all the fifteen Egyptian organizations in the Netherlands that are member of an umbrella organization. Important aspect to keep in mind when using interview outcomes as a source is the personal bias of the interviewer. This can partially be prevented by organizing a workshop or group discussion in which the participants create a session of their own and the interviewer is only a listener and hardly participates in the group discussion.

Besides the individual interviews the intention is to organize a group interview with Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands. The following subjects are part of the question list made as preparation for the group interview:

- Ideas about the past, current and possible future situation in Egypt
- Differences between the daily life in the Netherlands and in Egypt
- Realized developments in Egypt since the start of the political revolution
- Possible and desirable developments in Egypt
- Desirable developments that will be difficult to realize
- Influence of the situation in Egypt for the daily life in the Netherlands
- Future perspectives in the Netherlands
- Thoughts about possible remigration.

Expectation regarding the group interview is that the people present will discuss with each other about the subjects mentioned above. By this it might be possible that a more realistic idea about the past, current and future events will come forward. The participants depend on the interest that is shown during the individual interviews.

Besides the interviews a question list dispersed by email among Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands is another source to acquire information concerning the way of thinking of Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands. The following subjects were part of the question list dispersed by email:

- Personal (name, age, city, family, religion, occupation, in the Netherlands since)
- Migration reason
- (Do not) like about living in the Netherlands
- Opinion about the revolution in Egypt
- Future ideas
- Possible concerns about future developments
- Contact with 'Egypt' during the revolution
- Following the revolution
- Intentions to be part of the revolution and help rebuild Egypt
- Expectations about the role of the Muslim Brotherhood in the future
- Idea about conflict possibilities between Egyptian Copts and Egyptian Muslims
- Remigration thoughts.

Expectation is that especially younger Egyptians will react on the email question list.

This second part of the research methodology is a combination between qualitative and quantitative as well as between width and depth. The answers on the research questions concerning the case

study are reacted to on different levels, namely micro, meso or macro. The choice for one of these three is explained and accounted for in the introduction of each chapter. The case study is a clear example of an empirical research. The final conclusion is a combination between non empirical (theory on transnationalism and identity) and empirical (case study) research. The conclusions of the case study are a combination between the outcomes of the three sorts of interviews and my own insights, observations and conclusions during this research.

In this last paragraph a critical review is given regarding the in practice implemented research methodology. This has been done to estimate the contents of the case study properly. Because of this the research methodology concerning the case study is reviewed.

From the fifteen letters a few were answered. In the first reaction I was told that the former spokesman of the Egyptian umbrella organization no longer lived in the Netherlands. In the following reaction I asked if I could come in contact with someone else, I never received an answer on this question. Another reaction was from a women integration organization in Amsterdam. During the first meeting I spoke with Abier (A written summary of the interview is included as appendix III). The information was very useful and she seemed really concerned about the events in Egypt.

During this conversation I asked about the possibility to speak with her and others another time. A few weeks we had organized a group interview. Present were Abier and five other women from which two were Copt. During the group conversation Abier and one of the Copt women were talking most of the time. The interesting aspect that became clear because of this was the contradictions from the point of view from a Muslim woman and a Copt woman. Negative aspect was that the input from the other four women was minimal. This is seen negative because of the intention to create a general view about how Egyptians in the Netherlands think about, and act because of, the situation in Egypt. There was one other reason that the input from some of the Egyptian women was minimal, namely the fact that some of them had a moderate Dutch vocabulary.

Two other individual interviews took place, both with Muslim men, one in Deventer (Overijssel) and one in Neede (Gelderland). The outcomes of these interviews are comparable with the outcomes, included as written summary, of the interview I had with Abier. Worth mentioning is the difference that appears because of the living environment. In Amsterdam there exists an Egyptian society in Neede on the other hand totally not. Difference because of this is the extent to which interviewees are confronted with the situation in Egypt in daily life. When talking to another Egyptian the conversation topic soon will be the political situation in Egypt, when talking to a non Egyptian it is less likely that the political situation will be the conversation topic.

The response to the email question list was disappointing. Despite several requests and commitments the (short) answers did not lead to new insights or conclusions. As mentioned this was very disappointing, even more because I received email answers in which people seemed to be very enthusiastic and willing to help. After sending the question list (three times in some cases, though still very politely) I never heard from them again.

Overall I am content with the interview outcomes. Especially the group conversation brought interesting insights. On the one hand I had hoped for a better response (regarding making contacts), but on the other hand I am satisfied with the outcomes. They gave me more (new, unexpectedly) insights than I had thought in the beginning of this research. Final aspect I want to mention in this review is the difficulty of interviewing. Despite that this was not my first research in which interviewing was the major source; I still find it very difficult to be able to ask the right questions. And by asking the right questions obtain the necessary and desired information. Concerning this research an example is to ask the right questions to find out whether someone has changed its actions. This is difficult because in this case people often unintended changed actions. During the interviews I noticed that I find it difficult to make people aware of their possible unintended action changes.

# 4 Current affairs

In this chapter the current situation of Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands will be described. The approach is on macro level. The description gives a general idea about Egyptians in the Netherlands. On the basis of the identity paragraph in chapter two first the current identity of Egyptians in the Netherlands is described. Next the way they think about the political crisis and the way they follow the political crisis in Egypt is described.

The current affairs happening in Egypt itself are described in the societal background of this research and will not be repeated, because the most important aspects are the future events. Sometimes events happening/happened in Egypt will be described to clarify mentioned aspects.

## 4.1 Identity of Egyptians in the Netherlands

The description of the identity of Egyptians in the Netherlands in this thesis is bipolar. On the one hand social structures are mentioned and on the other hand individual aspects. The individual aspects apply to all Egyptians living in the Netherlands (exceptions excluded).

Approximately 19000 Egyptians live in the Netherlands. The biggest Egyptian community in the Netherlands is located in Amsterdam. Other cities with relatively big Egyptian communities are Haarlem and Den Haag. Most of the Egyptians in the Netherlands migrated out of Egypt because of economical reasons. Future perspectives were considered to be better in the Netherlands than in their home country. Often the men saw good employment possibilities in the Netherlands and because of this the women migrated with them. When settled in the Netherlands it often proved to be very difficult for women to become employed, especially on the same level as they were used to in Egypt. By level is meant a comparable social position as they were used to. This creates a situation in which the participation of men in the labour market is bigger than the participation of women in the labour market. Effect is that men have more contact than women, outside their private Egyptian relations in the Netherlands, through their work. Women seemed to be more interdependent with other Egyptian women or other female migrants. To connect with other female migrants was easier than to connect with Dutch women because of the comparable situation migrants mutually had. Another reason to (temporarily) migrate is to take classes in the Netherlands; these migrants are mostly young people.

There are strong mutual ties between Egyptians in the Netherlands. When living in the same neighbourhoods there is regular contact. Important way they keep in touch with each other is by all kind of associations. In 2005 an umbrella organization was founded. At present fifteen Egypt linked organizations are part of this umbrella organization. The organization has seven objectives:

- 1) Promote the completeness and equal participation by conscious integration of the Egyptians living in the Netherlands, especially women and elderly, but also youngsters and men.
- 2) Look after the interests of the in the Netherlands registered Egyptians and their families, in all areas like education, housing, employment and health care.
- 3) Activate Egyptians to participate in social intercourse and be self helpful by the solution of their problems.
- 4) Promote the accessibility of social, educational and political aspects and all the other facilities in the Netherlands to their members.
- 5) Consulting as a full partner with the Dutch governments, where this is necessary.
- 6) Inform the Egyptians registered in the Netherlands through a periodical bulletin and other media, about anything that can be in their interest to speed up and continue their integration process in the Netherlands.
- 7) Initiate activities like workshops, courses, lectures and conferences.



The Egyptian community in the Netherlands consists of Muslims and Copts. Sources show rather different total populations. This not only counts for the number of Egyptians in the Netherlands as a whole, but also for the numbers in Egypt. An average of the numbers gives the following distribution in the Netherlands: more or less 14,000 Muslims (75%) and 5.000 Copts (25%). Interesting is the fact that this distribution clearly differs from the distribution in Egypt, namely: more or less 72 million Muslims (90%) and 8 million Copts (10%). These numbers show that in Egypt the Copts are an even smaller minority than in the Netherlands.

As mentioned in chapter one identity is also about differences. The way Egyptian identity is created is partly based on the differences they experience compared to the Dutch. During interviews several aspects were mentioned more than once. Clear difference is seen between the way Egyptians and Dutch are emotionally involved. Egyptians seem to be much more and sooner emotionally involved. The Dutch seem to be more temperate, effect can be that Egyptians act more emotionally and Dutch act more rationally. In Dutch society it is customary to live by some sort of schedule, people often seem busy to keep up to the schedule. Egyptians mentioned that they are/were not used to live like this. It creates a tension (not violent) in society they did not experience in their former society (in Egypt). This difference makes it harder for Egyptians to integrate well.

The situation in the Netherlands provides future perspective for 'everyone'. This is experienced very positively by Egyptians who migrated to the Netherlands. This feeling is increased because of the situation they were used to in Egypt. The administrative situation made it almost impossible to improve their living situation.

The female interviewees all said that their expectations, before they migrated, about the Netherlands were/are not analogous with the situation they are living in. In a negative way, the actual living situation does not satisfy their expectations. In some cases it is hard for people to accept that their position in the society has changed. One woman indicated that she was well educated in Egypt and had a middle class job before she came to the Netherlands, but once here she could not find a job she was satisfied with and she did not have money for further education. The consequence of this is that she feels undervalued.

An important identity aspect that is not directly mentioned by one of the interviewees, but that is concluded is the following: the way of life in the Netherlands is normal for the Dutch. For Egyptians this way of life is everything but normal. They know how different it can be, because they were used to the situation in Egypt. To underline the difference this interview quotation, confirmed by other Egyptians present, is given: "the way the police acted before the political crisis was inhuman". It is quit unthinkable that someone living in the Netherlands will describe its living situation (or an aspect of it) as inhuman.

## **4.2 Opinions about the political crisis**

The general idea about the political crisis in Egypt is very positive. All the Egyptians in the Netherlands agree that something had to happen/change in their home country. All the Egyptians recognize the situation in Egypt as described in the media during the last six months, news flashes that are dominated with poverty, corruption and most of all the lack of a future perspective for their family and friends in Egypt. As almost all Egyptians they see Mubarak and his regime as the cause of this crisis in which Egyptians are living. The massive protests that led to the fall of Mubarak and his regime are seen as inevitable. After the happiness about the overthrown of Mubarak and his regime they started to think about the future of Egypt. On the one hand they especially think about the future possibilities for their family and friends, but at the same time almost all the Egyptians I spoke were truly concerned about the future perspective for the poorest Egyptians.

This has derived from the enormous wealth inequality in combination with the existing idea that Egypt is in the base one of the richest countries of Africa and the Middle East. They truly believe in a fairer distribution of wealth in the future. A changing administrative situation has to be the beginning

of a better future. Some sort of democracy should be implied and help Egypt forward. A democracy in which everybody is equal and corruption is something from the past.

Another aspect that definitely influenced their opinion about the political crisis and its possible outcomes is the role of the military. The military made clear that they will support the opposition in Egypt. They made clear that they would avoid violence against peaceful protesters. Because before, the military was always controlled by Mubarak this was a enormous step forward and created confidence in Egyptians living in the Netherlands concerning the safety situation. People still do fear the secret police, but they believe that the military is capable of avoiding abuses by the secret police. The secret policy is still on Mubarak's and his former regime's side.

There is a clear distinction between two groups of Egyptians living in the Netherlands with regard to the events happening in Egypt and the possible influence of these events for their identity. During the interviews an important difference came up between the way of thinking of Muslim migrants in the Netherlands and Copt migrants in the Netherlands. It became clear that they have a (partly) different opinion, especially concerning the safety of their family and friends. In the following section these differences and the causes and effects (for the opinion about the political crisis) will be made clear. The general opinion concerning the political crisis and its effects as mentioned above counts for both Muslims and Copts.

A simple explanation of the difference between the idea about the future safety situation for family and friends is that the Muslims I spoke to do not fear the current and future safety situation for their family and friends, whilst the Copts do. The Copts argued that the situation for Copts is already and will be unsafe because they are a large minority. During Mubarak's dominance disagreements between Copts and Muslims were harshly suppressed by the regime. For the Copts this meant that unless the fact they were a minority they lived in a safe environment. Now Mubarak has gone they fear that the situation will change and that their safe living environment will disappear.

Interesting aspect was the fact that the Muslims disagreed and that they do not see the unequal distribution between Muslims and Copts as a possible problem factor in the (near) future. There is another important aspect concerning these differences, namely the place family and friends of Egyptian migrants in the Netherlands live. One Copt woman said that two of her nieces (aged 14/15) living in Cairo were harassed by young Muslim men. According news flashes problems between Muslims and Copts do occur in Cairo. Another Muslim woman, who had disagreed about the negative safety situation idea, mentioned the situation in Alexandria her family and friends described to her. There are no problems between Copts and Muslims in Alexandria at all she told. According to the book written by Weissink (2011) based on his experiences during his correspondence time in Egypt, as a journalist for a Dutch newspaper, the last four year it is likely to assume that there are tensions between Muslims and Copts all over Egypt. The way in which these tensions might lead to an outburst of violence differs from day to day and city to city. Indeed, an event in Cairo narrated to me by Meijer make the complexity of the situation clear: fundamentalist Muslims burned down a Copt church, almost immediately after the fire was extinguished both Copts and Muslims started to rebuild and restore the church. This example makes clear that within Muslim and Copt societies there are lots of different beliefs. The different experiences create different ideas about the future, more about this will be addressed in chapter four.

### **4.3 Following the political crisis**

This paragraph describes the way Egyptian migrants in the Netherlands follow the political crisis in their home country Egypt. Most important way to keep in touch with Egypt is through family and friends. Direct contact through telephone and Skype (free telephone on the internet) is the way Egyptians prefer to keep in touch. In most of the cases family and friends of a certain individual (logically the same situation counts for family of this individual in the Netherlands) have their family and friends living in Egypt in a certain region. This means that the information they gain is regionally

based and by this does not have to count for Egypt entirely. As mentioned in the previous paragraph this can create different views on the general situation in Egypt.

Young people use Facebook on the internet as an important source to communicate with peers in Egypt. The fact that Facebook makes it easy to visualize by adding photographs makes it popular among young people. Another reason is the fact that, unlike telephone communication, you are able to send a message without someone receiving it immediately. This aspect is comparable with email and SMS (short message service). Through the interviews and its outcomes I conclude that this way of communication is the most important source concerning opinion formulation. The fact that it is very personal makes it for the interviewees very trustworthy. Important to keep in mind during this case study is the fact that personal communication can easily lead to subjectivity by the interviewees. During informal personal communication it is likely that positive aspects gain more attention than negative aspects.

A second way Egyptians in the Netherlands connect with Egypt is by regular visits to their home country. When visiting Egypt they visit family and friends. The visits are thereby also regionally bounded. Family and friends often live in the same region in Egypt. A visit to Egypt is mostly planned as a vacation. The extents with which visits are made mostly depend on the individual/family economical situation. Some interviewees mentioned that they prefer to visit family and friends in Egypt more often. Their economical capability is/was not sufficient to do so. Visits the other way around were barely mentioned in the interviews. Most likely family and friends in Egypt do not have the financial capability to finance a visit to the Netherlands. Visa aspects can also be a restriction, visiting the Netherlands coming from Egypt will be more difficult than the other way around.

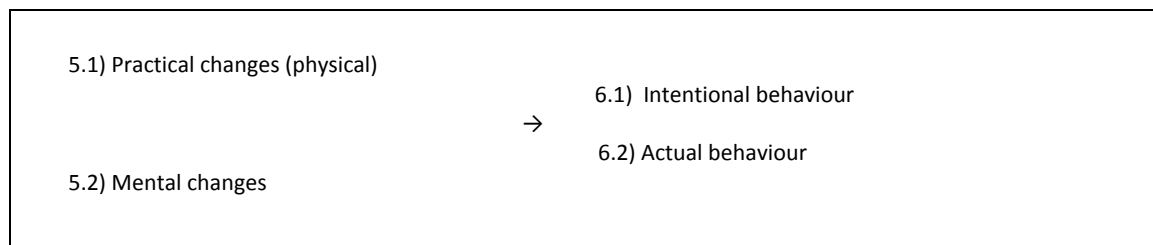
The third way of keeping up with the situation in Egypt is by media such as news broadcasts, radio broadcasts, websites and coverage's concerning the political situation in Egypt. Besides Dutch media, most Egyptians in the Netherlands follow regional (North Africa and the Middle East) and Egyptian media. Egyptians prefer Egyptian media above the Dutch media for two reasons, firstly the fact that they prefer to listen to media in their native tongue because their knowledge of the native tongue is still better than their knowledge of the Dutch language. Second the fact that the media in Egypt are closer to the actual events than foreign media, because of this it is likely that their information and sources are more reliable.

Another aspect, not mentioned by interviewees, can be that news broadcasts in Egypt are more emotional (reporters will be more involved) compared to the more rational Dutch news broadcasts. The more emotional news broadcasts are probably closer to the nature of Egyptians in the Netherlands.

# 5 Effects of the political crisis in Egypt for Egyptians in the Netherlands

In this chapter the effects of the political crisis in Egypt for Egyptians living in the Netherlands are described. First the changes in practice (physical) are described and second the mental changes. The changes are based on individuals, but in order of the final objective (a general conclusion) of this research it is attempted to create a general view. The way Egyptians in the Netherlands are influenced by the political crisis in Egypt is very diverse. The most important influence aspect is contact with family and friends; because of this the influence is very regionally determined. Nevertheless, it is attempted to create practical and thought change conclusions that are valid for the Egyptians in the Netherlands as a population group. This makes that the information is collected on micro level and is used in this research on meso level.

For the clarity of the coming two chapters a schedule is added to give insight in the way the coming two chapters are related to each other:



## 5.1 Practical changes (physical)

In this paragraph point by point practical (physical) changes in the daily life of Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands will be described:

- Conversation topic

The frequency of mutual contact between Egyptians living in the Netherlands is the same as before the beginning of the crisis. However what did change is the subject of conversation, where before the start of the political crisis daily events was the main subject of conversation, this has now shifted to the political crisis. Especially the changing safety situation is an important subject of conversation. First thing Egyptians in the Netherlands want to know when having contact with family and friends is their current safety situation in Egypt. Besides that they are curious about the actual political changes. Political changes regarding Mubarak's regime, what they want to know is who is actually governing the country at that moment. Persecution of Mubarak's regime also has their interest. Persecution of Mubarak's regime can mean the definitive end of decades of oppression.

- News broadcasts

A change took place in the way Egyptians in the Netherlands follow the daily events in Egypt. Before the crisis the only way they (could have) followed the daily events in Egypt was through contact with family and friends. Since the crisis started a shift took place. They now intensively follow what is happening in Egypt. Through various media they follow the developments in Egypt, especially concerning the administrative developments and the public safety situation. Concerning the safety situation interest especially goes out to the region where family and friends are living. Broadcasts that are followed are produced by Dutch, Egyptian and Arabic media. One of the channels is 'Channel Tahrir', a new channel which has been set up during the protests, named after the square where the massive protests began (tahrir means freedom).

- Contact with family and friends

An aspect mentioned by all of the interviewees is that since the beginning of the political crisis in North Africa and the Middle East and specifically in Egypt contact with family and friends has increased. Most common ways to keep in contact with family and friends is by telephone and internet, Skype is very often used to make telephone calls and younger people often use Facebook. Contact by telephone is popular because of the direct reactions, questions are immediately answered. Popular aspect of Facebook is that pictures and videos of the situation in Egypt are shown. In some cases Egyptians in the Netherlands recognize street views and by this are able to imagine the current situation in their home country. Besides pictures and videos reactions of other involved Egyptians can be seen on Facebook. It is a possibility to participate in the political revolution in Egypt.

## 5.2 Mental changes

In this paragraph point by point mental changes of Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands will be described:

- Pride

All the interviewed Egyptians told me that they are proud that the Egyptian population has been capable of starting the revolution and finally achieving the overthrow of Mubarak and his regime. Egyptians in the Netherlands still have strong ties with their home country and that makes that they are proud. Despite that they live in the Netherlands, most of the Egyptians also see themselves still as Egyptians and by this as members of the Egyptian society in Egypt. Special attention concerning this pride went to family and friends who had played a role during the revolution so far.

- Satisfaction

The Dutch Egyptian population is pleased with the current developments in Egypt. They are especially satisfied that on such a short notice actual administrative changes are realized. They are also pleased with the current role of the military (the fact that they do not use any force against peaceful protesters) and the fact that the secret police is no longer in charge of public areas. These aspects are seen as a precursor of the decrease of the corrupt administrative situation in Egypt. They mentioned one negative effect of these improving aspects and that is the missing safety supervisor at this moment. Because the military keeps distance and the secret police is no longer in charge, oversight in public areas is missing and by this the safety situation can decline.

- Economic future

Several interviewees made clear that they potentially see Egypt as one of the richest countries in the area. As mentioned the current and future developments will decrease corruption. Corruption is seen as the most important cause of the unequal distribution of wealth. The combination of economic potential and decreasing corruption ensures that the Egyptians in the Netherlands have faith in an honest distribution of wealth in the future. The enormous poverty within the Egyptian population will decrease and improve the self-image of Egyptians.

During the interviews it became clear that concerning the following two aspects a dichotomy exists between Muslims and Copts. To make sure this dichotomy is clear the aspects are divided in two sub paragraphs, namely Copts and Muslims.

- Achieved goals
  - Copts

Actual achieved goals had an enormous influence on the way people think. Actual changes mean progress. Major actual change is the resignation of Mubarak's regime. But progress can take place in two ways, positive and negative. In general the achieved goals in Egypt during the political crisis are seen as positive changes by the Copt Egyptians in the Netherlands. The changing situation in Egypt means that the living situation has improved for Muslims, but for the Copts a problem has arisen. During the regime lead by Mubarak the peace between (fundamentalist) Muslims and Copts was achieved with an iron fist. This created a safe situation for the minority Copt population. The disappearance of the iron fist is already noticed in practice (see church example described before).

Copt Egyptians in the Netherlands are worried about the safety situation for Copt family and friends living in Egypt because of this situation.

- Muslims

All of the Muslim interviewees were very positive about the achieved goals till now. Most of their family and friends are Muslim as well. One of the achieved goals in Egypt that is very positive for the Muslim population is that there is more freedom of speech concerning religion now. Furthermore there are not yet achieved goals that are specifically positive for Muslims, but compared to the Copts a positive aspect is that the Muslims do not have negative outcomes so far. For the Egyptian Muslims living in the Netherlands this situation makes that they feel comfortable concerning the safety situation of their family and friends in Egypt.

- Future perspective

- Copts

In the beginning the Copts saw the future perspective very positively. But during the political crisis more and more news regarding dissensions between Copts and Muslims reached them. One of the interviewees told that family in Cairo mentioned that two young nieces were harassed by young Muslim men during a telephone call. A message of this kind was never heard before the political crisis. A message like this in combination with news broadcasts about disagreements between Copts and Muslims decrease positive thoughts about the future perspective. Besides this they told her that she should not come to Egypt now, because her living style (clothes for example) would not be accepted by (some) Muslims these days. These events in combination with the fact that the Copts are an enormous minority in Egypt create a feeling of uncertainty for Egyptian Copts in the Netherlands: uncertainty about the current situation, but also about the future situation in Egypt. An important aspect that creates this uncertainty about the future is the possible changing political situation. Till now the Muslim Brotherhood was excluded from participation in politics. Some Copts fear that through administrative changes the Muslim Brotherhood will become one of the determining political parties. The worst case scenario for Copts is that the Muslim Brotherhood (or another Islam based party) will become so powerful that the Sharia will be introduced. The Sharia is an Islam based religious ethic. There are different variants, from very strict to more modernity applied (Berger, 2005). Fact is that any kind of Sharia will in practice very likely come in conflict with the lifestyle of Copts.

- Muslims

There is a clear dichotomy between the future ideas (concerning successful developments) of Muslim Egyptians and Copt Egyptians. Most of the Muslims have a bright future perspective; one important reason is the fact that they do not fear the Muslim Brotherhood. They believe that the Muslim Brotherhood (as a political party) will actually conduct a moderate Muslim policy. The Muslims I spoke to in the Netherlands are convinced that a possible future Muslim majority government will not plead for the introduction of the Sharia. An example mentioned during a discussion between a Muslim woman and a Copt woman is that the Muslim woman was convinced that wearing a scarf will not become an obligation in the future, but the Copt woman strongly doubted this.

There is a clear dichotomy between the ideas about the current developments as well as the future development between Copts and Muslims as well as between people with family and friends in Cairo or another city in Egypt. In for example Alexandria peacefulness has returned in the streets, but in Cairo the situation is still unsettled. For Egyptians in the Netherlands with family and friends in Alexandria this creates a feeling of composure, but for those with family and friends in Cairo their mood stays anxious. This is one of the regional aspects that are reason to let this part of the research be on meso level.

An observation of crucial importance I made during the interviews is the following: when positive events/happenings take place the confidence of the people in question that positive developments in the future will take place increases. When positive developments take place people are intended to believe it is likely that it will go one the same way. At the same time these same events/happenings

can be seen as negative by other people. In this case the confidence of these people, that positive developments will take place, decreases. Another aspect that is of importance is that when negative developments take place people intent to believe it is likely that it will go on in the same way.

# 6 Outcomes

The outcomes for Egyptians living in the Netherlands described in this chapter are an effect of the practical and thought changes caused by the political crisis in Egypt. In the first paragraph intentional behaviour is described and in the second paragraph actual behaviour. Intentional behaviour can deviate from the actual behaviour an actor demonstrates. The intentional and actual behaviour is based on individuals, but in order of the final objective (a general conclusion) of this research it is attempted to create a general view. The changes mentioned in this chapter are on an individual basis or common for Egyptians in the Netherlands. The information is collected on micro level and is used in this research on meso level.

## 6.1 Intentional behaviour

Intentional behaviour is often based more on emotions and can be seen as wishes an actor has. Point by point the various aspects of intentional behaviour as outcome of the political crisis are described:

- 'Rebuilding' Egypt

All the interviewees mentioned that they have the intention to help rebuild Egypt after the political revolution. The way in which they think they can help is very diverse and till now very indistinct. The diversity is caused by the different capabilities people have and the indistinct is caused by the ignorance people have according to what is necessary for Egypt at this moment. Despite this the interviewees are convinced they can be helpful now or in the near future and they can be part of positive developments that will make Egypt a better place to live.

- Visit Egypt

The intention to visit Egypt, especially family and friends, regularly is not new but has increased since the political revolution. Important is the financial capability. Some Egyptians living in the Netherlands do not have the financial capability to finance a visit to Egypt. The reason the wish to visit Egypt increased during the political crisis is the fact that Egyptians wish to see and experience the current situation and developments by themselves. When they do they think they will get an idea about possibilities to help develop Egypt in the future. Another reason is that actual being there gives them the idea they really participate in the political revolution in Egypt.

A Copt Egyptian woman noticed that family and friends told her that the situation at this moment in Cairo is not safe for her. They fear the fact that she is 'too western'. The increased tensions between Muslims and Copts in Cairo make that the situation might not be safe for her. Still she has the intention to visit Egypt as soon as the situation has normalized.

- Financial support

An outcome of an existing intention is to support family and friends financially. An extra motivation to send money is the possible changing development possibilities in the near future as an outcome of the political revolution. Changing development possibilities can create a situation in which family and friends of Egyptians living in the Netherlands are able to invest received finances. For example invest in small retail without corrupt interventions. This might structural improve their economical living situation. In case development possibilities do change financial support can lead to a better living situation for family and friends. A brief practical example is that when corruption decreases money spent corrupt in the past, can be invested to develop in the near future.

- Remigration

Some interviewees indicated the wish to return to Egypt as soon as possible. Two main reasons were given; first because of the on-going political revolution, people believe in a better Egypt in the (near) future and secondly the fact that living in the Netherlands does not satisfy the expectations they had at the time they immigrated to the Netherlands. They believe that in the (near) future the living conditions in Egypt will be better than the conditions they live in nowadays in the Netherlands.



Other interviewees mentioned that they have the intention to return in the future. It seems they want to leave the possibility open to remigrate in the future. The political revolution and the expected improvements concerning the living conditions in Egypt amplify this possibility.

- Social development in the Netherlands

As long as Egyptians still live in the Netherlands they intent to become full members of the Dutch society. The fact they integrate actively can be concluded from the large participation in organizations meant to promote the integration of Egyptians in the Netherlands and is also shown by the fact that most of the Egyptians in the Netherlands are able to provide their own income. Another aspect is the fact that the Egyptians I spoke to speak or study the Dutch language. The women I spoke to attend the Cleopatra foundation in Amsterdam. One or two days a week their kids go to childcare over there. The women take turns guiding and in the meanwhile they study the Dutch language together.

## 6.2 Actual behaviour

Actual behaviour is based more on rational thoughts: actual behaviour is actually demonstrated by actors. Point by point the various aspects concerning actual behaviour as outcome of the political crisis are described.

- 'Rebuilding' Egypt

Till now the Egyptians in the Netherlands are not capable of actually doing something. Another way some of them (mostly young Egyptians) are trying to help is by visiting Egypt and seeing what they can do over there. They hope to contribute to political developments. They try to find contact with key persons of the political revolution through existing contacts to find out whether and how they can participate. At the moment the political developments in Egypt are progressing very slowly. This makes it more difficult to actually contribute, even more difficult when staying in the Netherlands.

- Visit Egypt

In case it is financially possible the interviewees told me they make a trip to Egypt. Main visit reason is to see how family and friends are doing. Especially the young Egyptians who are capable of visiting Egypt try to contribute to the political revolution actively. They try to participate as mentioned above. Several interviewees had to cancel plans to visit Egypt, because they could not afford it financially. This situation is not new, but different in the current situation is the increased desire, because of the political revolution, to visit family and friends in Egypt.

- Financial support

Money is sent from time to time, but again it depends on their financial capabilities. Because of this a structural financial contribution is not a possibility. When one is visiting Egypt others try to send (material) gifts along.

- Remigration

To see actual behavioural changes regarding remigration it seems to be too soon. In a reaction on one of the letters I sent to the Egyptian organizations a member told me that their former spokesman immediately had left for Egypt to contribute to the political revolution. It is his intention to settle permanently in Egypt.

A Copt interviewee who wants to remigrate as soon as possible is still in the Netherlands for two reasons. She does not have the financials to build up a new life in Egypt. The second reason currently arose: the unsafe public situation in Cairo for Copt women. She was actually warned by family and friends not to come to Egypt at this moment, because of her being a (western) Copt woman.

- Social development in the Netherlands

On the one hand some are trying and succeeding to integrate in Dutch society. Others do not succeed, their educating is often not sufficient and/or they do not speak Dutch well enough. When trying to improve these aspects again the financials are a problem. They can not afford a sufficient education.

Another aspect that makes it difficult to participate in the (existing) Dutch society is the fact that most of the Egyptians in the Netherlands mostly socialize with fellow Egyptians or other migrants.

# 7 Conclusion

In this final chapter we return to the original research question and produce an answer to this. The original research question was: how does the political crisis in Egypt influence the identity of Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands?

According to Giddens (1984) structures give form and shape to social life, but are not the form and shape itself. Structures exist through the actions of actors. These actions are conditioned by structures and at the same time create and recreate these structures. The agency an actor has determines the actions of this actor. And these actions conducted by an actor determine the identity of an actor (Giddens, 1984). This means that a possible changing identity of Egyptians living in the Netherlands depends on the actions these Egyptians in the Netherlands undertake as an effect of the political revolution in their home country Egypt.

The most important aspect that has influence on the actions of Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands is the information they gain about the political crisis. The influence the political revolution in Egypt has on Egyptians in the Netherlands is clearly divided. In general the Egyptians in the Netherlands can be divided into two groups, namely Muslims and Copts. Information sources besides media (Dutch, Egyptian and others) are family and friends. Because of the close and trusted relationships between Egyptians in the Netherlands and their family and friends this source is the most determining one. Family and friend relations often take place in the same religious group. The political revolution has different outcomes so far, as well as future expectations, for Muslims and Copts. Through contact this dichotomy is also seen between the Egyptians living in the Netherlands. All the Egyptian interviewees spoke very positive about the current political revolution in Egypt. They truly believe in a better future. A future without corruption and with an honest distribution of the wealth they all believe Egypt has. The fact that the military has chosen the side of the civilian population since the beginning of the political revolution increases the confidence in future peaceful developments. The fact that most of the Egyptians in the Netherlands still have contact with family and friends in Egypt creates extra interest concerning the political revolution. The interest Egyptians in the Netherlands have for the political revolution in Egypt is more intense than the interest Dutch people have for the political revolution in Egypt.

The current events in Egypt and the way Egyptians in the Netherlands follow and think about these events led to practical and mental changes by Egyptians living in the Netherlands. Most of the interviewees mentioned that contact with family and friends in Egypt increased since the end of January 2011. Especially direct telephone calls are an important way to keep in touch with family and friends. Since the beginning of the political revolution the subject of conversations with other Egyptians, in the Netherlands and family and friends in Egypt, is above all the political revolution. When having contact with family and friends in Egypt they want to know what the actual situation is. They are interested in administrative changes on national level but also in the events taking place at regional level. These regional events directly influence the living situation of family and friends. There are clear mental change differences between Muslims and Copts. The political revolution in general is seen positively by both Copts and Muslims. Regarding the public safety in Egypt now and in the future the Muslim society has a more positive idea about this than the Copt society. During interviews it became clear that the Muslims are more positive about future developments than the Copts. Negative thoughts by Copts are caused by some hostile events which occurred between Muslims and Copts the last few months. Reason for Copts to fear this kind of events more than Muslims is the fact that the Copts are a minority compared with the Muslim population in Egypt.

Practical and mental changes by Egyptians living in the Netherlands finally led to changing intentional and actual behaviour. Intentional behaviour is often based more on emotional thoughts than rational thoughts. Actual behaviour is often based more on rational than emotional behaviour.

Important intention almost all the Egyptians living in the Netherlands have is that they want to contribute to the political revolution and more specific to future developments in Egypt. They do not know yet how they can participate in the administrative developments. This is partly because the actual changes in Egypt self have not yet taken place widely. Other reasons are the fact that participating from a distance is very difficult and that they do not know what kind of help is needed in their home country. They are not pleased by this situation but they seemed to understand the difficulties. Egyptians living in the Netherlands try to support family and friends; this depends on their financial capability. Another way they hope to contribute is by visiting Egypt. The way in which this intentional behaviour is transformed into actual behaviour depends on the financial capability. Another intention most of the Egyptians expressed was to remigrate to Egypt in the (near) future. On the one hand this intention is derived from the current events and expected positive developments in Egypt in the future and on the other hand is derived from the dissatisfaction with the current living situation in the Netherlands.

Interviewees said that today the Egyptians in Egypt still see Egyptians in the Netherlands as very successful, because they realised the dream to live in the Netherlands. In reality many Egyptians in the Netherlands have to struggle (mostly financial) to have a decent living. If in the future the situation in Egypt actually improves and wealth is distributed equal a situation can exist in which Egyptians living in Egypt have a better (connected to identity the term successful) life than Egyptians living in the Netherlands. This would mean a shift of the current situation. Related to identity this would mean a shift of roles. To clarify this hypothesis a comparable situation is described: *The situation of Turkish migrants in the Netherlands. They had a high social position in their country of origin, but since the situation in Turkey started to (economically) develop a shift took place. The last decade the support from Turkish migrants in the Netherlands to their family and friends in Turkey decreased. In some cases they can not afford it anymore and on the other hand friends and family do not need the support anymore because the (economic) development that took place. This means a shift of positions in society, especially noticed at the moment Turkish migrants visit their home country. They are not the rich and successful they used to be anymore (In Turkije, pers. comm., April 3<sup>rd</sup>).*

The case study shows that Egyptians in the Netherlands figuratively are living between their home country Egypt and their host country the Netherlands. This figurative space can be seen as a so called third space. This is amplified because of what they experience in the third space is never experienced by the Dutch in the Netherlands or Egyptians in Egypt. On the one hand the freedom they experience in the Netherlands is unknown for Dutch people, because Dutch people never experienced life in a dictatorial regime the way it was in Egypt. And on the other hand Egyptians living in Egypt still see the Netherlands as a state of their dreams, but the Egyptians living in the Netherlands experienced something different than they expected when arriving in the Netherlands. This third space is part of the Dutch society and by this part of the social structures the Dutch society exists of. Regarding to the structuration theory of Giddens changes in the third space will mean a changing social structure. A changing third space will be caused by actions of actors that are part of this third space. According to Giddens changes in this third space not only affect this third space but also other surroundings (structures) and by these surroundings also the actions of actors living in these surroundings.

Till now the actual actions of Egyptians in the Netherlands as an outcome of the political revolution in Egypt are limited. Increased contact with family and friends and intensively monitoring the current affairs are the most important changes in the actual behaviour of Egyptians living in the Netherlands. According to the research question this means that the identity change of Egyptians living in the Netherlands as an outcome of the political revolution in their home country Egypt is limited.

The intentional behaviour however has strongly changed. With in mind the possibility that this intentional behaviour can transform into actual behaviour in the (near) future the following interesting insight occurs: an event in the home country of migrants, living in the Netherlands, can

influence the identity of these migrants. As described in the theory a changing identity of an actor has influence on other actors in the direct environment. That means again changing identity and by this the environment, in which the identity of actors is changing, increases. This means that despite the enormous geographical distance events take place, these events can have influence in the Dutch society. Especially when an event takes place in a region that has relatively many emigrants living in the Netherlands. According to this the Dutch government would do well to take this into account when making, and debating about, integration policies. Not only in favour of the migrants living in the Netherlands but equally to all indigenous.

# 8 Review

In this chapter I will critically review the process that led to this thesis. Two main requirements were given by the start of the realisation of the research plan. The subject had to be part of human geography and had to have a link with a conflict. During the start of the process the political crisis in the Middle East and North Africa was current. The political crisis in Egypt actually culminated. Idea was to find out what this would mean for Egyptians living in the Netherlands. You have just read what this has brought. The start of the process was immediately a very interesting one. When writing the societal background the enormous diversity of this topic became clear. Again I noticed how little I (many of us) actually know about the situation in the Middle East and North Africa. So many actors are involved in these conflicts and by this so many different opinions and ideas exist.

Next phase in the process was to create a theoretical frame for this thesis. Soon the concepts of transnationalism and identity became important. With the structuration theory of Giddens these concepts became the theoretical framework. I think these aspects finally fit in well in this thesis. Most difficult was to produce a workable definition of the concept identity. With help and by keep trying finally I produced a reasonable definition. Looking back now what might have been done better could have been to link the concept of identity more with actual behaviour by giving more examples of identity in human geography; existing examples or hypothetical examples close to this study.

What is quit interesting in this thesis I think is the link between the structuration theory and the current events. The conclusion that events elsewhere in the world can have influence in the Dutch society is interesting and important, especially in human geography. Besides that I personally prefer to deal with current events.

Most important way to collect information was interviewing Egyptian migrants living in the Netherlands. In order of this thesis a review of this process has been described at the end of Chapter 3.

The next phase of case study was processing the collected information. Overall I am satisfied with this process. Problem that occurred was the danger of going into the field of psychology. After the last feedback I have tried to restore this as much as possible. Looking forward more important is how this happened. I think that the main reason has been incorrect expectations. I had expected to be able to conclude more actual behavioural changes. But in fact most important changes that took place were changes regarding intentional behaviour. The separation between behaviour (and especially intentional) in human geography and psychology is very thin. I think at some times I have assumed things to quickly. Instead of staying close to what was said during interviews I created hypotheses'. Partly because of the feedback I think I turned it around to human geography adequate. Overall I found producing this thesis very interesting and instructive. The process of creating a useful and correct theoretical frame for the research was partly new. Now even more than in the beginning I realize it is a value and because of the process that led to this thesis I think I am able now to produce an interesting and workable theoretical frame that adds value for my master theses.

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# Appendix I

Name interviewee: R. Meijer

Function: Researcher CLingendeal institute, researcher RU

Date: 24 may 2011

Location: Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen, Erasmusgebouw 17.17

Subject: political crisis in Egypt, current situation and (near) future.

## *Current situation:*

- Situation in Egypt is different from the situation in other states in North Africa and the Middle East, because press freedom, strikes exists for already ten years. Another aspect is the existing political structure, the base for the future situation. This is also one of the reasons the protests were able to be so massive.

The mentioned aspects can be seen as the opposite of the situation in sectarian states as Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. States where the protests do not really expand.

- Moslim Brotherhood arises. Nowadays it is free to start a political movement. Mubarak said it was free, but the control was corrupt. The start of a political party different from Mubaraks NDP always got a negative verdict. The competition between different parties might (will) have a positive influence in Egypt.

- There is a new parliament. This new parliament is going to decide about the constitution. This is an important aspect that directly influence and change the situation in Egypt.

- In a dictatorship people tend to be very passive. Now the administrative situation is changing from a dictatorship in a more free form (democracy??) people are starting to be more active. Problem that does occur is that this changing activity of people at the moment leads to a form of anarchy. Also caused by the fact that there is no policy force at the moment anymore. The police 'belong' to Mubarak and also lost it's power. Most mentioned problem is the dichotomy between Coptic and Islamic civilians (burning churches, but also rebuild immediately by the military and some others and anti-demonstrations at the Tahrir square). 400.000 people are member of so called thugs, for ideals or money.

- Mubarak supporters are of course still living in Egypt. What now occurs is an enormous dichotomy. This can easily lead to new violent situations.

- Egypt is a poor country, especially compared with some other countries in the surrounding. The moral is very positive though, that an advantage compared to other countries in the region. It improves the position towards other states in the region. Besides that Egypt is quit known in Europe (mostly because of the tourism), positive in reaching the media and others.

- As we speak (and in combination with the changing constitution) law, legislation and press freedom is changed.

- Existing (Mubarak period) mechanisms and instruments to control the population are disappearing and with this corruption and fraud as well.

- Silent revolutions are taking place all over Egypt. Think of companies and others. In all the layers of the government.



- Disappearing corruption might contribute to an increasing economy.
- Egypt is not a total dictatorship (partly because of the relationship with Egypt), long traditions of protests and strikes.
- Coming now: independent unions.
- Changing relation with Egypt. Probably the relation with Palestine will improve. America unhappy, as well as Egypt of course.

*Diverse notes:*

- Western media is in general quite negative about the progress that has been in Egypt. Some actually already (4/5 months) talk about failure.
- For an independent state it is essential that the state security is guaranteed and that there is not corruption. Existing institution can be helpful.

*Arising question:*

- position of women?
- in the Netherlands Coptic or Islamic Egyptians in the majority?
- current the situation under the Egyptian civilians is very enthusiastic, but for how long? What if changes take place slowly?
- what is the migrants history?
- role of media for Egyptians living in the Netherlands?
- what do the Egyptians self expect of the (near) future?

*Possible interesting sources:*

- magazine al-ahram
- magazine al-masri al yaum
- IMES (instituut migratie)
- Pauw en Witteman ('dansende vrouw op tafel')
- Nieuwsuur, tegenlicht, etc.

# Appendix II

The following contradictions are taken into account:

- Gender (man or woman)
- Age (20-40 or 41-60)
- Religion (Muslim or Christian/Copt )

The following composition would be ideal:

	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Religion</b>
<b>1</b>	Man	20-40	Muslim
<b>2</b>	Man	20-40	Christian
<b>3</b>	Man	41-60	Muslim
<b>4</b>	Man	41-60	Christian
<b>5</b>	Woman	20-40	Muslim
<b>6</b>	Woman	20-40	Christian
<b>7</b>	Woman	41-60	Muslim
<b>8</b>	Woman	41-60	Christian

# Appendix III

## Interview notes

*Name:* Abier M.

*Sex:* Woman

*Age:* +/- 40

*City:* Amsterdam

*Family:* Husband, children?

*Religion:* Muslim

*Occupation:* Leading member of the Cleopatra Stichting in Amsterdam Noord, the Cleopatra Stichting is divided into four local organizations (all in Amsterdam Noord)

*In the Netherlands since:* 1991

*Migration reason:*

Migration of her husband, he migrated because of economical reasons. The administrative situation in Egypt made the future situation far from prospective.

*Expectation at the time:*

Like everybody in Africa, they wanted to go to Europe. Freedom, possibilities and opportunities to improve living conditions.

*Current thoughts:*

She is satisfied with her current living situation, but when she arrived in the Netherlands she felt very lonely. After a while she made friends (first Moroccans and Egyptians and later also Dutch) and the lonely feeling disappeared. Nowadays she is used the life is in the Netherlands.

*Difference with non Egyptians:*

Everybody in the Netherlands seems to be busy. Things are more serious. In Egypt things go a lot easier. To concrete: going to Egypt is really vacation.

Egyptian people are more sensitive. Difference between rationality (Dutch) and emotionality (Egyptian).

*Links with Egypt:*

Family, friends

*How follow(ed) the political situation in Egypt:*

Internet (sites, facebook, skype) , television (channel Tahrir, new channel since the protests), telephone contact (mostly with her mother, 3 to 4 times a week)

*Egypt thoughts pre political crisis:*

Very strict, stringent policy, no opportunities, un fare economical situation (all the wealth for the elite). Thought is that Egypt is a very rich country, one of the richest in North Africa.

She literally used the Dutch word 'onmenselijk' to describe to way the police was acting before the revolution.

*Current Egypt Thoughts:*

Everything is better. Improvements already took place. The situation will keep improving. Important aspect that creates a sense of security is the fact that the military is with the people and the policy has lost its power.

She would like to contribute for a better Egypt. How in practice is quit unclear so far.

*Expectation future Egypt:*

Will keep improving and the benefits of the economy will be distributed honestly. Closing the gap between poor (lot of people) and rich (few people).

*Influence current events in Egypt for daily life and how:*

Increasing contact with family and friends in Egypt. It is something her surrounding is talking about a lot, it is a very important aspect in her daily life. As well as a very important discussion topic.

*Remigration thoughts:*

-

Remarks interviewee:

She seems enormously proud at the revolution going on in Egypt. She sees it as a very important and necessary happening and she seems to give extra attention to the poor people. That is probably one of the reasons why she is so convinced about a future in which the benefits are distributed honestly.

Site information:

Abier thinks the relation between Egyptian migrants in the Netherlands who Muslim ore Christian is 50-50.