Hoax News Websites at the Crossroad between Popular and Political

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyze satirical hoax news websites in relation to local, regional and global mobilizations. To achieve this, a corpus of three websites is selected: *The Onion* (USA), *Zaytung* (Turkey) and *El Koshary Today* (Egypt). The objective is to retrace the history of online content productions before, during and after the movements Gezi, Tahrir and Occupy. This study aims to understand and analyze the phenomenon of satirical newspaper websites through evolution of topics and subjects, use of language, participatory content production, differences and similarities between selected cases.

Keywords

Art, activism, Occupy, Gezi, Tahrir, language, internet, aesthetic experience, dissensus.

Introduction

The essence of our approach lies in our desire to demonstrate the links between everyday life, the arts, politics and the media. There is a "continuity" between these domains as many philosophers and writers claim, among them Dewey, Rancière, Baudrillard, Foucault. We study the links between political events and online cultural productions, and question the digital arts, and internet aesthetics, through an analysis of selected websites in connection to the movements that broke out after the great recession of 2008 to end 2013.

We have witnessed the transformation of the industrial society towards a post-industrial society and the digital revolution has brought about upheavals, especially in the field of communication and the media, but also in professional and social life. Even the smartphones have changed our hours of working, reading and answering mails, or our relation to public and private space. In parallel we've witnessed social movements around the world, and they are still popping-up somewhere. The causes and consequences of these mobilizations are diverse, but there are important points in common. Castells lists them as follows: "It was not just poverty, or the economic crisis, or the lack of democracy that caused the multifaceted rebellion. Of course, all these poignant manifestations of an unjust society and of an undemocratic polity were present in the protests. But it was primarily the humiliation provoked by the cynicism and arrogance of those in power, be it financial, political or cultural, that brought together those who turned fear into outrage and outrage into hope for a better humanity" (Castells, 2012, 2-3).

This atmosphere of struggle has also increased the productivity and creativity of the opposition and protesters. Their reactions on the street and web were intelligent and ironic; they had created their own language, codes. Those "new modalities of action" find their roots in the events of Seattle 1990, and in several collective actions through the 1990s and 2000s. Regarding online productions, we may count hoax news websites, the fictitious personalities, fake accounts of real personalities, piracy, modified posters (or memes), which we mention in our doctoral research. One of these productions, a common phenomenon of our "post-industrial" societies, hoax news websites, questions the realities of everyday life and politics. They draw attention to the role of the media in misinformation and credibility of the mass media. They transform or divert the articles on a humorous register, as the *situationists* would do. Despite some differences, these sites have a collective, participatory culture and a common language.

Satirical hoax sites exist in several countries, here we opt for a comparison between three cases: *Zaytung* (Turkey), *The Onion* (United States), *El Koshary Today* (Egypt). How should we read this type of production? Who are the producers or co-producers of the content, and who are the "consumers"? How do the production and dissemination processes work? What are the peculiarities of their language(s), what are the similarities with the codes of the mass media? Is it a community language? What are their relations with social and political events? In response, our methodology will be to conduct data analysis and interview the founders and publishers of these platforms.

Truth and Trust Towards the Media

For Foucault, "history is like a sequence of fictions, as truths change according to the structures of power, [...]. Truth is a function of language (that is, culture), which is created by humans, [...]. Each culture builds its own version of what is true (and what is not), and the system to recognize it. "Truth" is a "system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and exploitation of states"; which is connected "by a circular relation to the systems of power that produce and support it, and to the effects of power that incite and redirect it" (Foucault, 1976). From this point of view, Jones Gray and

Thompson's remarks about satire take on their full meaning: "the unique ability of satire ... is to tell the truth to power" (Gray, Jones, and Thompson, 2009, 6).

In recent years, especially since the 9/11 attacks and the US intervention in Iraq, trust in traditional media has diminished. According to a poll by The Gallup Organization, only 40% of Americans would trust the media. Another survey conducted in the United Kingdom reveals that the most read newspapers would be the least reliable. Jones and Baym wrote for UK: "As we have seen in the past decade on nearly every issue of public significance—from the invasion of Iraq in 2003, to the economic crisis of 2008, to the health care debate of 2009—when we have deeply needed critical information and reasoned debate, the most influential sources of television news instead provided a steady and often debilitating diet of distraction, distortion, spectacle, and spin." (Jones and Baym, 2010, 281). According to Pew research, among young Americans aged 18-29, the results are even more significant: they would be 5% to read the print media. The proportion of Americans who view information on a mobile device has increased from 54% in 2013 to 72% today. People aged 50 and over (22%) would give more confidence to the national press than 18-29 year olds (10%) and 30-49 year olds (16%). On the other hand, a significant proportion of the population confidence in Colbert Report and Jon Stewart, the two American satirical television shows.

In Turkey, too, the media are losing the confidence of a significant part of the population. They occupy the last place of the institutions in which the citizens trust such as the army, the president of the republic, the police, the government, the NGOs or the political parties. For his part, Lüküslü observes that majority of young people who are interested in political news would not trust political organizations or the mass media (Lüküslü, 2014, 78-79). Konda's study of the Gezi movement confirms this trend: social networks (34%) and websites (11%) would be the main source of information for young people (18-28 years old). Over 44 years old, 5% use social media and 2% use the Internet, and for 88% of this group, television would be the main source of information (Konda, p. 22-28).

Several studies have also been conducted in Egypt. The first source of information for Egyptians would be television. The country's English-speaking elite has access to diverse sources, including foreign sources. It would also give greater confidence to both foreign and national sources of information. In addition, there is an increase in the use of social networks, particularly by bloggers and Twittos (Hamdy, 2013).

About this, Graham Meikle draws a connection between satire and media study: "[…] both ask questions about power and influence, both make judgments about social, cultural and political standards and failings, both are forms of cultural criticism." (Meikle, 2008). In the light of this approach we try to analyze how do uprising people response to the current political events daily realities in our "post-truth era".

Hoax and Satire

In the 1990s in Europe, particularly in Eastern Europe, Italy, and the United States, activist artistic projects emerged that challenged notions of 'information', 'reality' and 'perception', such as Yes Men, Luther Blissett project, etc. These projects were mainly influenced by the writings of William S. Burroughs and Hakim Bey on the media and the manipulation of information. Both authors proposed to "hack" the media, the tools of communication. Cornelia Solfrank draws an interesting parallel between art and the term hack: "if you take a closer look at the term "hack," you very quickly discover that hacking is an artistic way of dealing with a computer. [...] hacking does have to do with limitations, but even more with norms. [...] The only thing art actually does is break the patterns and habits of perception. Art should break open the categories and systems we use in order to get through life along as straight a line as possible. Everyone has these patterns and systems in his or her head. Then along comes art: What we're used to is disturbed, and we're taken by surprise. New and unusual patterns of perception offer up the same things in a completely new context. In this way, thought systems are called into question." (Baumgärtel, 1998). The hacktivists thus create radios and pirate TVs, fanzines, fictitious personalities, false identities. Hence, we affirm that the satirical newspapers offer "ordinary people" an opportunity to "hack" social and political clichés, and to question these norms.

Even though these last examples are recent, the hoax has a long history. Excerpts from Jonathan Swift and Mark Twain on the shows of Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert, mostly in the form of satire. A satire is a written or oral speech in which the author criticizes the faults, the customs, the norms of his or her time often in an ironic way. According to Phiddian satire is "a rhetorical strategy (in any medium) that seeks wittily to provoke an emotional and intellectual reaction in an audience on a matter of public (or at least inter-subjective) significance" (Phiddian, 2013).

Megan R. Hill mentions Griffin on this issue: "[...] satirists should seek to harm the current system and to create confusion, even if only momentarily, in people's understanding of how the world works, challenging their attitudes and opinions, taunting and provoking them into doubt, and perhaps into disbelief." But he is not the only idealist, Hill also mentions Burke: "By offering a new way of looking at "normal reality", the satirists' strategy calls into question the taken-for-granted assumptions (i.e. the master narrative) underpinning social life and, therefore, attempts to awaken citizens' perceptions by illustrating that "one's way of seeing is, inevitably, a way of not seeing" and she adds as a comment: "The ultimate provocation of satire is thus to make people aware of the lenses they see with." (Hill, 2013, 379). That's the main point of our approach to link our data to Jacques Rancière's and Dewey's theories on aesthetics as an experience and as moment of dissensus, and to the distancing effect of Brecht. In the

second part of this paper we will discuss this issue by case studies.

Data and Methodology

Our corpus includes two sites from Mediterranean countries with strong cultural and political differences, and a North American site. The latter was chosen because of the cultural influence of the United States in the world but also because usage of English occupies an important place to the language of the movements of Gezi, Tahrir and Occupy and in the online contents. Four criteria have conditioned the construction of our corpus: Access to the sources that concern these three movements; fluency in the language the existence of work on the links between social networks and these movements; and Internet access in the countries concerned.

The *Netvizz* application allowed us to download the shared data on the Facebook pages of the corpus sites (not including the public posts on the page). Note that the three sites have inequalities in the number of published content. We have started with *The Onion*, which has 13,000 publications (over five years). This allowed us to discover the limitations of data analysis and text mining software (explained below). We first analyzed the texts using software to determine the general trend of the site. Then we cut out the publications in three-month periods and studied their links to political news.

At the end of this analysis, we found it difficult to evaluate the importance of the published topics in relation to current events. For example, during debates on gay marriage in the United States, *The Onion*'s Facebook page shows an increase in publications of articles on the same topic. However, further analysis reveals that gay marriage was already a topic on the page before the social debate and before the discussions and decisions of the federated states. But this subject was not identified as important by the software due to normal attendance. To isolate this variant, we decided to do a semi-manual analysis and tighten our sample on the Facebook publications that generated more engagement (likes and shares). Knowing that, the more a publication created an engagement, the more Facebook's algorithm makes it visible to other followers of the

Figure 1. Web statistics, 2015. Population statistics, 2016.

page, and to the friends of the followers of the page (see Figure 1).

We had an interview with Hakan Bilginer, the founder of *Zaytung*, on May 23, 2015. But we could not *reach El Koshary Today* who has not posted anything on Facebook and on the website since January 2014. We have tried to contact them on all their media and social accounts without success. As for *The Onion*'s Facebook page and Twitter account, they do not accept private messages. And they did not respond to any of the emails we sent them. That's because we decided to use other sources such as newspaper articles, radio and TV interviews of the editors of all three websites.

Visual and Form

Satirical sites have the same appearance as "real" newspapers; they also broadcast weekly magazines, horoscopes, sports pages, etc. The mentioned subjects are similar, as Meikle speaks of too on media satire, there is "similarity of form and content". The contents revolve around the following themes: political, social, economic, religion, sex, celebrities, couples ... as those are the privileged themes of humorists for centuries.

Most satirical sites of fake news finds its roots in *The Onion*, the founders of the various sites, including those of *Zaytung* and *El Koshary Today*, mention it in their interviews. However, *The Onion* has a difference: the site produces from time to time audio-visual content with the participation of professional journalists, or actors. Audiovisual contents are not part of our analysis unless it is shared as a full text paper on Facebook or on the website.

These sites parody the mass media by appropriating their codes to encourage readers to question the credibility of these conventional sources. The hoax papers look like those of the *Wall Street Journal* or *New York Times*. In their interviews, Joe Garden and Chad Nackers from *The Onion* explain why they produce audiovisual content on the format of traditional media. This resemblance would allow them to benefit from the same status of authority and legitimacy (authority to give information) as the dominant media and thereby reinforcing the satire. *Zaytung* founder Hakan Bilginer explains: "When you use traditional media codes, what you produce is like "real information", whatever the content is. You read a real newspaper article, written in a journalistic language using verbs like: declares, expresses, underlines, etc. We do the same thing except that at the end it is pointed out that it is a joke all in the last sentence."

The slogans (mottos, tags) of these sites also reflect their critical approach vis-à-vis the traditional media: *Zaytung* "Dürüst, tarafsız, ahlaksız haber" [Honest, objective and immoral news]. *The Onion* "America's finest news source", *El Koshary Today* "Egypt's most reliable news source". *The Onion* also has this Latin phrase "Tu Stultus Es" (You're stupid.). This motto seems to mean that the satirical site produces these contents for stupid people, and if the reader is there for to read in a real way, it means that he is stupid. It also implies that readers are stupid to believe
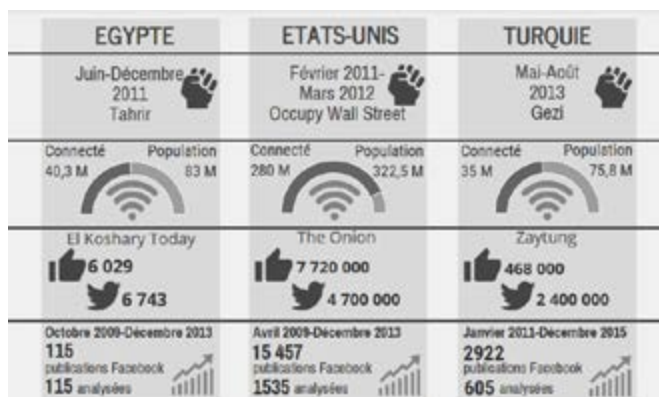
those they read on *The Onion*, also on other "real" newspapers.

At the bottom of the page, they have the same icons (like, share, etc.) for social media links like those of real newspapers and also the copyright notes:

- *The Onion* is not intended for readers under 18 years of age. © All rights reserved 2017 Onion Inc.
- Decree by the Zaytung Public Relations Department: All written and visual materials on this site, even html codes, are fake [lies]. Those who have a bone age of less than 18 years are not allowed to visit the site, even if it's just to check out quickly for a friend. Finally, we would be very grateful if you don't sue us. Cordially. Hosted by radore.
- © 2009 El Koshary. All rights reserved. Designed and developed in-house, using Drupal.

The sites also have a section dedicated to public opinion: *Halkın Sesi* [The voice of the people] on *Zaytung, Americas Voices* on *The Onion*. In this section, sites parody polls. They claim that they ask the public their opinion on a hot topic. They always use the same pictures (3-4 people), and under the pictures is the answer of the person. The

Figure 2. Dark gray for political content, light gray for other.

name, age and profession of the person in the photo change every time.

Themes and Subjects

Articles cover current topics, political and / or family life of politicians, but also lifestyles, romantic and sexual relationships, science, technology, and religion. Graham Meikle points out that these web sites belong to a mash-up culture, it is a remix aesthetic. They mix topics in a relevant way, as predicted by Burroughs and Situationists (cut-up). There are sometimes links between the two, three themes in the satirical sites. Religion, being footballer and gay can be treated in a single article for example. As a result, we noted that a more detailed categorization needed to be done to improve the presentation of results. For this reason, we have defined the themes and subchapters as follows.

Politics

The political theme is divided into five sub-categories:

1) Publications concerning political news and elections. During the election period, we observed an increase in political content, discussions on elections and candidates. *The Onion* is preparing a special column for the elections.

2) The daily life of the politicians must be understood in the broad sense: subjects on the members of the families of the leaders, on their participation in the social events or sports. For example: *Diamond Joe Biden*, a character created by *The Onion* in the image of the real Joe Biden (former vice president of the United States).

3) Scandals and corruptions. Especially the corruptions in Turkey unveiled in December 2013 were parodied by *Zaytung. The Onion* also made several references to the sex tape of the CIA director in November 2012.
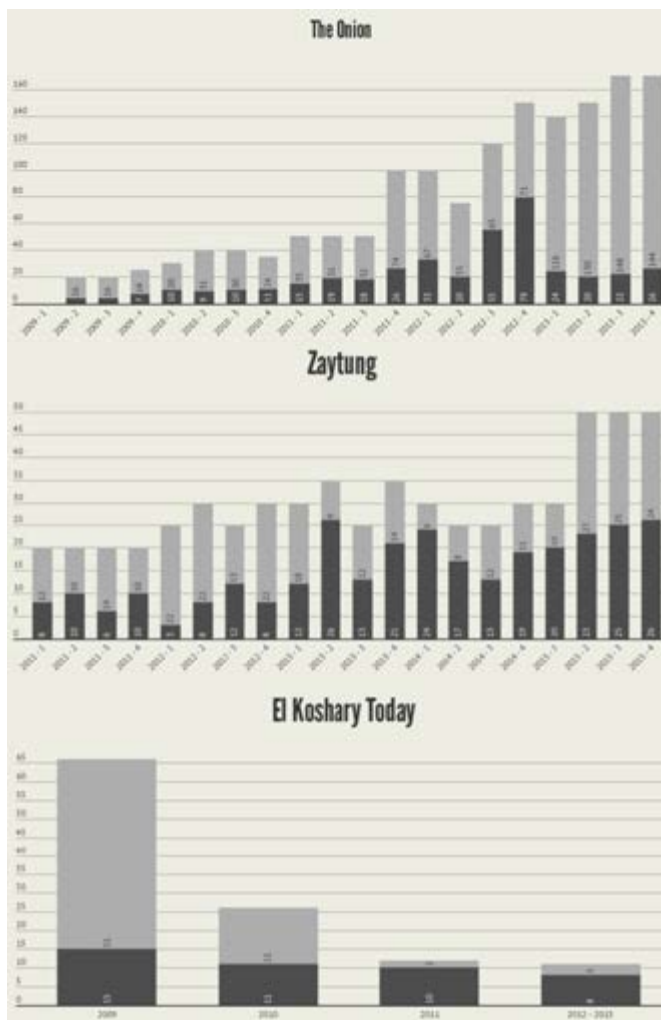
> Subsection: News
> Title: "**Obama Takes Excited Daughters Out for Day of Drone-Watching**"
> Publication time: 6/05/13 1:59pm
> Text: "WANA, PAKISTAN—Calling it a chance to get some fresh air and learn about the unmanned aerial vehicles inhabiting the Middle East, President Barack Obama took his daughters Sasha and Malia out to the tribal territories of Pakistan for an exciting afternoon of drone-watching, sources confirmed Wednesday. "Look, there's one right there," Obama reportedly whispered as he handed a pair of binoculars to his youngest daughter Sasha, keeping quiet so as not to alarm the RQ-11B Raven drone sweeping past a nearby mountain ridge. "And there's another—that's an MQ-9 Block 1-Plus Reaper. You can tell by the markings on its wings. Just a beautiful, beautiful drone. You may not see as many of those as you used to, but around here they're still the kings of the sky." According to reports, Obama then told the two girls that if they came back at nightfall, they might get to see a drone attacking its prey."
> © 2018 Onion Inc.

4) Foreign affairs, leaders and policies of other countries. The sites publish articles about international events and meetings like G20 or negotiations between Greece and the European Union.

5) Everything related to economic, urban, energy and environmental policies. For example, the articles on the technical problems of *Marmaray* (a railway connecting the two sides of Bosphorus, in Istanbul) in October and November 2013.

We see in the table above the evolution of the proportion of political theme and other themes over time in *The Onion* and *Zaytung* (Figure 2). As we had very small sample for El Koshary Today, the graph for this one is annual. In our PhD thesis, we also highlight the links between the different themes with examples, more detailed tables and visuals, and better adapted to local and global discussions. In this article, the demonstration will be limited to presenting the numerical evolution of political theme.

Daily life and clichés

Satire sites also target the "ideal life" offered to "middle class" workers, especially those working in *bullshit jobs* (jobs in the service sector that do not lead to actual production as defined by David Graeber). For example, in the mass media, one usually notices articles entitled "Where to eat this weekend?". A way to advertise restaurants, a certain way of life, or "extraordinary" holidays, etc. Satirical sites also hijack them. For example, *Zaytung* publishes an article about an engineer who has no more money at the end of the month, and who receives a text message from his girlfriend to go out. The objective here is to highlight the contrast between reality and the image constructed and returned by the mass media. Subcategories of this theme:

1) Jokes of Mercury-Venus, LGBTI (jokes about male-female relationships, sexuality, and gays)

2) Jokes about social media tools. They relate to users who share photos of engagements, weddings or couples in love; older users or loved ones with whom we do not want to be in contact on social media; on interface changes (like switching to Timeline View in Facebook).

3) Area Man / Nation jokes. Humor about everyday life:

Subsection: Workplace
Title: "**New College Graduates To Be Cryogenically Frozen Until Job Market Improves**"
Publication time: 3/15/10 5:00pm
Text: "WASHINGTON—In a bold new measure intended to address unemployment among young professionals, lawmakers from across the political spectrum agreed on legislation Tuesday to subsidize the cryogenic freezing of recent college graduates until the job market recovers. The bill, expected to swiftly pass in both houses, would facilitate the subzero preservation of any graduate of a two- or four-year educational institution. […] "
Text under photo: "Grads would be cryopreserved immediately after receiving their diplomas."
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Subsection: Valentine's Day
Title: "**20,000 Tons Of Pubic Hair Trimmed In Preparation For Valentine's Day**"
Publication time: 2/11/10 8:00am
Text: WASHINGTON—Flushed with anticipation and ready to emerge from another long, cold winter, millions of Americans participated this week in the annual tradition of trimming their pubic regions in time for Valentine's Day. A ritual as old as time itself, this year's pubis-shearing is expected to be among the largest in decades, with more than 20,000 tons of curly clippings predicted to fall by Feb. 14. […] "
Text under photo: "Americans all across the country once again prepared for Valentine's Day by carefully thinning their pubis."
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there is no special time for this kind of content. The event described in the article can happen to anyone and anytime. Satirical sites tend to use the same places and / or people for this type of news.

4) Jokes related to work, "bullshit jobs", mobbing, and unemployment, unemployed. We observed that sites refer to youth unemployment, and such as after graduations in June or July, they create articles about this issue.

5) Religion is a common theme. The three sites treat this subject differently. *The Onion* mixes this topic with taboo topics like gay marriage, or pedophilia. On *Zaytung*, the subject is rather related to institutions and political actions relating to religion.

The other themes are: sports, science and technology celebrities and unclassified subjects. The common language between satirical sites and social movements is not limited to political themes. They also cover topics such as the launch of new iPhone, from an economic or social policy point of view, in connection with the national news. This is what creates a language and common codes and gives a "symbolic power" to its producers.

Cultural and linguistic codes

It is not always easy to understand the content of these sites for readers, because they include many references to political and social news. To understand them, the reader must know the "codes" as Umberto Eco has defined them. We observed that sites sometimes deal with the same topics or events by offering different angles of view. The difference can be cultural or political; or linked to the divergence of humorous approaches according to the culture. We have noticed some of the methods and barriers that Shifman and Levy have identified, such as "cultural substitution", the replacement of extralinguistic cultural values by elements that are well known in the target culture. To give an example: to exchange the name of a celebrity with that of a local celebrity. The "cultural affinity" between two cultures and linguistic proximity influences the use of the same jokes at different sites. And that some themes - such as computers and gender differences - will cross national borders better than others.

Subsection: Internet
Title: "**Entire Facebook Staff Laughs As Man Tightens Privacy Settings**"
Publication time: 5/26/10 11:30am
Text: "PALO ALTO, CA—All 1,472 employees of Facebook, Inc. reportedly burst out in uncontrollable laughter Wednesday following Albuquerque resident Jason Herrick's attempts to protect his personal information from exploitation on the social-networking site. "Look, he's clicking 'Friends Only' for his e-mail address. Like that's going to make a difference!" howled infrastructure manager Evan Hollingsworth, tears streaming down his face, to several of his doubled-over coworkers. "Oh, sure, by all means, Jason, 'delete' that photo. Man, this is so rich." According to internal sources, the entire staff of Facebook was left gasping for air minutes later when the "hilarious" Herrick believed he had actually blocked third-party ads."
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Subsection: Local
Title: "**Gay Teen Worried He Might Be Christian**"
Publication time: 1/12/10 5:00pm
Text: "LOUISVILLE, KY—At first glance, high school senior Lucas Faber, 18, seems like any ordinary gay teen. He's a member of his school's swing choir, enjoys shopping at the mall, and has sex with other males his age. But lately, a growing worry has begun to plague this young gay man. A gnawing feeling that, deep down, he may be a fundamentalist, right-wing Christian. "I don't know what's happening to me," Faber admitted to reporters Monday. "It's like I get these weird urges sometimes, and suddenly I'm tempted to go behind my friends' backs and attend a megachurch service, or censor books in the school library in some way. Even just the thought of organizing a CD-burning turns me on.""
Text under photo: "Lucas Faber has tried focusing on Godspell to keep the thought of tithing out of his mind."
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As observed in Ermida's case studies, the texts start with a title and then present a first sentence containing the most important information. They then develop this information with details of decreasing importance (parallel to the rule of the "inverted pyramid" of journalism). The titles of the articles are of great importance, the founders, authors and editors of *Zaytung* and *The Onion* declared that they define the title first. *The Onion* staff begins with 800-1000 titles and eliminates 97% of them, as part of their weekly routine.

In short, as pointed out by Jones and Baym "[...] irony and satire demand a far more active process of engagement on the part of the audience than does the monological and literal modality of news. [...] the audience first has to *figure it out*, [...] read between the lines, [...] has to perform some relatively complex interpretive labor, connecting dots that often require an extensive set of competencies, both political and cultural." Thus, satire offers us an active and performative citizenship (Jones et Baym, 2010, 290-291).

Jokes to hack the established order

We observed that *Zaytung* and *El Koshary Today* were more engaged than *The Onion*. Both have done more publications related to politics and mobilizations. However, it should be noted that *The Onion* has a more professional structure and exists since 1988 in print, and since 1996 online (since 2013 only online). In this part of the article we sought to understand if there was a relationship between these sites and social mobilizations.

The authors of *El Koshary Today* said in a radio interview that they have targeted the middle-upper class that holds power in Egypt and that class will make the revolution. The founder of *Zaytung* informed us that he participated individually to the mobilizations. In the *Facebook* data we analyzed, we also found their call to fight against a censorship law in 2011 and their call to join to the Gezi movement, on May 31, 2013. *El Koshary Today* team also

appealed to manifest on their Facebook page on January 27, 2011.

The Onion editor Chad Nackers and publisher Cole Bolton told the radio that their cynicism was about getting people into action, pushing them to do the right thing, and making them laugh. Jones and Baym confirm this "revolutionary" aspect of humor: "Philosophers who study ancient Greece argue that cynicism is not this modern notion of detachment, smugness, or lack of commitment. Rather, it is a proactive protest, against and objection to corruption, self-interest, luxury, hypocrisy, and insincerity that so easily infects and dominates politics." (Jones et Baym, 2010, 288). *Zaytung* founder Hakan Bilginer said there was already a dialogue between the site and the young people who participated in the mobilizations before the street movement. These young people visited the sites and produced content well before demonstrating their creativity on the street.

In addition, it is difficult to know if satire must have a reformist role in society; it seems to us fundamental that it should rather create a moment of estrangement or dissensus. Interviews and data analysis show us that satirists tend to question sources of information and power, as Meikle writes: "First, satirists draw attention to the workings of media power – in particular, they open up an analysis of media in terms of symbolic power. Second, satire matters to media scholars, because there are parallels between satire on the one hand and academic media criticism on the other, and a consideration of these parallels can help set each in a fresh context." (Meikle, 2008)

Participative, producers, visitors, co-creators

To what degree have satirical hoax sites been successful, open to the public? In the past, satirists, political opinion leaders, were professionals employed by the media, who managed the flow of information for the masses. With the advent of the Internet, as Berthon et al. cited by Lijun Tang and Syamantak Bhattacharya, "Satire has been liberated

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Subsection: Local
Title: "**8.4 Million New Yorkers Suddenly Realize New York City A Horrible Place To Live**"
Publication time: 9/02/10 8:00am
Subtitle: "NEW YORK—At 4:32 p.m. Tuesday, every single resident of New York City decided to evacuate the famed metropolis, having realized it was nothing more than a massive, trash-ridden hellhole that slowly sucks the life out of every one of its inhabitants."
Text under photo: "Within 90 minutes, the borough of Brooklyn had completely cleared out."
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from the monopoly of professionals and the Internet has enabled ordinary people, or netizens, to create and disseminate satirical work online." (Tang and Syamantak, 2011). The hoax news websites too offer "ordinary people" the opportunity to "hack" daily routines and make readers reflect on these routines. Guy Debord expresses the need to change the world and envisages the diversion of existing forms by "organized collective work" aiming at a unitary use of all means to disrupt everyday life.

The production process is collective and participatory. On the collective production of the content or an action, we can refer to the notion of social sculpture attributed to Beuys, it is not necessary to be geek, expert or member of a specific community to create and share satirical texts. The idea of a participatory radio of Walter Benjamin's listener also corresponds to the idea of collective production of individuals. On all three sites, it is possible to send proposals. For *Zaytung*, you must register on the site for free, and then fill out an article proposal form. For *The Onion*, this first step is to be a *collaborator* (unsolicited contributor). The next step is to be part of the team becoming a *contributing writer*, during this period the authors propose only titles. Then, it is possible to become a member of the editorial team comprising 8-9 people (25-30 years, one person is +40, 7 men, 2 women). In this team, there is an editor-in-chief, chief editor, editors, and editors of daily content. On the other hand, for *Zaytung*, there are only two groups. The first is composed of all the collaborators registered on the site, who can propose a whole article or only titles. The second group includes the editorial team, which consists of five people, one woman and four men

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Subsection: Politics
Title: "**Handmade Anti-Obama Sign Currently Frontrunner For Republican Presidential Nomination**"
Publication time: 6/08/11 8:00am
Subtitle: "WASHINGTON—According to a Quinnipiac University poll conducted this week, a homemade anti-Obama sign has surged to the front of the 2012 Republican presidential field, emerging as the clear favorite to earn the party's nomination in next year's primaries."
Text under photo: "The sign, which pundits say is nothing short of a GOP "dream candidate.""
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between 25-30 years old. Content producers are generally young students or workers aged 20 to 30, depending on the interviews. The situation is the same as *Zaytung* for *El Koshary Today*, founded by two undergraduate student friends, who also accept contributions from ordinary people.

These are communities composed of people from different social backgrounds, mostly middle – upper middle class, mostly "white-collar", mainly leftist, opponents. The founders of *The Daily Mash* (England) say they "help people in offices waste time." A survey reveals that: 65% of their visitors earn more than £30.000 a year, 22% more than £70.000; and 73% are university graduates.

According to *The Onion Media Kit* 2016 statistics, 55% of visitors to the site are between 18-34 years old, 35% earn more than $75,000 and 74% are university graduates. For the same report, the site reaches 15 million unique visitors, 54 million pageviews, and 200 million *Facebook* post reaches per month. As of June 2010, *El Koshary Today* had 1,500 visitors a day, and in May 2015 *Zaytung* had 1 million visits per month. When there is controversial political news the number of visitors increases to 1 million 6 cents - 1 million 7 cents. Data from *The Onion Media Kit* and also our interview with the founder of *Zaytung* showed us that users and visitors are mostly from major cities. In Turkey, for example, they are mainly from Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir (like the number of Internet users across the country).

Content creators have pseudonyms that are also part of the satirical content and anonymity. Sometimes interviewees want to remain anonymous or fear being "tagged" by state officials, who risk being jailed. *El Koshary Today*'s editors said they preferred to write articles in English so as not to get the attention of the authorities. The other benefit of writing in English is to speak to an international audience.

Conclusion

In this article, we conducted a comparative analysis between three hoax sites in countries where there were mobilisations between 2009 and 2013. We have discovered their disruptive and creative forces, their contributions to "the constitution of a new politics of truth, [...] and change the political, economic, institutional regime of truth production." They criticize the clichés of the information and consumer society, the political figures, the actions of governments, as well as the mass media. They are part of a reinforced participatory culture especially with the penetration of the Internet and version 2.0. The language and cultural codes of these sites are mostly shared by other Internet users around the world, while keeping local specificities. Those who take to the streets meet in a very large proportion with those who produce and consume on the Internet.

These sites create an opportunity for distancing for producers and visitors who are both co-producers and co-authors. To understand the field of new media, activist and artistic projects and to discover their link with everyday

life, we need to broaden the scope of our analysis and examine other activist products, actions, and projects.

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After finishing BA in International Relations at Galatasaray University; and MA at EHESS in Theories and Practices of Language and Arts; continued studying at the University of Paris 8 in Contemporary Art and New Media department.

Realized two researches on the relation between society and cinema from different periods and different regions: "The Representation of totalitarian regimes in the cinema of Central Europe" and "The religious elements in contemporary cinema in Turkey: religious man figures and children".

Also examined individual and/or collective experiences in interactive installations, studying the artwork - 'spectator' relationship in the MA dissertation at University of Paris 8. Interested in the change of communication, media and digital arts fields in connection to the transition from industrial to post-industrial society. Ongoing PhD thesis "Activism and arts in the web: language as living entity" is an attempt for an aesthetic reading of online *artivist* productions in relation to social movements.