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# Activist Cartoons without Borders: The Political Cartoons of Brazilian Artist Carlos Latuff

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*Abstract: Brazilian cartoonist Carlos Latuff has been described by Allers in Menassat as “a one-man cartoon wrecking-ball when he hits the ink.” In the last few years of penning sharp cartoons, he “has been alternatively praised and vilified in the press for his depictions of suffering” in places like the Palestinian territories, Iraq, and the slums of Latin America. In this study, I use Latuff’s work to illustrate how the artist has formed a global identity based on political affiliation, rather than national origin. I show how the “affordances” of the Internet, namely, the ability of non-mainstream individuals and groups to self-publish, and the ability of activists to contact him directly, have allowed Latuff to be his own publisher and to contact his fans without intermediaries. The fearless cartoonist avoids “blockages” to free communication by posting on his website daring political cartoons that veer off from mainstream views on global issues. Furthermore, his cartoons draw their power from being centered on a marginalized global audience that most mainstream cartoonists ignore. His lateral communication with his 120,374 Twitter followers (September 13, 2012 count), coupled with his use of new forms of copyright protections, such as Creative Commons and Copyleft, have broadened his appeal to the general public whose members remix his work on walls, placards and T-shirts, and use it for their own political ends. Finally, I argue that the growing use of social media by social movements enhances the organizing capacity of activists internally, but also encourages lateral communication with the formerly unreachable “global other,” exposing the global communicators to views not readily available on mainstream media, and affording them a forum previously denied them.*

**Keywords:** Carlos Latuff, Brazilian Cartoonist, Political Cartoons, Social Media, Social Movements, Egyptian Revolution, Marginalized Audiences, Social Justice, Twitter, Creative Commons, Copyleft



A Latuff “See No Evil, Hear No Evil, Speak No Evil” cartoon drawn after the Egyptian government censored Al Jazeera

## Introduction

**J**ESÚS MARTÍN-BARBERO OBSERVES that the modern world has witnessed new ways of forming identity that contrast with how identities were formed in the past, i.e. by being aligned directly with language and territory. These new cultures, “essentially, youth cultures,” are not anti-national, per se, but have adopted a new way of perceiving identity:

They are identities with shorter, more precarious time spans and a flexibility allowing them to bring together ingredients from different cultural worlds, riddled with discontinuities, atavistic gestures, modernist residues, and radical innovations and ruptures (Martín-Barbero, 1999).

In a more recent rendering of the concept of identity, Hartley (2011) suggests that we need to stop seeing it as “an intrinsic property of individuals who then enter into society,” instead, we should start observing how “identity, like rational thought and purposive action, emerges—it results-out of social networks and relationships . . . and various organized forms of collective agency that use ‘social technologies’ . . . to produce our individual capacity for signaling (sense-making practices)” (Hartley, 2011, p. 14).

In this study, I use the work of Brazilian cartoonist Carlos Latuff to illustrate how this artist has formed a global identity based on political affiliation and shared experiences, rather than national origin. I also show how his work has been used both by the people whose causes he supports, and increasingly, by the mainstream press, in part because he makes access to his work easy and invites readers to copy and share it. However, before I introduce the cartoonist and his lateral communication with his viewers, I describe the global digital context in which he operates. I argue that despite the ongoing attempts to control the Internet through censorship and the restrictions imposed by the definition of copyright as “property,” digital media distributed by its global producers (the newly empowered audience) enables the voiceless to speak for themselves and globalize their concerns. Furthermore, the introduction of new forms of copyright protection, such as Creative Commons and Copyleft, have enriched the public sphere by providing access to creative work that would not have traveled far with the old practices of copyright, or if activists from marginalized groups had to pay for the use of the cartoons. I also show how lateral communication among people from different countries responding to the Latuff cartoons has enhanced cross-cultural connections with what used to be the distant “global other.” For example, a cartoon he drew about a water dispute between Indian villagers and Coca Cola ended up as a poster in an Indian village; his 2009 Honduras coup cartoon ended up as a poster plastered on the door of the Embassy of Honduras in the UK; and a Gaza cartoon was plastered on British Ambulances donated to the Palestinians of Gaza (Photo: Political graffiti, 2011).<sup>1</sup> Although I discuss the Latuff cartoons drawn for various progressive global causes, refer readers to his web

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<sup>1</sup> Available from <http://latuff2.deviantart.com/>

Photos: Political graffiti and street art around Cairo

Available from <http://she2i2.blogspot.com/2011/07/photos-political-graffiti-street-art.html>

[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Carlos\\_Latuff](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Carlos_Latuff).

Available from <http://latuff.deviantart.com/art/Pacifists-against-occupation-2149534> (Wikimedia Commons).

sites, and show some examples of those cartoons, I focus mainly on Latuff's cartoons of the Egyptian Revolution because of space limitations.

## Methodology

Although I was following the Egyptian Revolution and saving tweets in real time, I also conducted a formal search that allowed me to access every single cartoon and Tweet Latuff has published on various web sites that he had created, or in which he participated. Latuff embraces his outsider status as a "Deviant Artist member," so I checked all the cartoons posted on Deviant Art. An Internet search of his name yielded cartoons he was commissioned to do for German, Turkish and American papers, as well as articles that used his cartoons. I have also found some of his work on various websites fans informed him about in their tweets, for example, one often-used cartoon of his; combining a victory sign with the Palestinian flag was photographed on a street wall in Cairo. The caption under the photo reads: "One (Arab) nation-third Intifada [Uprising]. Street art borrowed from the revolutionary Brazilian artist Carlos Latuff."<sup>2</sup>



Below, two examples of the many placards and banners of his cartoons that were held in demonstrations. The first placard (below) reads: "Say something, talk .. Power has to be relinquished. Down, down with military rule."

<sup>2</sup> Photos: Political Graffiti and Street Art Around Cairo  
<http://she2i2.blogspot.com/2011/07/photos-political-graffiti-street-art.html>



Above: Banner with a Latuff Cartoon Denouncing Military Rule



Above: Demonstrator uses a Latuff cartoon to call for the death penalty for the people who killed Khaled Said, whose death, coupled with years of repression under President Mubarak, sparked the Egyptian Revolution

Latuff's work is also posted on Wikimedia Commons and at Pacifists against the Occupation.<sup>3</sup> To understand how he communicates with his readers, I searched for tweets under his name @CarlosLatuff starting on January 1, 2011, until July 26, 2012. I also talked to him in person in Brazil, a conversation that gave me insight into his passion for the causes he supports. For other material about the Egyptian Revolution, I consulted several illustrated books written by young and digitally media-savvy activists and photographers mostly from Egypt.

<sup>3</sup> [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Carlos\\_Latuff](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Carlos_Latuff).

<http://latuff.deviantart.com/art/Pacifists-against-occupation-2149534> (Wikimedia Commons).

## The Context of the “Global Other”

As Perry says, because we receive our second-hand experience with the “global other” through government or the media, “most of us have been spectators” with only a theoretical consciousness of the global population, experienced via interviews broadcast on radio and TV. He added that: We have known that there is a global population out there, but have not been able to participate in it directly as individuals until now (Perry, 2008, p. 127).

Earl and Kimport suggest that one needs to pay attention to the “affordances” of the Internet. The term has been defined in different ways, but they define it as: “the actions and uses that a technology makes qualitatively easier or possible when compared to prior technologies” (Earl and Kimport 2003, p. 32). The fact that a technology such as a computer or the web can offer an affordance does not really matter unless people leverage that affordance. Latuff has leveraged the technology well to marry his cartoons to his ideas and spread those ideas worldwide. Other affordances of the Internet are the reduced costs for organizing and participating in protest, and the reduced need for co-presence for collective action to take place (Earl & Kimport 2003, p. 33). Because of the affordances of digital media, many aspects of old communication methods have been renegotiated. However, the authors of a valuable book that relates the events of the Revolution only through tweets, *Tweets from Tahrir*, remind us that despite the fact that the Egyptian Uprising has been described as a ‘Twitter Revolution,’ “It was not. Revolutions do not come out of thin air, or even cyberspace. But the internet provided a tool that helped shape the form of the uprising, and it gave us some of the most riveting real-time coverage ever recorded” (Idle & Nunns, 2011, p. 19).<sup>4</sup> Below is a look at what the Internet has helped change:

**The actors:** Communication used to be what government and private media did. Lessig calls the world of media from the 20<sup>th</sup> century “‘Read-only.’ Passive recipients of culture produced elsewhere. Couch potatoes. Consumers” (Lessig, 2004, p. 37). Those people have changed, and are what Jay Rosen calls, “The People Formerly Known as the Audience” (Shirky, 2010, p. 36). Cross explains that what evolved was “A whole generation of ‘digital natives’” who were born into this digital world and know how to negotiate it, “they basically have known no other than the viral world and its environs” (Cross, 2011, p. 119). Lessig predicts that “the twenty-first century could be different, ...it could be both read and write” (Lessig, 2004, p. 37).

**The professional-amateur divide:** In the recent past, there was a preference for the output of professional journalists, to the exclusion of members of the public (except as subjects). With the wide use of cell phones and other digital devices, the world moved into lateral communication, and the newly empowered audience is now speaking for itself. In fact, the mainstream media and various governments monitor and use Twitter audience tweets in real time as news gathering and intelligence devices.<sup>5</sup> The transformation was not merely in the technology or text of communication, “but in agency within them.” This type of agency played havoc with the concept of the consumer derived from the industrial era. In times of unrest, masses which used to be “represented,” be-

<sup>4</sup> For an intelligent discussion of what preceded the Egyptian Revolution, see Al-Aswany (2011).

<sup>5</sup> For the best example of how the media used twitter feeds and Al Jazeera content almost minute by minute, see *The Guardian News Blog* <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/blog/2011/feb/09/egypt-protests-live-updates-9-february#block-45>



come direct participants; receivers become transmitters; passive receivers become active participants; objects become subjects, and consumers become producers. “Here, in short, is where the agency of ‘the message’ flips from the professional expert to the population at large –now, in principle, everyone is a journalist, publisher, and creative artist” (Hartley, 2011, p. 192). This is especially true in conflict areas where regular journalists are afraid to tread. A study found that 75% of UK journalists source news from known social media contacts. Oriella Digital Journalism Study also found more than half of journalists worldwide use social media, such as Twitter, to source and verify stories, from contacts already known to them (McAthy, 2009). The Tunisian and Egyptian Revolutions are prime examples of the power of being there and tweeting what activists see to the whole world. In the case of Egypt, the performance of official government-run media that totally ignored events in Tahrir Square was so bad that Egyptian popular culture took over, as may be seen in the hand-drawn signs of the public (Assaf et al, 2011) and (Grondahl, 2011). Two Latuff cartoons criticizing the way the Egyptian government media reported/censored the news of the Revolution were among the most viewed of all of Latuff’s cartoons:

Criticism of regular media performance had very high viewership.



**#Cartoon**-Talk show host Tawfiq **#Okasha**, all time bullshit champion-**#Egypt** **#Jan25** **#Tahrir2** (23 days ago from site, viewed 24480 times)



**#Cartoon**-Talk show host Dina Abdel Rahman fired for criticizing SCAF-**#Tahrir** **#Egypt** (26 days ago from site, viewed 18710 times)

**The cost and reach of the technology of communication:** In the past, only some governments and large media corporations could afford the expense of studios and heavy equipment. Now, cell phones have become necessities even in poor countries. For example, the number of cell phone users in Egypt is 92 million, with a prevalence rate of 113 percent, and an annual increase of 27.8 percent. The number of internet users is 30 million, [in a population of 80,810,912 (2011 est)] with a prevalence rate of 37 percent (Egypt IT Sector, 2011). Shirky (2008, p. 22) notes: “[M]ost of the barriers to group action have collapsed, and without those barriers, we are free to explore new ways of gathering together and getting things done,” and the youth of the Egyptian Revolution did just that via their cell phones.

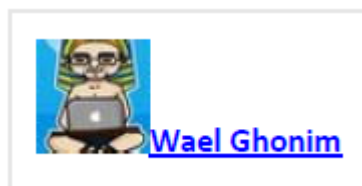
**The direction of communication:** The direction of communication has changed within countries, as well as between countries. Communication used to flow from West to East and from North to South because Western news agencies and TV broadcasts dominated world media. Now Arab nations and others have declared their information independence by developing their own media, such as Al Jazeera, which sells news globally (Barko, 2010),<sup>6</sup> and was instrumental in spreading real-time news about the Egyptian and Tunisian Revolutions. This new digital age favors horizontal communication over vertical. Consider what happened on June 6, 2010, through lateral communication, and how far the repercussions went. A 26-year-old businessman named Khalid Said entered an internet café in Alexandria. Two plain-clothes police officers asked for an ID. He refused, so they beat him to death. The Egyptian Revolution had gotten its most important martyr. Photos of the maltreated Said proved that the police were lying when they said he had died from swallowing a bag of marijuana when arrested. The web page that the Google marketing manager Wael Ghonim established for Said, “We are all Khalid Said,” struck a chord, first with some 200,000 followers soon after it was established, and later with 1,595, 884 “likes” by August 20, 2011.<sup>7</sup> A cartoon depicting Khalid Said holding Mubarak as if he were a rat (below) was also published on Ghonim’s web site.

<sup>6</sup> For an interesting comparison between different broadcasters, see, Barko, (2010).

<sup>7</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.facebook.com/EIshaheed>

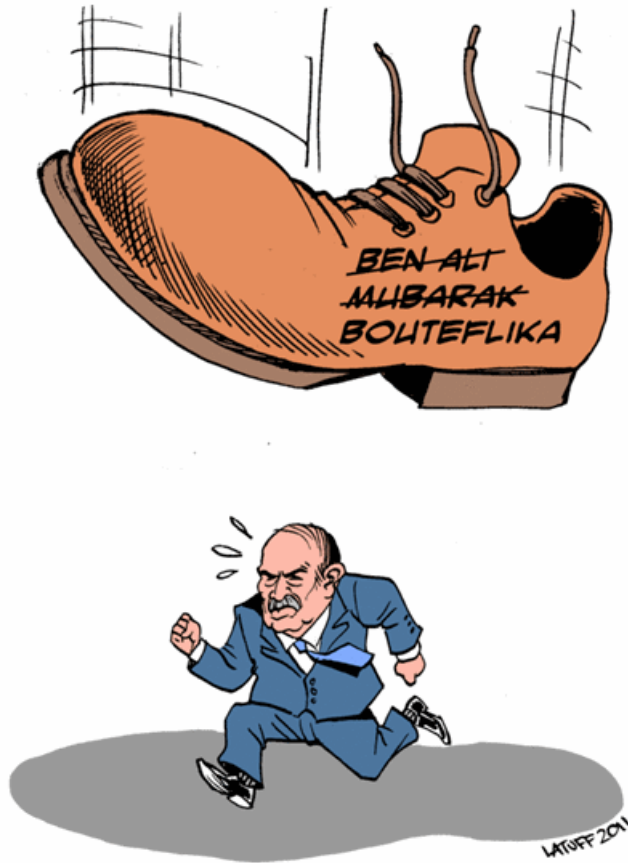


No better example than the globalization of discontent can be found than the use of the expression, “We are all Moshe Silman,” in an Israeli demonstration to commemorate the death of an Israeli who set himself on fire to protest the lack of government support. Israeli lawmaker Likud MK Miri Regev said that protesters “want to turn Rabin Square into Tahrir Square by provoking the gullible people” (Manual, 2012). Mark Levine, however, noted that “It is precisely the inability of Israeli Jewish society to envision a different future ... which drove Moshe Silman to emulate the self-immolation of a Tunisian fruit vendor less than half his age” (Levine, 2012). Lateral communication also connects people in new ways. Says Tunisianbelle on a website called Multiply: “I would like to post just a few political cartoons that I found by Carlos Latuff and let them do the talking for me.” The cartoons she posted were from the Israeli invasion of Gaza in 2006. In this new digital world, it is not unusual for a Brazilian cartoonist to connect a Tunisian to Palestinians. Communication also used to be vertical, top-down from the ruler to the ruled, from the military to journalists, or from journalists to the public. While these communication patterns are still going strong, they, too, have started to change, as can be seen in this tweet authored by Wael Ghonim:



Egypt changed, 8 young guys setting with 2 generals from the higher council of the armed forces and exchanging our opinions (#Jan25 Sun Feb 13 19:40:40 via Twitter for Black-

Berry®).<sup>8</sup> When the New York Times quoted Ghonim, it chose to illustrate the article with a cartoon by Carlos Latuff.



Feb 12, 2011

**#Cartoon-Hey #Bouteflika the Big Shoe is going after YOU! #Algeria #Feb12 #Jan25**

Latuff, by using various recognizable symbols of revolutionary action connects various issues and causes. In the series of 184 cartoons produced about the Egyptian Revolution in 2011 alone, Latuff sometimes uses shoes in a nod, as he later explained, to Iraqi journalist Mun-tazar Al-Zaidi who hurled his shoe at former US President George Bush at a press conference in Baghdad in 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Perry (2008, p. 123) writes that having more horizontal social relations does not mean that government hierarchy will be flattened, “but that the exaggerated top-down hierarchy of traditional military culture will be gradually tempered, and eventually reformed.”



Said Latuff: “Different from him [Al-Zaidi], who had the chance to throw a shoe against Bush, my way of throwing shoes is through cartoons” (El-Sherif, 2011). It is the same symbolic shoe that Palestinian cartoonist Emad Hajjaj called “Shoe and awe.”

**The speed and reach of communication:** The change from the need to physically transport film during the Vietnam War to instant transmission in real time from the battlefields of Iraq or from Tahrir Square in Egypt has collapsed most barriers to the monopoly on communication and facilitated group action. As may be seen from the various sources of ideas and cartoons that animated the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions, communication may now originate anywhere and be picked up by anyone. As a result of the ease of making global contacts, civic identity is no longer fixed in the way it was for our ancestors. “The conditions of modernity and late modernity, which enable mobility, financial autonomy, transnational workplace, and cultural versatility, allow individuals to develop civic bonds with a number of constituencies.” (Papacharissi, 2010, p. 108). Before I discuss how Creative Commons and Copyleft helped spread Latuff’s work internationally, I introduce the artist and his work.

### Who is Carlos Latuff?

Carlos Latuff is a Brazilian political cartoonist who identifies himself as “a leftist with a special interest in social and humanitarian issues” (Gulf News, 18 January 2009). Latuff realized the power of the Internet for political activism perhaps earlier than other cartoonists. In 1997, he drew two cartoons in support of the Zapatistas and faxed them to the activists, and they used his work. Later, he posted his cartoons on a web site, allowing activists to download them. Latuff told an interviewer that his first experience with artistic activism through the Internet encouraged him to apply those principles to other causes around the

world. His visit to Palestine in 1999 got him heavily involved in the Palestinian struggle. Latuff has some detractors who accuse him of anti-Semitism in his cartoons chronicling the Israeli occupation's mistreatment of Palestinians. He is not intimidated by such charges and dismisses them as an attempt to silence him (Portnoy, 2008).<sup>9</sup> On the censorship of some of his cartoons in Spain, he asks, "Are cartoons more in 'bad taste' than wars?"<sup>10</sup>



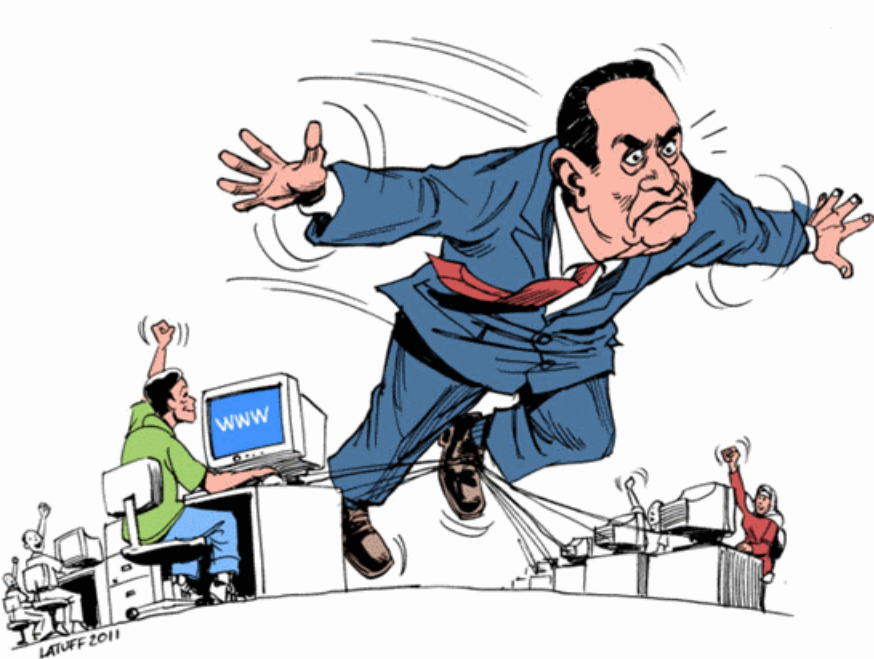
Later, he drew cartoons for the Tunisian Revolution and the Egyptian Revolution, while also drawing cartoons for progressive causes around the world. Latuff said he first knew his cartoons were having an impact when, while watching TV, he saw them printed on banners as protests swept Egypt on Jan. 25, only two days after he had made them available. "That gave me certainty that my job was useful." Latuff said: "It's not the social platforms that make revolutions, it's the people. Twitter, Facebook, just like a camera or Molotov cocktails, are just instruments, equipment" (Moraes, 2011). Latuff started getting requests for specific topics and thus, created a daily dialogue with his followers on Twitter. Arab interviewers who love to claim him as their own discovered Latuff's connection to Lebanon: his grandfather, who died before he was born, was Lebanese (Rabie, 2001). Latuff told an Egyptian interviewer, however, that he draws because he wants to support liberation movements all over the world and that he posts his cartoons on Creative Commons and Copyleft "for use freely hoping that my ideas will have a positive effect in change for the better ... I am not Arab or Egyptian or Muslim" (Fahmi, 2011). An Egyptian publication summed up Latuff's current status with the headline: "The eyes of the revolution: Carlos Latuff." (El-Sherif, 2011).

Latuff started chronicling the events surrounding the Egyptian Revolution a few days before January 25. Activists like Wael Ghonim who were familiar with his cartoons on the Tunisian revolution, the War on Iraq, and Palestine asked him to draw cartoons about Egypt, which Latuff later saw on placards (Ambassadors, 2011). Foreign and local news media started using his work. For example, Ahram Online published a gallery of Latuff's photos on August 8, 2011 (Ahram Online, 2011). The fact that Egyptian alternative and mainstream

<sup>9</sup> For more on this topic, see Latuff's interview with Portnoy, E. (2008) <http://forward.com/articles/14745/latuff-cartoonist-in-conversation-/#ixzz21PTqkxZI>

<sup>10</sup> Are Cartoons more 'bad taste' than wars? (2007, August 5). Tales of Iraq War by Latuff. Available from <http://tales-of-iraq-war.blogspot.com/2007/08/are-cartoons-more-bad-taste-than-wars.html>

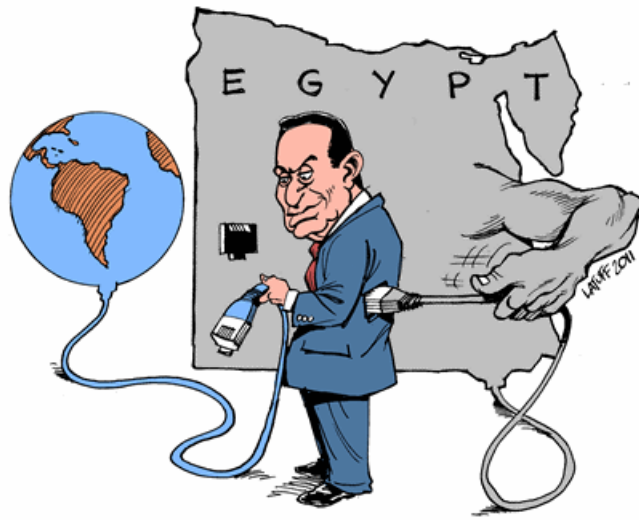
publications would publish his work is not surprising, but the fact that mainstream publications outside of Egypt have followed suit reflects his acquired status as one of the few cartoonists who has intensively chronicled the Egyptian Revolution. The Blog *Desert Peace* reported, “Carlos Latuff goes global! Last week in the *Guardian*, and yesterday in *The New York Times*!” (Goodman, 2011). *Desert Peace* boasted: “Just remember, you saw Carlos’ work on this Blog before it made it to the *Times*. An article published by the Norwegian newspaper *Dagens Næringsliv* used one of Latuff’s cartoons to illustrate the role of youth in forcing the resignation of Mubarak (How Facebook, 2011).



On August 1, 2011 the *Red Phoenix*, the newspaper of the American Party of Labor, published an article called “A People’s History of the Egyptian Revolution,” with three cartoons by Latuff.<sup>11</sup> Israeli academic Neve Gordon published an article with one of Latuff’s cartoons (Gordon, 2011). “Domestic Responses to the 2011 Egyptian Revolution,” published a photograph with a placard of an enlarged cartoon depicting Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak pulling the plug on Egypt, and Egypt, in turn, pulling the plug on Mubarak (Domestic Responses, 2011).

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<sup>11</sup> A People’s History of the Egyptian Revolution. Available from <https://ixquick.com/do/metasearch.pl>



A Latuff cartoon documenting a moment when the Christian Copts led the crowd in prayer in Tahrir Square alongside a photo of the same event appeared in Wikipedia Timeline of the Revolution (Wikimedia, 2011). The prayer was undertaken to put to rest the fiction that the Muslim Brotherhood was behind the Tahrir demonstrations. The same cartoon also appeared in an Egyptian paper.



The spread of Latuff's cartoons also speaks to the power of the new licensing tools he insists on using in addition to his own websites: Creative Commons and Copyleft.

### **Creative Commons, Copyleft, and Latuff**

Media activism springs from what Downing calls, "blockages of public expression." (Downing, 2001, p.v). The unauthorized copying and distribution of material created and



owned by others has led to two different movements. One movement hopes to control illegal copying through stricter punishment. The other seeks to change the assignment of rights from the automatic “all rights reserved” to “some rights reserved.” At the forefront of this second movement is Creative Commons, a web-based intellectual property sharing schema developed by a consortium headed by Lawrence Lessig, now professor of law at Harvard Law School. Copyleft, a play on copyright (Lessig, 2004a), makes work available for use and modification, based on the argument that creativity needs work to be in the public domain, and that without a well-functioning public square, creativity as well as politics will suffer.<sup>12</sup> To Copyleft any work, one has to first state that it is copyrighted, and then add distribution terms.<sup>13</sup>

The licenses come in different formats: the Commons Deed (human-readable code), the Legal Code (lawyer-readable code), and the Metadata (machine-readable code) ([paragraph] 12). Creative Commons licenses are non-revocable ([paragraph] 14) (Broussard, 2007).

Latuff chose to offer the cartoons he produced between 2002 to March 2008 free of charge in Copyleft as well as on his own websites for use without his permission.

Iraq Images: <https://ia700305.us.archive.org/31/items/LatuffIraqWarcartoons2002to2008/LatuffIraqWarcartoons2002to2008.zip>

Egypt Images: <http://latuffcartoons.wordpress.com/tag/egypt/>

*Palestine (283 images)*

<http://ia341334.us.archive.org/0/items/Palestine2002to2008/Palestine2002to2008.zip>

**Artintifada (thumbnail gallery)** <http://artintifada.wordpress.com/2009/01/10/latuff-palestine-cartoons/>

Latuff said to his followers: “Once saved to your computer, share it with people, upload it on different servers, make it available on websites and file sharing clients, save it to CD, make copies and distribute. Make these cartoons to reach people with no access to Internet.”<sup>14</sup>

In 2011, Latuff made all the cartoons he produced in 2011, including those he made for Arab Spring protesters (Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria, Bahrain, Libya, Yemen, Syria) available for free.<sup>15</sup> Latuff’s fans continue to send him photos of his work being used in the street, which he then posts on Twitter. For example Latuff tweeted:

My @NabeelRajab toon in a t-shirt, worn by @SAIDYOUSIF’s in a demo in #Bahrain [and included a photo by GettyImages]

Latuff’s popularity is on the rise. He had 112,359 followers on July 22, and 120,374 on September 13, 2012. Latuff’s fans feel comfortable enough to ask him in a July 25 tweet whether he was going to support Egypt or Brazil in a soccer game. This exchange is telling:

*Hesham Al Kashef@DreamReg* July 25, 2012.

lol **Carlos Latuff** supports Egypt against his home country Brazil. <https://twitter.com/CarlosLatuff> and I support his against mine :)

<sup>12</sup> Available from <https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/Copyleft>

<sup>13</sup> GNU Operating System, What is Copyleft? Available from <http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/>

<sup>14</sup> Tales of Iraq War by Latuff. Available from <http://tales-of-iraq-war.blogspot.com/>

<sup>15</sup> Latuff Cartoons. Available from <https://latuffcartoons.wordpress.com/tag/cartoons-2/>

Perry notes that Cyberspace has become the new town square in the global village. And because cyberspace is everywhere, “citizenship can also be transitional, independent of time, place or accident of birth” (Perry, 2008, p. 121).

Verbal Förlag, a Swedish publishing company, has published a book, *Using the Pen as a Weapon*, which covers his cartoons from 2002–2011. In it, Latuff explains his political views on how art can be used as a weapon in the struggle for social justice. The book also contains an essay by Swedish art historian and cartoonist Elisa Rossholm, which reflects on the relationship between art and propaganda and draws parallels between Latuff and artists such as Francois de Goya, Honoré Daumier and John Heartfield.



Cover of the Swedish Book on Carlos Latuff

Egyptian author, Amr Ezz Eddeen also illustrated his cover and his book on the Egyptian Revolution with Latuff's cartoons, according to a Latuff tweet.

## Global Outsourcing and the Building of the Global Technical Village

It appears that Egyptian youth had started preparing for the November elections of 2010 by improving their technical capabilities. The activists had gotten help from NGOs like Cyber Dissident, according to *Dagens Næringsliv*, as well as a Kenyan software producer who was hired to expand the online capacity of the participants. Italian anarchists helped them get around the government's Internet walls. The Egyptians intended to use this knowledge after Egypt's November 2010 elections, but those skills came in handy in the Egyptian Revolution of January 25, 2012, in combatting censorship by the state.

In addition to the international help the youth received, they have also benefited from having their output from cell phones broadcast on Al Jazeera, prompting the authors of the book *Tweets from Tahrir* to thank Al Jazeera for broadcasting the work of “citizen journalists” (Idle & Nunns, 2011, p. 19). The act of self-immolation by Mohammad Bouazzizi because

of poverty and official indifference was not the first of its kind in Tunisia, but this time, on December 17, 2010, two of his relatives posted a video of a peaceful protest led by the young man's mother outside the municipality building. Al Jazeera's new media team, which trawls the web looking for video from across the Arab world, had picked up the footage via Facebook and aired it that night and that proved to be the first shot of revolution across the Arab world (Ryan, 2011).

### **Examples of Latuff's Lateral Communication with his Twitter "Followers"**

Downing observes that "culture consists not only of texts or other artifacts, but also of their reception and use" (Downing, 2001, p. 6). Below are examples of some of Latuff's communication with his followers, and how they receive and use it.

One of Latuff's cartoons was inspired by young Twitter activists who were complaining that their parents refused to let them go to the protests on July 8, 2011. The cartoon he drew for them shows a girl holding a backpack and running towards the protests while flashing a victory sign (Cartoonish, 2011)<sup>16</sup>



A cartoon encouraging activists to join the July 8 demonstration, published on July 7, 2011.<sup>17</sup>

Some of Latuff's cartoons have done quite well. The cartoon depicting Mubarak's stay in Sharm el Sheik drew 22,495 views. This large number would not have materialized had the material been copyrighted in the old way.

<sup>16</sup> Cartoonish Resistance, 2011. Available from <http://www.egypttoday.com/news/display/article/artId:312>

<sup>17</sup> Available from <https://twitpic.com/5mfqy8>



Solidarity with **#Mubarak** who's facing difficult times in Sharm el Sheik - **#Jan25 #July8 #Egypt** (published July 10, 2011).<sup>18</sup>

According to Latuff's Twitter account, one viewer who misunderstood the irony of the cartoon phoned him in Brazil to ask him not to support Mubarak. One of Latuff's many admirers wrote during the 2012 Egyptian election struggle:



**ramyhatem:** I told u before and i will tell u it now again. U r on of us :)<sup>19</sup>

Latuff has started drawing cartoons for Bahraini activists. Several people tweeted that they had seen the cartoon he drew for @IHRC Campaign for Freedom and Justice in #Bahrain on an ad on a red double-decker bus in London.

Latuff regularly draws cartoons on breaking news. He drew American mass murderer, James Holmes, posed like Charleston Heston with the slogan, "From my cold dead hands," a reference to the easy access to guns in the USA."<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Available from <https://twitpic.com/5o3x3v>

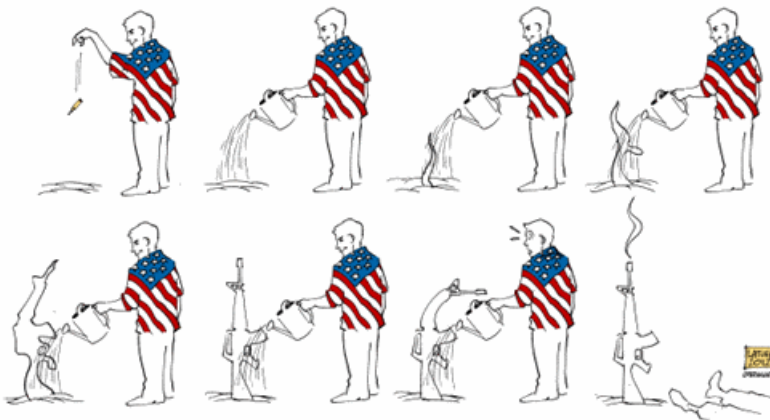
<sup>19</sup> Available from <https://twitpic.com/5o3x3v>

<sup>20</sup> Available from <http://twitpic.com/aa7e1a>



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He also nominated Holmes to head the NRA in a Twitter post. After the NRA cartoons, Latuff had several discussions with supporters and detractors of the NRA. In other words, the “affordances” of the Internet allowed cross cultural and cross border talk and discussion with the global other, not available in the past. Twitter allowed people from across the globe to debate what to call the killer, “terrorist” or “alleged killer.”



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One of Latuff's top Tweets after the Colorado killing was tweeted by several people including:

Sky@skymama65 22 July 2012 “@CarlosLatuff: Americans killing Americans is IN-SANITY. Americans killings Arabs is PATRIOTISM. Arabs killing Americans is TERRORISM.”

I Suzanne Visschedijk@Suzamina 22 July 2012

Raymond@\_Raymnd 22 July 2012

Elle of Oakland@OaklandElle 22 July 2012 and many others.

The cartoons and tweets sparked several exchanges with Adam of Oakland@CarlosLatuff thanks for the dialogue.:)

@AdamInOakland on July 22, 2012@CarlosLatuff I believe this is pertinent to our dialogue last night. Last 3 paragraphs primarily. [http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2012/07/21/my-take-the-batman-killings-and-the-evil-that-we-do/?hpt=hp\\_c2&hpt=hp\\_c2](http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2012/07/21/my-take-the-batman-killings-and-the-evil-that-we-do/?hpt=hp_c2&hpt=hp_c2)

Abdallah Alnagga@Kondour tweeted on 23 July 2012: I love @CarlosLatuff mood when he gets inspired by #american news & events :) #ORIGINAL #usa impression !

Ahmed Samir 4 @asead10 22 July 2012@CarlosLatuff Sir, I just wanted to tell you that ur cartoons are nothing but a real representation of the saddening reality we live. Thnx. @CarlosLatuff wallahy [by God] you got me goose bumps :) I personally count on you all the time. Thank for being here and there .all respect and love

But Latuff also got this interesting question from Pakistan:

Nauman Ali Alvi@nauman 22 July 2012: @CarlosLatuff what about Arabs killing Arabs? Ali@Ali\_sao 20 July 2012

Another example of cross cultural conversations: When someone posted on Twitter a photo of a man carrying a poster on Fox News stating that: “Rich people paying rich people to tell middle class people to blame poor people,” an Egyptian @Legendary Noor tweeted to Latuff on April 21, 2012: “same here in #Egypt.”<sup>21</sup>

## Conclusion

In this study, I attempted to show how the “affordances” of the Internet and the spread of digital media have changed the way a non-mainstream cartoonist works, as well as how he connects with the world. Instead of waiting for the gatekeepers of newspapers to determine which of his daring cartoons may be used, if at all, he is able to reach thousands of his followers directly via Twitter, daily, and interact with those who love or hate his cartoons right after he posts them. His use of open sources allowed even mainstream papers to use his work, at least on issues they also support. Social media has also changed the way individuals

<sup>21</sup> Available from <https://twitter.com/CarlosLatuff>

and nations communicate within their own borders, and across borders in times of social unrest, even though old forms of communication monopolies persist. This globalizing of communication by “citizen journalists” from disenfranchised groups has revolutionized how people experience what used to be the distant global other. The new type of communication has created former “senders” who now are not the sole senders, and former “receivers,” who are also active producers and senders. When news happens, no one waits for the TV crew to cover it, and everyone in the area whips up a cell phone. Says Hartley, (2011): “Individuals ... don’t just ‘send’ messages as an action, ... they are a system of messages; ... they are constituted by and productive through messages, which are the means by which reason emerges” (p. 193). New forms of copyright, aptly called Copyleft and Creative Commons, have also enriched communication by making it freely available under conditions determined by the authors, thus, contributing the more creative use of the product of others, as may be seen in the reproductions of Latuff’s cartoons on the walls of Egypt and Palestinian refugee camps. The implications of these changes are enormous for social movements and those who study them. Researchers need to document how this type of interaction leads to creativity, as those who favor open copyright believe. The ease and lower cost of *real* mass communication for *real masses* means that scholars now have to archive, store and use Tweets to understand communication in real time, in specific countries and globally. No longer can one get away with only studying the *New York Times* and a few other papers to study political events or media coverage in other countries. Now, scholars have rich material to choose from when they study social movements. Numerous photography books took photos of signs Egyptians carried in Tahrir Square; ones that show that the Egyptian sense of humor for which they are known for in the Arab world is no joke. One student carried the sign addressed to Mubarak: “Scam! We have high school exams!” Another Egyptian told Mubarak in a sign that he got married 20 days earlier, and he misses his new bride. “Leave!” he begged. Now, scholars also have to look at the tweets of Egyptians like the one who wrote:

**Mohamedahmos:** Freedom loading. 99% [Error: Please remove Mubarak and try again!] Feb. 4, 2011 (Idle & Nunns, 2011, p. 146).

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