The Cartographic Ambiguities of HarassMap
Crowdmapping Security and Sexual Violence in Egypt

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Abstract

In December 2010, HarassMap was launched as a Cairo-based interactive online mapping interface for reporting and mapping incidents of sexual harassment anonymously and in real time, in Egypt. The project's use of spatial information technologies for crowdmapping sexual harassment raises important questions about the use of crowdsourced mapping as a technique of global human security governance, as well as the techno-politics of interpreting and representing spaces of gendered security and insecurity in Egypt's urban streetscape. By recoding Egypt's urban landscape into spaces subordinated to the visual cartography of the project's crowdsourced data, HarassMap obscures the complex assemblage that it draws together as the differentially open space of the Egyptian street – spaces that are territorialized and deterritorialized for authoritarian control, state violence, revolt, rape, new solidarities, gender reversals, sectarian tensions, and class-based mobilization. What is at stake in my analysis is the plasticity of victimage: to what extent can attempts to 'empower' women be pursued at the microlevel without amplifying the similarly imperial techniques of objectifying them as resources used to justify other forms of state violence? The question requires taking seriously the practices of mapping and targeting as an interface for securing public space.

Introduction

In December 2010, HarassMap was launched as a Cairo-based interactive

online mapping interface for the anonymous reporting and mapping of incidents of

sexual harassment in real time, in Egypt. Going public concomitantly with the

beginning of the mass demonstrations that have since come to be known as the

January 2011 Egyptian Revolution placed the project in a timely position to address

the issue of gendered sexual violence and assault. In the days leading up to former

president Hosni Mubarak's ouster, numerous accounts of Egypt's popular protests

were presented alongside reports of forced 'virginity tests' and women being

insulted, beaten, and raped (Amnesty International, 2013). The issue received

heightened international attention with the high profile assault of CBS reporter Lara

Logan, with media coverage of the incident emphasizing culturalist interpretations

of mob-style attacks on women protestors and accounts of the 'Arab street' teeming

with hyper-sexualized, hyper-masculinized mobs of young Arab men (Amar, 2011;

North, 2011). In subsequent months, HarassMap received worldwide media

attention for addressing the issue of sexual harassment in the country, which has

increasingly been portrayed as an endemic problem 'deeply rooted' in Egyptian

society (Chick, 2010; Bell, 2012).

HarassMap uses the Ushahidi open source crowdmapping platform and

FrontlineSMS to create a cartographic representation of incidents of sexual assault

that are reported through multiple channels and data streams including SMS texting,

email, Twitter and the HarassMap website (Ushahidi.org, 2014; HarassMap, 2014).

Ushahidi uses the Google Maps application programming interface (API), which

allows Google Maps to be embedded as a base map into the websites of third party

developers. As a Ushahidi implementation for geocoding and georeferencing

incidents of harassment, HarassMap presents geovisualized data points that

represent spaces of violence which are geolocated through positional information

reported, for instance, as text within an SMS report. The project's use of web-based

spatial information technologies for crowdmapping instances of sexual harassment

in Egypt presents a unique prism for theorizing about the increased interest in and

adoption of Google's mapping applications for disaster management, conflict

response, and other forms of humanitarian and human security intervention,

including those related to gendered sexual violence.

My interest in this project focuses on how crowdmapping -- understood here

as a networked assemblage of technological devices including global positioning and

imaging technologies, mobile phones, and Ushahidi software -- is used to produce a

particular biopolitical configuration of the Egyptian street. Like Bennett (2010), I

am drawn to Deleuze and Guattari's notion of assemblage in my thinking of the relay

between these different devices as 'ad hoc groupings of diverse elements... that

function despite the persistent presence of energies that confound them from

within' (Bennett, 2010: 23-24).   Alone these technological devices are not

necessarily biopolitical, but as they work together to aggregate data about sexual

violence, they create the conditions of possibility for forms of population

management through the 'targeting' of dangerous people, dangerous streets, and

dangerous neighborhoods. My reading does not attempt to analyze the impact of

the program's mapping and communication campaigns in terms of policy

implementation or shifts in general sentiment on the ground with regard to

perceptions or experiences of gendered sexual violence. Rather I am interested in

how HarassMap's specific configuration of data collection, processing, and

representation produce a particular knowledge of targeting that resonates with

other projects of securitization. As such, the project has more in common with

forms of scopic engagement imbued in unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) than, for

instance, how the same technologies are used for commercial purposes. Scholarship

on the ethics of precision in contemporary war, specifically aerial warfare, is helpful

for thinking about HarassMap's use of crowdmapping for generating criminalized

subjects and spaces in need of intervention. Zehfuss (2010: 544) argues that

precision targeting has made warfare more ethically acceptable because precise

targeting is assumed to incur less collateral damage. The acceptability of

intervention is justified by the ability for precision weapons to identify, locate, and

'hit' particular targets with accuracy while minimizing incidental damage. I suggest

that a similar ethics of precision is evident in narratives that celebrate HarassMap's

use of technology and its ability to target both individual harassers, whose pictures

are uploaded to the site via smartphone cameras, and in the visual and statistical

identification of 'hotspots' on the harassment map.

As with any evaluation of precision targeting, one needs to consider the

question of incidental violence. The incidental violence of HarassMap turns on what

I call the plasticity of victimage. To the extent that HarassMap seems unequivocally

positive, its location of the problem of gendered violence in Arab culture, its reliance

on the trope of victimhood, and its appeal to both international organizations and

local law enforcement are implicated in a project of population management that

works through an assemblage of actors, objects, and affects that animate colonial

archives of sexuality and 'Arabness.' As these archives resonate within new

techniques of mapping and targeting, the project produces a series of tensions

through demands for the expansion of the state's policing powers, more punitive

sanctions for harassers amidst crackdowns on anti-government and anti-military

sentiment, new prohibitive laws on public assembly, and the sexual torture of

women and men arrested for protesting while in state custody.

This chapter presents an alternative reading of HarassMap that considers

how the project presents a 'vertical solution' (Weizman, 2002; Crampton, 2010;

Graham, 2004, 2011; Graham and Hewitt, 2013; Elden, 2013) to the problem of

gendered human security through a series of technological interventions that

attempt to create new forms of public consciousness in the presentation of targets.

As a Ushahidi implementation, HarassMap's interfacing with Google Maps allows the

project to engage in a kind of aerial targeting of harassment, creating a domain of

intervention that is atmospheric, grounded, networked, and global. By recoding

Egypt's urban landscape into spaces subordinated to the visual cartography of the

project's crowdsourced data, HarassMap recodes the complex assemblage that it

draws together as the differentially open space of the Egyptian street – spaces that

are territorialized and deterritorialized for authoritarian control, state violence,

revolt, rape, new solidarities, gender reversals, sectarian tensions, and class-based

mobilization.

Leszczynski and Elwood (2015: 15) accurately note that HarassMap

highlights how the spatial navigation of urban life is never a frictionless terrain of

movement for women, but is always gendered and sexualized and must therefore be

negotiated to minimize the possibility of violence. My analysis asks us to consider how HarassMap's representation of space is also racialized, and how the project is skewed toward a particular internationalist interpretation of gendered space that relies on a liberal 'rule of law' framework, one that is highly problematic given the role of the Egyptian state in the creation of a climate of sexual terror as a form of political retribution and intimidation. Without discounting the potential ameliorative effects of HarassMap or dismissing the intentions of its founders and

participants, I wish to highlight how HarassMap appeals to culturalist explanations of sexual violence in the Arab world that resonate with an ethics of precision that has filtered into realms of human security and public consumption as satellite and imaging technologies become part of our everyday experience of *other* space. What is at stake in my analysis is this: To what extent can attempts to empower women be pursued at the microlevel without amplifying the similarly imperial techniques of objectifying them as a resource used to justify other forms of state violence? The question calls for a close analysis of the practices of mapping and targeting as interfaces for securing public space. Ultimately we must consider the degree to which seemingly progressive uses of these technologies can exceed the martial logic of their origin.

The original research for this chapter is based on an evaluation of 449 reports posted in English and 252 reports posted in Arabic, including pictures and video, to the HarassMap website between October 2004 and April 2014; two annual reports produced by the project; approximately three hours of video published on

the HarassMap website; as well as several articles about and previously published

interviews with members of HarassMap staff. Rather than explore the use of

HarassMap as a strategy that either 'works' or doesn't, or make claims about any

number of reports representing epistemic breaks in practices of human security, I

propose an engagement with the project from within the globalizing networks

whereby bodies and data travel together to think about what it might represent in

terms of incipient shifts in biopolitical logics of securitization. In other words, I

explore how the concept of HarassMap is outpacing its application. The primary

focus of the chapter is on how the project makes sensible the targeting of space, and

the emergence of new forms of intervention that point to how larger systems of

biopolitical ordering that may mutate and transform at rates often too slow to be

seen.

In what follows, I consider the project's specific policing techniques in the

context of what I identify as an incipient merger between UN gender discourses on

sexual security and the use of crowdsourced data for human security governance. I

then argue that HarassMap employs a particular territorial strategy to capture and

redefine the policing of urban sociality as a three-dimensional space, where planar

perspectives on territory representing the so-called 'reality' of sexual violence on

the ground are dependent upon a material assemblage of technologies, from

satellites to mobile handheld devices, that make visible particular kinds of targets

through the project's mapping interface. Finally, I pose the question of whether or

not sexual violence is best addressed through more total forms of surveillances and

paradigms of risk management that seek to order populations into profiles and

probabilities as part of an internationalist and interventionist project of human

security governance.

Security, devices, and the government of things

While spatial information technologies have deeply militarized roots, they

are, like all technologies, ambivalent and contingent in how they organize

knowledge (Coutard and Guy, 2007: 714; Burns, 2014). This is evidenced in the

increasing public use of these technologies through platforms like Google Earth and

Google Maps. A growing number of scholars have begun to consider the use of

geospatial technologies and mapping platforms in theorizations of geopolitics and

visuality (Weizman, 2002), urban life (Graham & Hewitt, 2013), critical geography

(Elden, 2009, 2013; Crampton, 2010) and humanitarian intervention (Parks, 2009;

Crutcher & Zook, 2008). Burns (2014: 52) defines digital humanitarianism as 'the

enacting of social and institutional networks, technologies and practices that enable

large unrestricted numbers of remote and on-the-ground individuals to collaborate

on humanitarian management through digital technologies'. Writing about the use

of GIS in digital humanitarianism, Burns argues that the reliance on remote

processing, aggregation, and the representation of user generated data results in

each program or project also producing its own form of knowledge politics (Burns,

52; see also Zook et al., 2010; Brabham 2008). For example, Lisa Parks' (2009: 537)

essay on Google Earth's 'Crisis in Darfur' project shows how mapping platforms

mediate affective visual-cartographic arrangements of satellite imagery, war

photography, graphic narratives, and human rights monitoring meant to provoke

particular responses and preface particular geopolitical agendas. The use of Google

Earth in creating both a knowledge politics about Darfur and the publics for this

information is an example of what Burns calls 'moments of closure' in which certain

forms of knowledge politics become temporarily 'fixed' in the software, hardware,

and social practices of particular technologies (Burns, 2014: 52).

This scholarship presents a challenge to the idea of spatial information

technologies as purely instrumental, instead attending to the social, historical and

political contingency of technical devices and platforms, and how the functionalities

of these devices shape human action and the representation of data to present a

particular picture of the world. Focusing on the instrumentality of the devices

employed in the production and distribution of HarassMap's crowdsourced data

provides insights into how the project reorganizes concerns about development and

modernization toward a gendered security paradigm invested in both feminist

internationalism and free-market transnationalism. By feminist internationalism, I

mean the move toward defining universal and measurable criteria to improve the

conditions for women globally in a range of areas including health, education and

economic opportunity. These criteria, in particular those related to sexual violence,

are increasingly being thought of in terms of surveillance and policing in UN gender

discourses. As Foucault (2007) recounts through the work of Guillaume de La

Perrière, policing requires the right disposition of people and things within a

network of contingent interventions, technological innovations, and spatial

arrangements, where life and the living are organized in such a way as to achieve

these criteria. Free-market transnationalism, which I borrow from Sparke (2006:

153), is defined as 'the incorporation of economic imperatives that involve

increasingly transnational capitalist interdependencies and the associated

entrenchment of transnational capitalist mobility rights through various forms of

free-market re-regulation'. Here neoliberalism is described as a set of contingent

practices of free-market governance, which often incorporate illiberal forms of

political management (Sparke, 2006: 153). I am interested in how the confluence of

these two interests resonate with security as a form of governance, and how the

goals of the advancement of women and the expansion of market reason come to

inhabit the practices of sexual security.

Critical feminist engagements with human security have raised important

concerns about gendered, racial and class-based exclusions produced in the

construction of universal notions of human values, instead highlighting the

ambiguity of 'security' and arguing for an emphasis on relationality and context in

how security is conceived and operationalized (Hudson, 2005; Christie, 2010;

Wibben, 2011; Marhia, 2013). The study of HarassMap contributes to this literature

in two ways. First, it brings feminist security studies into conversation with

feminist geographic research and postcolonial cartography engaging GIS

technologies (Kwan, 2002; McLafferty, 2005; Radcliffe, 2009) to looking at how the

project's use of crowdsourcing and crowdmapping produces racial and class-based

exclusions in the interest of sexual security. Second, it suggests an incipient shift in

how the use of crowdsourcing and crowdmapping by international organizations is

reorganizing the locus of human security from the individual to what Deleuze

(1990) terms the 'dividual'. Williams (2005) explains, dividuals are embodied

human subjects that are 'endlessly divisible and reducible to data representations

via modern technologies of control' where information about our*selves* can be

separated from us and resynthesized in ways over which we have no control. As

women who are subjected to sexual violence are encouraged to identify themselves

as targets of intervention via HarassMap, their experiences are aggregated at the

intersections of class, age, race and gender to demonstrate large quantities or

patterns of violence. Once this happens, it is no longer a particular person's

experience or life that is to be secured. Instead, aggregate sums of experiences

replace any one woman's life to determine the success or failure of an intervention,

as well as for indexing the targets of those operations. Spaces and lifeworlds are

thus decontextualized and made sensible to a quantitative index used to determine

how liberal or illiberal a neighborhood, city, or even an entire region is. Here, the

streets of Cairo become a space in which the highly sexualized bodies of Egyptian

men and women are tracked, tagged and coded in ways that seem innocuous, but in

fact fall into a *dispositif* of security that renders all data useful in 'manipulating,

maintaining, distributing, and re-establishing relations of force' (Foucault 2007:

312). Within this *dispositif*, security is no longer strictly disciplinary, but is

dispersed along and within multiple layers and strategies of power whose project is

to 'make life live' (see Dillon & Lobo-Guerrero, 2008; Muller, 2008).

Thus HarassMap cannot help but produce new data streams about the

Egyptian population that can be redeployed by the matrix of liberal feminism and

neoliberalism. Paul Amar (2013: 214) describes this phenomenon of UN-affiliated

non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working locally on the issue of harassment

within 'a middle-class, law enforcement-centered rescue-protection

framework'. My reading of HarassMap pushes Amar's analysis further into the

'government of things,' and specifically toward what Aradau (2010) identifies as the

performative role of material objects in practices of securitization. The devices I am

engaging in this chapter are performative in that they produce particular

frameworks for security that privilege Western international norms and a middle-

class and consumerist understandings of public space. We can neither graft

Foucault's account of 18th century France onto the streets of contemporary Cairo,

nor declare these new technological assemblages as unprecedented. Instead what I

am arguing is that innovative techniques of governmentality mobilize and mutate

older epics of racial and sexual knowledge. Following this, technological devices,

crowdsourcing, private enterprises such as mobile phone companies, datasets,

satellite imaging, and international organizations become imbued with colonial

legacies and the particularities of the Egyptian urban milieu to define a unique

repertoire of human security interventions where social, political and cultural life

can be reduced to a set of calculations and codes.

HarassMap, crowdmapping and laboratories of securitization

Amar (2013: 204) argues that the spaces in which gendered human security

regimes operate in Egypt form 'a crucial laboratory' for experiments with an

assortment of emancipatory and repressive securitization practices that shape what

he calls 'contemporary gender-sensitive security states'. I draw on this idea of the

laboratory for thinking about HarassMap in light of the emerging alliance between

UN gender norms as a human security priority, and the increasing move toward

crowdsourced mapping by international institutions as a strategy for disaster

management and human security governance. These systems work together at the

intersection of technology, calculation, and affect to produce two separate yet

interfacing configurations of security governance. The first relates to the

production of a particular kind of cultural security and social hierarchy that

marginalizes class-based mobilization, and instead highlights the proper female

citizen as a law-enforcement centered and gendered consumer marked by class

(Amar, 2013: 128). The second form of ordering relates to the creation of what

Jasbir Puar (2007: 107) terms 'data bodies', or bodies materialized through

algorithms, statistics and data streams that are racialized and sexualized through

the information they assemble.

Originally created for the purpose of mapping reports of violence in the

aftermath of the 2008 Kenyan elections, Ushahidi has since been used by numerous

organizations to collect information about and create cartographic representations

of crowdsourced reports on various issues, including those related to sexual

violence and assault. In what appears to be a growing trend, other organizations

have adopted the Ushahidi platform specifically for georeferencing crowdsourced

data on gendered violence, including the Women's Media Center's 'Women Under

Siege' (2014) website, which documents reports of sexual assault in Syria,

Geographies of Violence Delhi (2014), and the Open Institute for Gender Based

Violence in Cambodia (2014).

The idea for HarassMap was developed in 2005 by two women working for

the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR) in Cairo: Rebecca Chiao, an

American graduate of the Johns Hopkins University Paul H. Nitze School of

Advanced International Studies (SAIS), who currently acts as the director of the

project, and Engy Ghozlan, an Egyptian women's right activist (Tavaana.org,

2013). Both women recall experiencing daily sexual harassment on the streets of

Egypt as a motivating factor in the project's beginning stages. As part of their work

for ECWR, Ghozlan and Chiao began developing an anti-harassment campaign and

communicating with other organizations and NGOs addressing the issue. It was at

this time that they met two of the other core members of the HarassMap team:

Sawsan Gad, a geographic information systems (GIS) data analyst, and Amal Fahmy,

who had worked for the United Nations Population Fund (Tavaana.org, 2013;

HarassMap.org). The harassment map was conceived in part with technical

assistance from NiJeL, a group that partners with other organizations to create

custom systems for data visualization and analysis (NiJeL.org, 2014). Nahdet El

Mahrousa, an incubator focusing on 'social entrepreneurship,' currently provides a

legal umbrella for the organization to operate within the country. Since its initial

launch, the project has received a two-year grant from Canada's International

Development Research Centre (IDRC), and has raised more than US$25,000 from a

2013 Indiegogo crowdfunding campaign. The project has also received several

international awards including the 2012 World Summit Youth Award, which

acknowledges organizations working toward the United Nations Millennium

Development Goals, the 2012 Deutsche Welle Award for best use of technology for

social good, and a certificate of recognition from the Association of American

Geographers 'My Community, Our Earth' partnership.

HarassMap has both an Arabic and English language interface for reporting

incidents of sexual harassment. Individuals are prompted to assign the incident to a

particular category of harassment provided by the site (touching, rape, catcalls, etc.),

the location of the incident, a summary of what happened, along with a series of

demographic indicators including age, gender, and level of education

(HarassMap). These reports are reviewed by the HarassMap team and then

geovisualized as a geographical data point over Google Maps in the form of a red dot

that can be aggregated or individuated depending on the position of the zoom toggle

(Figure 1). Its multiple filtering options for refining the presentation of data

reinforces the perception of the map as both totalizing and infallible in terms of its

ability to penetrate particular space. HarassMap's research team regularly reviews

the map to identify 'hotspots' where community organizers deploy communications

campaigns aimed at encouraging action against sexual harassment in accordance with a series of guidelines provided by the organization (Rissman, 2014). Chiao states that the outreach program takes what she calls a 'social approach' to addressing harassment: 'We do direct interventions to rescue the women, but in our normal long-term work we target bystanders to intervene' (Tillet, 2013).

HarassMap has 10 full-time employees, at the time of writing, and claims over 1000 volunteer members for its community outreach program (Rissman,

2014). These volunteers are trained to speak with 'locals' and those with a visible presence on the street, and printouts of the map are distributed to demonstrate 'proof' of the problem as endemic to a particular area (HarassMap, 2014). Those with whom HarassMap makes contact are asked to sign an agreement that they will intervene when acts of harassment occur according to the guidelines provided, and in instances where people are reluctant to sign a document, HarassMap reads this
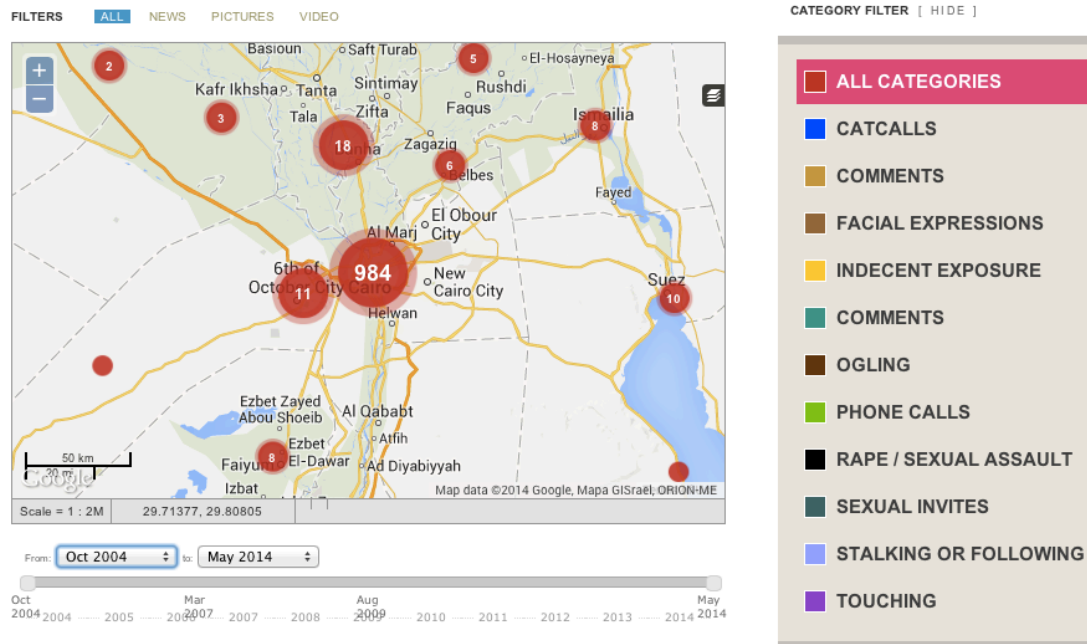
Figure 1. HarassMap. http://HarassMap.org/en/what-we-do/the-map.
Source: HarassMap (2014), author screenshot (accessed 2 May 2014).

contract to them, asks them for a verbal agreement, and signs it on their behalf

(Rissman, 2014). HarassMap also encourages shop owners who have signed the

pledge to put stickers in their windows indicating their support for the project, with

the promise of potential revenue generation, and as a visual marker of HarassMap's

presence on the street.

The techniques described here allow us to situate HarassMap within a

particular system of UN-recognized feminist campaigns identified by Amar (2013:

204) that emerged between 2003 and 2010. These campaigns rejected class-

conscious movements for social change and instead focused on cultural

explanations for gendered sexual violence. Organizations working within this

framework called for an intensification of policing on the streets to combat

harassment, and promoted campaigns geared toward 'social respectability' that

facilitated 'securitized and militarized appropriations of internationalist gender and

security interventions'. For example, Harasmap's 2010-2012 annual report, despite

acknowledging that some instances of sexual violence reported to the site were

committed by Egyptian security forces, focuses its criticism of the police and

military solely in terms of a lack of presence or a lack of willingness to intervene

(Gad and Hassan, 2012: 6, 9). Chiao has also advocated in numerous interviews for

increased policing on Egypt's streets as part of an integrated campaign to fight

sexual harassment: 'We're also going to give the map to the police, who want to

increase their activities against sexual harassment but still don't have a system for

finding out exactly where the incidents tend to happen. The map will reinforce the

protection of women, especially in so-called "hot spots" ' (Shibib, 2011). This

position ignores how the Egyptian security state has institutionalized sexual

violence against women and men as a way to undermine political dissent (Amar,

2013; Slackman, 2005; Allam, 2014).

Amar traces the development of the legislative language around sexual

harassment as a human security priority within UN gender discourses back to

October 2000 with UN Security Council (UNSCR) Resolution 1325 on 'Women, Peace

and Security,' which was designed to 'mainstream gender' into practices of peace

and security among member states (Amar, 2013: 205). UNSCR 1325 was

incorporated into the 2005 United Nations Development Program's 'Arab Human

Development Report', which identified the problem of sexual harassment and the

discriminatory dispositions of Arab men as a human security concern. The Egyptian

government also used UNSCR 1325 in 2009 as a precedent for consolidating

executive powers and increasing security during civil unrest, supposedly to protect

women from street harassment (Amar, 2013: 205). Referencing Sally Merry (2003:

943), Amar describes the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of

Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) as

> 'a cultural system whose coin is admission into the international community
> of human-rights compliant states. At the heart of this legal process of
> monitoring this international human rights convention is the cultural work of
> altering the meanings of gender and of state responsibility for gender
> equality [through which] national and international NGOs...shame
> noncompliant governments [whose] sovereignty was increasingly defined as
> contingent on its human rights performance' (Merry cited in Amar, 2013:
> 206).

HarassMap draws directly on these UN gender doctrines and CEDAW institutions,

funds, discourses and legal-juridical mobilizing strategies; two of its four core

members have worked for the UN, and the project has a standing relationship with

the UN's Safe Cities Project.

This research provides a valuable context for considering the use of geo-

spatial technologies in the ordering and management of urban Arab populations,

and how crowdsourced mapping is emerging as a preferred technique within global

human security governance. UN General Assembly Resolution 61/110 established

the UN Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and

Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER) on December 14, 2006 (UN, 2014). The stated

goal of UN-SPIDER is to provide 'universal access to all countries and all relevant

international and regional organizations to all types of space-based information and

services relevant to disaster and disaster risk management' (UN-SPIDER, 2014). In

2011 the UN General Assembly Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

released report AC105/1007, which emphasized the importance of crowdsourced

mapping facilitated by spatial technologies, satellite imagery, telecommunications

satellites and global navigation satellite systems for disaster management, and

acknowledged the importance of collaborative ventures between UN-SPIDER and its

Volunteer and Technical Communities (V&TCs) including Ushahidi, Google

Mapmaker, OpenStreetMap and CrisisMappers (UN, 2011).

Ushahidi is an example of how advances in software, mobile technologies and

geo-spatial data collection and interpretation have facilitated the move of geodata

collection from commercial uses to crowdsourcing data for human security

governence. Crowdmapping, has become increasingly popular for addressing what

Ushahidi co-founder Erik Hersman calls the problem of 'wasted crisis information',

which he explains as an ability to 'produce' crowdsourced reports in excess of the

ability to 'consume' them (TED, 2009). We can infer here that Hersman means that

the data collected via crowdsourcing often exceeds the ability to use it for disaster

response, but his language of production and consumption is also telling.

Crowdsourcing, which was born in user-generated advertising content and online

commercial competitions, speaks to a particular kind of relationship between space

and calculation that contributes to a phenomenon that Crampton and Elden (2006:

681) call the 'mathematization of the subject'. Following Osborne and Rose (2004),

they argue that a model of population management based on ordering, ranking and

measuring relies on a model of rationality that makes space 'amenable to thought'.

Consider this insight in the context HarassMap's ability to differentiate between

types of harassment and their degrees of violence in order to manage the level of

response. The coding of the different types of sexual harassment (catcalls,

comments, facial expressions, stalking, etc.), of the number of incidents, and of their

precise location speaks to HarassMap's own projection of the relationship between

space and calculation that allows the project to produce through crowdmapping a

particular visualization of urban life in Egypt. Here geo-spatial technologies become

tools for HarassMap's unique form of population management around statistical

inferences about sexual violence that remain distinct from questions of economics,

inequality, austerity policies, geopolitical relations, international arms trade, and

monetary and fiscal policy.

The illusion of transparent space and an all-seeing vision has been described

elsewhere by Donna Haraway as the 'view from nowhere' (1988; see also Rose

1997). Given that sexual violence is not the traditional way that political geography

situates knowledge, HarassMap does appear to present a feminist cartography via

crowdmapping. However, the project does not appear to engage working-class

Arabs, alternative feminist movements within the country, or movements mobilized

around religion or class in the building of categories and the assignment of names in

the process of mapping.

Mapping gender securitization in the volume

      The notion of terrain as volumetric is incorporated in a provocative range of

scholarship on the vertical dimensions of security (Adey et al., 2011; Elden 2013,

Graham and Hewitt, 2013; Williams 2007; Zehfuss 2011) and on the more overtly

militaristic control of aerial space (Williams, 2007; Gregory, 2011; Adey, 2010a;

Adey, 2010b). However, the aerial politics of domination are not always overtly

militaristic. The use of mapping and geo-positioning technologies also engage the

vertical dimensions of territory and security, highlighting new spheres for

intervention and new spaces of vulnerability. HarassMap uses mapping as a

territorial strategy to capture and redefine the policing of urban sociality as a three-

dimensional space. The ability for HarassMap to approach the problem of sexual

harassment from a multi-scalar perspective is dependent upon an assemblage of

devices that are atmospheric, grounded and networked. Here, the securitization of

feminist internationalism dovetails with practices of aerial targeting (of individuals,

neighborhoods, even whole 'cultures') not dissimilar from what Wall and Monahan

(2011: 239) call the 'drone stare,' or a form of surveillance that abstracts life on the

ground and reduces difference, variation and 'noise' in an effort to achieve a

strategic advantage through systems of verticality.

Graham and Hewitt's (2013) work on 'Google Earth urbanism' highlights a

series of useful vantage points from which to consider HarassMap's 'vertical

solution' to the problem of sexual violence. In their account, global satellite imagery,

digital cartography, geo-spatial data collection, street level digital imagery, social

media and other data and software that make up Google's mapping interface are

combined as an 'always on' interactive datascape. These platforms become 'a

flexible and multi-scaled portal through which urban life can be enacted, mediated

and experienced in profoundly new and important ways' (p. 75; citing Scott, 2010).

The increasing public access to these technologies is reshaping our relationship to

the world as one that is becoming 'radically accessible, zoomable and pannable in a

myriad of mobile and (near) real-time ways'. The fact that Google does not produce

any of its own aerial images, instead acquiring them through various commercial

entities and governments that produce satellite imagery (Parks, 2009; Kurgan,

2013), does not diminish the fact that 'any distinct spatial patterns within uploaded

information have the potential to become real and reinforced as Google is

continually relied on as a true representation of the offline world' (Graham and

Zook, 2011: 115). Roger Stahl's (2010: 67) discussion of aerial representations

facilitated by Google Earth provide some insight into how aerial representations

produced through the Google Maps API create a new kind of public consciousness

through a particular 'aesthetics of visibility' that make certain kinds of knowledge

visible while obscuring others.

Following Stahl, the layered regimes of visibility, access, and control embedded

in these interfaces speak to HarassMap's use of geospatial data for targeting, as well

as the use of the harassment map as irrefutable evidence that sexual violence is

happening in a particular locale. As co-founder Rebecca Chaio notes, 'It's so easy to

zoom in... make a printout of the map and bring it to people in the streets and show

them, *this is our neighborhood*.' (emphasis mine; IDRC, 2013).

Crowdmapping, together with the delegation of on-the-ground outreach

activities, make visible a particular interpretation of Egyptian urban sociality that is

not only reflected in, but is also defined by, different interfacing technologies, aerial

images, and digital representations of violence. Hence, more than a digital depiction

of an existing reality on the ground, HarassMap aims to shape the spaces it claims to

represent. HarassMap as a tool for mapping sexual violence in real-time is only

possible because of today's real-time zoom, from the entire surface of the Earth to a

single individual on the ground. Through its interfacing with the Ushahidi platform,

the website is able to present a totalizing picture of incidents of sexual violence from
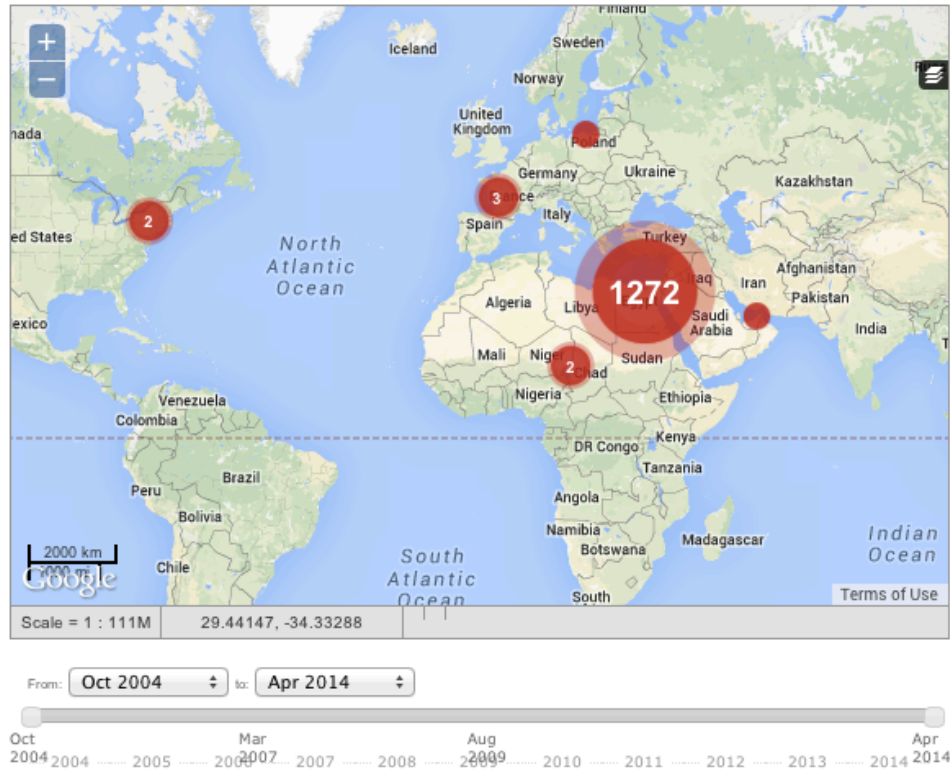
Figure 2. HarassMap.org/en
Source: HarassMap (2014), author screenshot (accessed 12 April 2014).

2004 to present day as a comprehensive and filterable set of geo-spatial data points

organized along a uniform spectrum that smoothes over the varying origins,

sources, motivations, and contexts that belong to the patchwork of individual

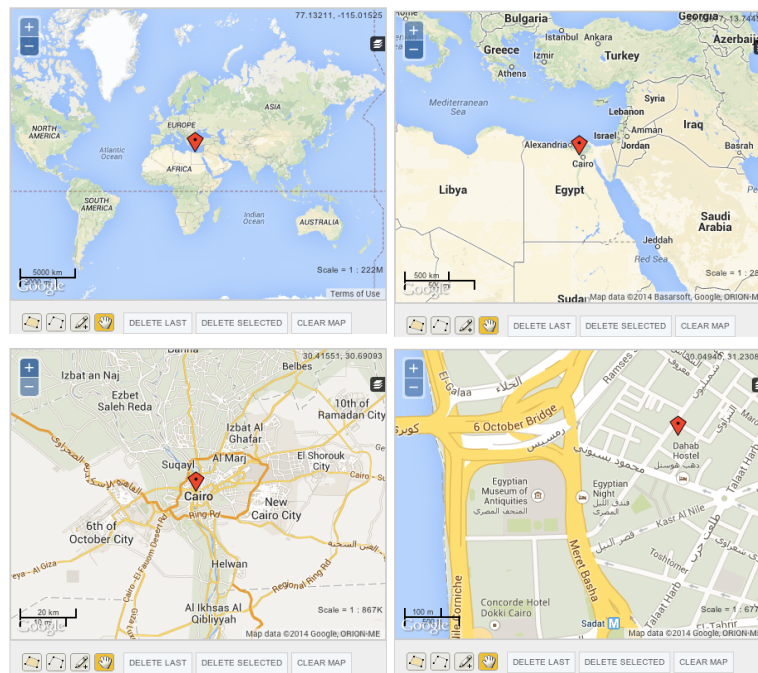reports and news items that comprise its archeological record.

Figure 3. Four different zoom positions on a single reporting map.
Source: HarassMap (2014), HarassMap.org/en/submit-report.
Author screenshot (accessed 12 April 2014).

HarassMap claims to represent the material conditions of sexual violence and assault on the ground through its ability to zoom in and out of a series of frames that present a 'view from above' of incidents of harassment. The zooming function of Google Maps creates the aesthetic experience of sliding along a scale by constructing an uninterrupted flow between different spatial planes whereby sexual harassment is captured from the air to the ground target and then back again into the Earth's atmosphere at a scale of 1 pixel to 111 meters. This experience of scale is illustrated in Figure 3, which depicts four different zoom positions, from the global to the street level, on a single reporting map. At its maximal aerial vantage point (Figure 2), the
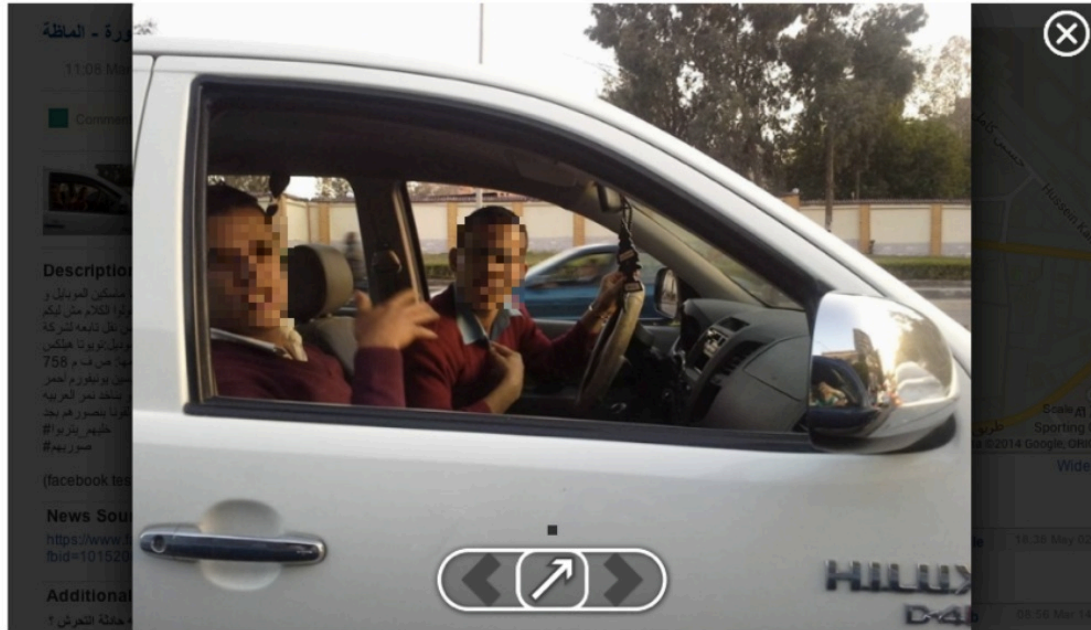
red dot representing instances of harassment and sexual violence in Egypt visually

dwarfs the entire country, spreading into Turkey, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and

Libya. The number of reports (1272 on April 12, 2014) mostly originating from

Cairo vastly overshadows the single digit reports made in the United States (two

reports) and those made in Europe (three reports).

Applying Kurgan's (2013) engagement with Google Earth to the Google Maps

interface, we can see how the political, economic and security stakes that

underwrite the creation of the map disappear (p. 21). All that remain are the

markers of sexual violence as time stamps and a series of coordinates (p. 21) that

are made available for the public view. Certainly it could be argued that

HarassMap's efforts are focused primarily on Egypt's urban areas and not on the

United States or Europe. The program's target areas notwithstanding, global

surveillance is a specter residing within the combination of Google Maps satellite

imagery and the international purview of the UN gender conventions and norms

cited on the HarassMap website. The assemblage of interfaces that make up the

harassment map generate a visual representation of the project's global jurisdiction,

as well as a visual representation of its crowdsourced data.

Kurgan (2013: 20) draws our attention to the 'radically decentering' effect of

the seemingly 'uninterrupted flow' of the map as one moves smoothly from one

scale to another. The combination of interfaces that make up the harassment map

do not give preference to any particular scale, as there is no 'natural or logical

starting or stopping point for the zoom'. As Kurgan notes about the decentering

effect of the zoom toggle more generally, the scale is 'relativized by its proximity to

and distance from the next'. The map is not bound to any particular location or

scale, 'least of all the human scale' (Kurgan, 2013: 20), which is where HarassMap

Figure 4. Image of harassers, accompanying a report dated 21 March 2014.
Source: http://HarassMap.org/en/what-we-do/the-map/. HarassMap (2014), author screenshot
(accessed 7 May 2014).

identifies the emergence of subject as victim or perpetrator. This creates a visual

representation of HarassMap's jurisdiction as global, a presentation that works

concomitantly with the project's promotion of UN gender norms. As such, Egyptian

urban sociality and sexuality appears as a series of flattened and homogenous

images that can be evaluated and monitored at the minutest level.

Targeting chains and the plasticity of victimage

HarassMap points to how advances in mobile technology have

deterritorialized the capacity for aerial surveillance from overhead images

produced by military-grade satellites to quotidian ground-level mobile

communications devices for capturing video, photographs, and other forms of data.

The complex interfacing between practices, technologies, people, and policies

creates a 'target-chain' used to direct HarassMap's management of Egypt's urban

spaces. My use of the term 'target-chain' is inspired by Derek Gregory's (2011: 196)

theorizing of the 'kill-chain' in his discussion of more overt forms of violence in

drone warfare and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). In Gregory's description, a

'kill-chain' is the dispersed apparatus of networked actors, affects, objects,

discourses and practices that produce targets as these elements pass through the

chain. This process of passing through creates particular kinds of subjects when

bureaucratic practices and acute forms of violence are brought together in the

creation of targets. For Gregory, what is unique about the late modern kill-chain is

that it must contend with mobile targets, which requires the rapid processing of

information. This results in an experience of time-space compression that draws

more dispersed elements within the apparatus closer to the visual field of the

'killing space' (Grant, 2008 cited in Gregory, 2011: 196).

A less overtly militaristic yet similar organization of actants and processes can

be found in HarassMap's geospatial interventions. These interventions are also

comprised of an assemblage of disparate and dispersed elements, including

Egyptian women, NGOs, liberal international discourses on human rights,

smartphones, GIS software, the Ushahidi platform, local shop keepers, international

donors, images of young Arab men in moving cars, and security states that are

drawn together in the creation of decisive objects of aerial targeting. Through its

community mobilization campaigns, HarassMap engages everyday citizens in the

practice of targeting (on the street when asked to 'speak out' against the harasser, in

uploading reports, in taking photos of harassers with mobile devices, in identifying

target areas for community intervention), creating a target-chain comprised of

nodes and links that engage other areas of social, legal, and political life.

We should give closer consideration to the networked engagements between

ground and air surveillance that make it possible for HarassMap to act on real

objects and complex urban environments, where violence of such intervention have

otherwise become increasingly abstract and obscured. This is in part, I think, a

result of crowdmapping's so-called utility, as well the discourses of innovation and

progress that filter into HarassMap's use of imagery and navigation to be able to

intervene on victims' behalf with increasing precision. It is here that we find the

answer to the ethico-political problem of sexual harassment in Egypt - in discourses

about Western technological superiority and a market-based ethics that sees life as

enhanced through its subjection to free-market governance. Yet HarassMap's ability

to hit its specific target is, as Zehfuss (2011: 551) has argued about targeting

precision more generally, not the same as not hitting anything else.

The targets visualized through the HarassMap interface are also more than just

a mark on the map representing an ogler, toucher, or rapist. In fact, it might be

more accurate to say that HarassMap produces a series of interfacing targets. There

is the materiality of the targets themselves, which are actual people, objects, and

environments that can be acted upon immediately, decisively, and with such speed

that the violence of these interventions often appear abstract. Within this material

and holographical target space are racialized and sexualized women who

themselves become targets for rescue operations. There is also Egypt's cultural

acceptability of harassment as a target, which plays into culturalist explanations for

sexual violence that rely on Orientalist tropes of unchecked masculine aggression

and the 'predatory sexuality' of the so-called Arab street, which as Amar (2011b)

argues resonates with a commonly accepted presumption that Egypt needs an

authoritarian government to keep its politics and population in order.

More importantly, the idea that the proliferation of sexual violence emerged as

a result of the power vacuum left by Mubarak's ouster is factually inaccurate. Sexual

violence committed by security forces, police, and hired 'thugs' [*baltagiya*] was a

frequently used element of Mubarak's repertoire of political intimidation tactics.

One of the more notable examples is the event known as Black Wednesday, when in

May 2005 security forces held back crowds so that plai-clothes policemen could

beat and sexually assault four women, including journalists, who called for a boycott

of a constitutional amendment that would strengthen Mubarak's position in

government and solidify the succession of his son, Gamal. (Ahram.org; Slackman,

2005). Mubarak's government also used sexual violence and harassment as a

justification for mass arrests of presumed political dissidents. This move was seen

as a victory among many women's groups demanding more police intervention on

the street. In another example, in November 2008 Egyptian security forces arrested

400 young men and boys between the ages of 15 and 17 for 'flirting offenses'

according to Cairo police director Faruq Lashin (Amar 2011a: 319).

A similar culture of sexual terror continues under al-Sisi's rule despite recent

overtures to international demands for more government response to the issue.

Egypt signed the United Nations Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence

in Conflict in 2013, and in 2014 made sexual harassment a criminal offense, with a

punishment of up to five years in jail and fines ranging from E£ 400-7000 (US$ 52-

917) (Allam, 2014). It seems clear that the enforcement of the sexual harassment

law seems highly selective at best, and at worst has been used as a justification for

extending political brutality and the mass arrests of protestors. In October 2012,

another 172 men were arrested during the first two days of the Eid al-Adha [*Feast of

the Sacrifice*] holiday (Egypt Independent, 2012). There have also been widespread

reports of women being assaulted while in custody after they have been arrested to

'protect' them from harassment while engaging in demonstrations. Male dissidents

are also regularly raped and tortured while detained by security forces (Kingsley,

2014). If, according to government figures, more than 16,000 people have been

arrested for political dissent between July 2013 and April 2014 (Kingsley, 2014), it

is daunting to consider the number of incidents of rape and assault that have gone

unreported.

HarassMap has almost nothing to say about the role of the Egyptian government and Egyptian security forces in directly perpetuating a culture of sexual terror among its citizens. When explaining why they think sexual harassment has become so common in Egypt, they argue that there is no data that exists to explain this phenomenon, but that based on their experiences it seems reasonable to attribute it to a form of 'general aggression, power, and violence' (HarassMap, 2015) within Egyptian society. Women are more likely to be attacked, in their explanation, because they occupy a lower position within society, and the government's passive attitude toward the problem of sexual harassment seems to be exacerbating the issue (HarassMap, 2014). However, the examples of state sanctioned violence illustrated here seem anything but passive.

Bringing Zehfuss' (2011) discussion of precision back in, these examples also ask us to consider what else might lie with the 'radius of the blast' of HarassMap's targeting campaign. Do the HarassMap team and its volunteers consider those who might not otherwise become targets of the state - for instance women who are 'protectively detained' (Amar, 2011a: 319) from harassment during protests? Are these women simply considered 'collateral damage' in the overall appeal to more policing of sexual harassment? Does the program offer justifications for its own 'casualty levels' that also rise as sexual harassment becomes targeted more decisively by security and legal apparatuses? As Zehfuss (2011: 553) points out, 'technological advances might lead to an increasing - or at least different - exposure of civilians, as did the possibility of aerial warfare in the first place'. In this

instance, faith in precision may also encourage engaging targets in new ways and in more problematic environments.

Could the problem of sexual violence be considered in other ways? And more specific to this analysis, could the map itself be used and interpreted in a different way? Given the prevalence of the state's use of sexual violence against political dissidents, is it possible that 'hotspots' might also reflect areas where class-based mobilizations against Egypt's politico-military infrastructure are gaining traction, and thus where 'thugs' and other plain-clothes police might be deployed to do their dirty work? Where do lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) communities fit, or alternative forms of public sexuality? And how might HarassMap be used to reduce state intervention in political publics rather than increase it? Rebecca Chiao has stated that she and her team are not academics, from which I infer that she means the program is more interested in putting 'boots on the ground' (or eyes in the air) than speculating about the political, legal and juridical spaces that the map creates, as well as the consequences, intended or not, of its framing.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how HarassMap's use of crowdsourced data for mapping sexual harassment helps us to think about both technological contributions to securitization and the hidden violence of feminist humanitarianism that translates Arab bodies, Arab streets, and Arab cities into targets for remote

monitoring and intervention. The militarized systems and market rationalities from which these technologies have emerged cannot be entirely separated from the techniques of ordering and targeting that they make possible in the context in which I have described. While I readily acknowledge the variation and diversity in reports and in the emerging community responses within and across these security-scapes, the map's resonances with other forms of aerial targeting reveal broader patterns that depoliticize class-based politics around the issue of harassment, as well as promote increased state security presence without acknowledging the violence inherent therein. Aerial targeting via crowdmapping and online mapping applications attempts to subject whole populations to scrutiny and intervention, and treats them as targets that can, without careful consideration, be abstracted from political, cultural and geographical contexts, thereby reducing difference that might otherwise highlight the moral and political ambiguity of the map. The combination of UN gender norms and the turn to crowdmapping for the purpose of human security governance normalizes the ongoing subjugation of those who find themselves outside of these international norms and legal regulations, becoming racialized and sexualized targets for discriminatory observation and intervention. However, aerial observations and interventions operate on multiple discursive and affective registers where the categories and identities they create are far from objective (Wall and Monahan, 2011: 250). In the present context, these identities include but are not limited to *baltagiya* and civilian, women and middle-class consumers, and working-class youth and the 'Arab street.' The use of HarassMap as

evidence of gendered sexual violence blurs how these categories are constructed

and conflated, flattening their nuance into a calculative sets of variables that can be

mapped, ordered and filtered into zones of security and insecurity. These zones are

then constructed as the differential borders between the powerful discursive tropes

of developed and undeveloped, between civilized and backward, and so forth.

Campaigns like HarassMap reveal what Wall and Monahan (2011: 251) call

'an unstable fault line' within societies in which the control of individual behavior is

subordinated to the preemptive imperatives of risk and preemption. This targeted

control is diffuse and can work in multiple directions, for instance in the hands of

state security for the purpose of obstructing other forms of anti-government

political mobilization. If we take HarassMap, which makes claims about the moral

significance of its precision technology, at its word, how can such technology be

used in a way to help stop gendered sexual violence against women without

depoliticizing the strivings of working-class Arab youth, or obscuring other extant

attempts to combat gendered sexual violence? I concede that the Ushahidi platform

works very differently when it is used, for instance, to locate individuals and

communities in need of provisions after a tsunami or an earthquake, than when it

attempts to locate 'hotspots' of sexual violence. Also, the targeting logics that

organize the HarassMap project may work differently in Egypt than they do in other

locations.

The geo-spatial technologies that HarassMap uses in the biopolitical

management of Egyptian urban sociality remain open to experimentation, and offer

the possibility of becoming a tool for bringing a heightened awareness to other

types of violence with certain categorical adjustments and visual reorientations.

What might the same technologies being used to police young Arab men do if they

were redirected, for example, at Egypt's security forces and its implementation of

state-sanctioned violence against women to thin their presence on the street? This

potential resides in the realm of speculation for now. Still, we should be wary of the

idea that better, more total surveillance will produce accurate depictions of the

environment of gendered sexual violence. We should also be critical of paradigms of

risk management that seek to sort whole populations into 'profiles and probabilites'

(Wall and Monahan, 2011: 251) as part of a feminist internationalist organization of

security governance in Egypt.

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