

## **Gennaro Gervasio and Andrea Teti**

### **Prelude to the revolution. Independent civic activists in Mubarak's Egypt and the quest for hegemony in *Journal of North African Studies*, 2020**

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2020.1801267>

This article explores whether, in the decade preceding the 2011 uprising, Egypt's Independent Civic Activists (ICAs) can be considered organic intellectuals in terms of Antonio Gramsci's well-known definition. To do so, three aspects of 'organicity' with respect to subaltern groups are identified: a 'demographic' dimension, namely their embeddedness within subaltern groups; an 'ideological' dimension pertaining to their ability to correctly identify the problems affecting subaltern classes; and a 'cognitive' dimension, i.e. whether ICAs had managed to gain at least partial recognition from subaltern groups as providing political leadership. During the pre-2011 period, ICAs can be shown to be partly – but not fully – 'organic' intellectuals with respect to Egypt's subaltern groups. Examining ICAs' evolving mobilisation, it is also possible to both discern the embryonic emergence of a counter-hegemonic project well before 2011, and by contrast the substantial continuity between the regime and the Ikhwan. Finally, the article notes that the Egyptian regime under Husni Mubarak appeared unable or unwilling to address the root causes of dissatisfaction through anything other than palliative measures, leaving it not so much stable as fierce and brittle, vulnerable in precisely the same ways ICAs capitalised on in the run-up to the 'January 25th Revolution'.

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