THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN POLITICAL MOBILISATION

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Abstract

The events of the Arab Spring in 2011 led to many political changes throughout the Arab world. The Internet, social media to be specific, is believed to have played a major role during the protests. This case study will examine carefully the role of Facebook, Twitter and blogs in the political movements in Egypt during January and February 2011. It further looks at the different possibilities that a society and government has, to take political action on social media.

This research draws upon both, primary and secondary sources. Interviews conducted by different organisations will further show how the new media is used to mobilise people. To conclude, it will judge whether social media was the main instigator of the revolutions and if its entity fosters democratic movements.

The motivation for this study derives from an interest in historical events, modern politics and technology.
https://twitter.com/Ghonim/status/36102073128853504

Figure 2: Tweet by Wael Ghonim
1 Introduction

In 2011, a wave of revolutionary protests and demonstrations swept across the Middle East, which culminated in the fall of many defiant Arab dictators. Countries such as Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen found themselves liberated after many years of repression.

It is generally acknowledged that the Internet and social media have played a significant role in the social movements and demonstrations that gained international attention within this region. Various academics, politicians and journalists have embraced the concept of a “Twitter revolution,” mentioned for the first time in the 2009 Moldova civil unrest. Mediums such as Facebook, Twitter or YouTube are believed to be a helpful tool for the mass in order to criticise and attack the pillars of a regime.

Today the influence of social media in public relations, intercommunication and collective knowledge management is almost everywhere taken for granted. In fact, as of February 2011 there were more people in Egypt reading their news on the Internet than on the actual newspaper offline.

As the opportunity for political participation emerged with social media, the web helped raise public awareness within the Egyptian population. Wael Ghonim, a Google executive and the founder of the “We are all Khaled Said” Facebook


5 Jeffrey Ghannam, “Social Media In The Arab World: Leading up to the Uprisings of 2011”, Center for International Media Assistance, 3 February 2011, p.12.
page, famously stated, “If you want to liberate a society, just give them the Internet.”

In light of the many events surrounding the usage of social media, there has been much discussion going on to which extent social media encourages social change. Nicholas D. Kristof referred to the unrest of young protesters using the web against suppressive governments as the “quintessential 21st century conflict.”

The starting success of the Arab Spring has led to the belief that social media promotes revolutions. This link made between democracy and the Internet needs to be placed under scrutiny and requires further investigation. Every once in a while a revolutionary product comes along that changes everything. This is not the first time an innovation has led to change. Gutenberg’s printing press in the 15th century helped weakening the medieval church and later on leading to the Renaissance. The Internet, specifically social media, has an innovative and sweeping potential, which should be examined with a more analytical approach. Richard N. Haass denotes, “It is hardly the first disruptive technology to come along: the printing press, telegraph, telephone,

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radio, television, and cassettes all posed challenges to the existing order of their day. And like these earlier technologies, social media are not decisive: they can be repressed by governments as well as employed by governments to motivate their supporters.⁹

This case study aims to analyse the measure in which social media influenced the Egyptian Revolution at the beginning of 2011. Subsequently, it will provide empirical evidence of the use of the web leading up to the Egyptian uprisings. In order to achieve this, I will examine the period starting from the 17 December 2010, Bouazizi’s death until the 11 February 2011, Mubarak’s fall. The lead-up to the protests is essential in order to understand how the revolution could happen within 16 days. The dates chosen are also highly symbolic, since they reflect the kick-starter of the Arab Spring and the end of the Egyptian Revolution. This case study cannot be considered as a manual for the use of social media, but rather it should be acknowledged as a documented research paper. My hypothesis implies that social media was the main instigator of the Egyptian Revolution and its presence fostered democratic movements.

I approached this study by giving myself some time to get a separate overview of social media and the Arab Spring. Concise Wikipedia articles turned out to be very useful in this case. They helped me understand basic issues and gave me an insight into the Arab world. After I gained knowledge, I read parts of a book dealing with activists and their use of social media. All of my understanding is based on hours of reading. The most useful book was ‘Democracy’s Fourth Wave?’ which combined both, social media and its use during the Egyptian Revolution. Additionally, I collected articles from newspapers, which further helped me understand the Arab culture. After reading books and studies on the web, I would quickly write a summary and mark important parts. During the

research I came across many papers that held a one-sided view. These were usually disregarded, unless they had a convincing and meaningful core, like Malcolm Gladwell’s article in the New Yorker.

Considering the young age of this topic, it is evident that the current state of research is not very advanced, compared to other historic events. What is more, comparatively little literature is available on specific questions in connection with social media and their democratic nature. Apart from two books, ‘Democracy’s Fourth Wave?’ and ‘Soziale Bewegungen und Social Media’, I worked with literature from the Internet. There are many studies and blogs with valuable information. However, I found that many of these papers would always refer to one another. As a matter of fact, I have downloaded more than 15 different papers from the Internet. Truth is, the information was available somewhere on the web, but gathering it turned out to be challenging. Especially news sites like the New York Times or CNN were useful resources to understand basic historic events and the impact of social media.

A definition of social media will follow in chapter two. Since there is a big number of social networking sites on the web, I have to point out that I limited myself to Facebook, Twitter and Weblogs. I had to cut down, in order to provide a precise evaluation of their role, instead of a more general view.

The aim of this study is to give some insight into the potential of social networks for both, activists and governments.

As previously mentioned, chapter two will define social media and explain the difference between the three social networks. Furthermore, it will elucidate the theories of communication through the web and talk about critical aspects of this medium. Lastly, it will place the media culture of Egypt in context with modern communication.

Chapter three will consist of a historic research of all the events leading up to the revolution and then a summary of the Egyptian revolution in form of a timeline. In order to understand the events, a subchapter will deal with the meaning of revolutions and explain its dynamics.
Chapter four will address the use of social media in a broader context. The online political sphere and geo-data tweets will be analysed. Furthermore, five phases of protest interaction will explain how protestors organised themselves to achieve the revolution. On top of that, an examination of the authoritarian use of networks is pivotal to the conversation. Ignoring the fact that regimes use the Internet for their own purposes would make this paper too one-sided. As well as that, it is important to emphasise the role of social media as a news medium and how citizens conveyed their messages through social media. Furthermore, I will be analysing the use of macro-level data on social networks such as Facebook and Twitter. A first survey conducted by the Journal of Communication, explores the different individuals that used social media and participated in the Tahrir Square protests. A second survey conducted by the Dubai School of Government, analyses how and for what reasons people in Egypt used Facebook and Twitter. This will give empirical proof of how and why social networking sites are used and will also help in drawing a conclusion at the end.

Finally, chapter five will discuss the role of social media in political mobilisation. By delivering a compact synopsis of all previous chapters, I will draw a conclusion and analyse the democratic potential of social networks.
"We use Facebook to schedule the protests, Twitter to coordinate, and YouTube to tell the world." #egypt #jan25

Figure 3: Tweet by Fawaz Rashed

https://twitter.com/FawazRashed/status/48882406010257408
2 Communication Theories of the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century

2.1 Introduction
This section will first deliver a definition of social media and then explain theories of how the media can be used to communicate and mobilise. It will further, give voice to critics, such as Malcolm Gladwell. To conclude, social media will be placed within the media culture of Egypt.

2.2 Social Media
Social media, also known as social networks, is a social tool used to communicate and interact with other users on virtual communities, bringing new forms of collaborative organisation into the limelight.\textsuperscript{10} The cooperation of various users by self-organizing themselves differs fundamentally from a hierarchically organized system.\textsuperscript{11} Equally noteworthy, the unstructured form of a social network may well be regarded as an adhocracy. This form of organisation is according to the Oxford Dictionary defined as "a system of flexible and informal organization and management in place of rigid bureaucracy."\textsuperscript{12}

2.2.1 Facebook
Founded in 2004 as ‘Thefacebook’, Facebook was a closed communication-system for US university students. Since 2008 it is freely accessible to anyone in the world. Facebook allows its users to interact with other users or ‘Facebook friends’ and keep updated with their lives. They can send private messages, post a message on other members' ‘walls’, join groups and share photos,

\textsuperscript{10} Toni Ahlqvist, Asta Bäck, Minna Halonen & Sirkka, “Social Media Roadmaps Exploring the futures triggered by social media” (Helsinki: VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland, 2008), p. 13.

\textsuperscript{11} Voigt & Kreiml, 2011, p. 10.

http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/adhocracy?q=adhocracy
videos or links. With the introduction of the ‘Like’-button in 2009, users were able to like pages or other people’s content and thus showing their opinion in that specific post.\textsuperscript{13} As of June 2013 Facebook has 1.15 billion active users, while 669 million use the network every day. Around 80\% of all users are outside North America making it a truly global forum. Considering the pivotal aspect to the role of media in the Egyptian Revolution, it is important to highlight that there are also 819 million monthly active users who use Facebook on a mobile device.\textsuperscript{14}

2.2.2 Twitter

Twitter is a micro blogging platform, better known as a “real-time information network that connects you to the latest […] news about what you find interesting.”\textsuperscript{15} It enables users to share information in less than 140 characters, a ‘tweet’. Besides, tweets can contain photos, videos and links or be the space for conversation. Unlike Facebook, Twitter users ‘follow’ other users and there is no reference to ‘friends’. According to various researchers and journalists, speed and autonomy make Twitter the most powerful network for information transfer. News agencies are proclaimed to use Twitter as a source of initial information, which reinforces Twitter’s importance in the media of today.\textsuperscript{16} Expected to grow, Twitter has 232 million monthly active users, making it yet one of the biggest social networks.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{13} Voigt & Kreiml, 2011, p. 94-95.
\textsuperscript{16} Voigt & Kreiml, 2011, p. 166.
2.2.3 Weblog

Often referred to as ‘blogs’, the word weblog derives from the terms: ‘web’ and ‘logbook’. Blogging barely requires any computer skills and it is accessible to almost everyone. The key element of a blog consists in its willingness to support dialogue and hence facilitating the intercommunication between bloggers. Blogs further organise posts in a chronological order and are therefore suitable for an on-going documentation of developments, thoughts and events.¹⁸

2.3 Communication Theories of the 21st Century

Means of communication have helped people keeping in contact throughout the whole world. With the rise of social media, new platforms of communication originated. According to Kreiml, the Web 2.0 is an open platform where complex tasks, such as organising big events, can be solved. A decentralised and collaborative organisation based on the contribution of users, is the heart of this medium. Furthermore, what marks the difference between professional editors and social media users is the ‘One-to-Many’ and ‘Many-to-Many’ principle. While newspapers and mainstream media send their information from a few people to the community (‘One-to-Many’), websites such as Facebook or weblogs allow the users to work in cooperation and simultaneously download or share information (‘Many-to-Many’). This draws a distinction in the way the user perceives news and gives him the opportunity to publish, value and comment on the given information.¹⁹

‘Hearing to Speech’ is a method used by activist Andrea Mayer-Edoloeyi. It implies that the organisation should not be centralised in order to allow every user to participate and express his opinion. While this may be chaotic, she argues that it creates the opportunity to question everything about a certain issue. Furthermore, she insists that buzz marketing is more successful in conveying news, since it communicates in relationships.²⁰ She sees a problem

¹⁸ Voigt & Kreiml, 2011, p. 335.
¹⁹ Ibid. p. 10.
²⁰ Ibid. p. 91-92.
when it comes to the ‘Digital Divide’. People with little knowledge about technology or with simply no Internet connection, will continuously lose access to platform such as Weblogs.\textsuperscript{21} To conclude, she states that the new media are a dialogue-platform and should not be valued on their number of members, but on the quantity and quality of intercommunication.\textsuperscript{22}

When talking about communication theories it is important to mention the ‘snowball’ effect. This refers to the phenomenon that posts are bound to grow in the number of views. Take Twitter for example. A tweet can be ‘retweeted’ and hence gain a broader audience. This new audience will then ‘retweet’ the message again. At the end, the original tweet has reached a far bigger audience than at first expected. This is how things go viral.\textsuperscript{23}

Kreiml maintains that the use of imagery cannot be underestimated. Videos and photos are an effective tool in the transmission of political concerns. Unlike textual posts, they can convey a much more powerful message and thus mobilise people with greater ease.\textsuperscript{24}

The ability to ‘subscribe’ to preferred content has further allowed the Internet to be customised to particular audiences. Through self-organising the news, social networks become more productive and are capable of providing its users with interest-related content.\textsuperscript{25}

The Internet offers great possibilities, but also harbours certain risks, since everyone on the web is anonymous. A person cannot always be sure who the other people are that he is communicating with. This anonymity often leads to scepticism and cautioned behaviour between users.\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{21} Voigt & Kreiml, 2011, p. 94.
\textsuperscript{22} Voigt & Kreiml, 2011, p. 95.
\textsuperscript{24} Voigt & Kreiml, 2011, p. 205.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid. p. 237.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid. p. 261.
Last but not least, Kreiml discusses that relevance, speed and brevity are needed to create curiosity on the platforms and expand the knowledge of people. A self-reflexive, democratic and visionary process will then fully exploit the emancipatory potential of social media in order to result in social change.27

2.4 Criticism

One of the biggest sceptics about a positive outcome of social media in social movements is the American writer and journalist Malcolm Gladwell. In an article published in The New Yorker ‘Small Change – Why the revolution will not be tweeted’, he differentiates between the ‘classic’ revolutions where sit-ins and boycotts were regarded as high-risk strategies and the revolutions led on social media of today. He argues that social media has few real impacts and its role is grossly overstated: “It makes it easier for activists to express themselves, and harder for that expressions to have any impact.” While the participation on the web might be remarkable, the success cannot be measured until the walkouts have actually taken place. Here, Gladwell sees a big problem since there is a difference between getting involved on networks and in effect going out into the street and put forth the outrage. In other words, armchair activism is inefficient to challenge the status quo.

Furthermore, he discusses that without a hierarchical organization, it is harder to make decisions through consensus and think strategically. In addition, the fact that friendships on the web often have no personal connection between users creates weak ties, which consequently “seldom lead to high-risk activism”.28

2.5 Social Media in Egypt

The focus on social media illustrates the endorsing and empowering nature that networks can instigate. However, in order to appreciate the significance of social

27 Voigt & Kreiml, 2011, p. 286.

media during the Egyptian Revolution, it has to be placed within the media culture in the Arab World.

In a region where most of the countries are led by authoritarian regimes, reliable news coverage was not available for a long time. Over the past years governments took steps to encourage the access and use of Internet with the purpose of boosting the economy. The introduction of the Internet “represented an important shift from the monolithic, state-controlled, and government-media pattern to a much more pluralistic and diverse media scene”.\(^\text{29}\)

With the launch of Al-Jazeera in 1996, the independent news culture of Africa and the Middle East reached a turning point. This was now a forum for debate and discussions. As the Internet proliferated, Al-Jazeera grew with it and they became the place where the disenfranchised youth searched for participation in the public and political sphere.\(^\text{30}\) The economical reasons for Internet infiltration combined with the attempt to maintain control over the media, is defined by Khamis as “a highly ambivalent and complex relationship between media and governments”.\(^\text{31}\)

The Journal of Communication asserted, “Perhaps one of the most important events in the transformation of the Egyptian public sphere was the diffusion of Facebook particularly its Arabic language service, which began in March 2009. Early political bloggers in Egypt connected mostly with each other. Facebook, however, provided a means for Egyptians to connect with their large social networks all at once. For the first time in modern Egyptian history, political

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\(^\text{29}\) Dr. Samar Khamis and Katherine Vaughn, “Cyberactivism in the Egyptian Revolution”, Arab Media and Society, Summer 2011, p. 3.


\(^\text{31}\) Kamis & Vaughn, 2011, p. 3.
activists and others could have pointed, broad, and semipublic political discussions across vast social networks.”

As claimed by Howard, in the years leading up to the Arab Spring, the diffusion of digital media had a remarkable impact on the systems of political communication. He argues that social media did not have a sudden impact on Egyptian politics, but rather it “took several years for people with political affinities to find themselves online”.  


The people were ruled for decades in fear of regimes this year the fear was over taken by hope and dreams of change.. #ArabSpring

https://twitter.com/ArabsUnite/status/127031417787006976
3 The Egyptian Revolution

3.1 Introduction

Mubarak’s resistance merely withheld 16 days. What eventually brought him down were the years of oppression and lack of freedom turning into social movements. Therefore, it is important to explain the lead-up to the wave of protests in Egypt, why and how these ambitions of revolution expand.⁴ Since this is a new medium and the power of it has not been fully explored, social media has always to be considered with the events of the surrounding environment. Any other kind of analysis would be too one-sided and could not be considered as reliable. A well-grounded research between the events of the Arab Spring and the potential of networks, will give evidence of the role of social media in the Egyptian Revolution.

3.2 Background

3.2.1 Khaled Said

On 6 June 2010 Khaled Said, an Egyptian blogger, was fatally beaten by two policemen. This incident spread quickly throughout the country on the Internet, sharing images of the corpse of Khaled Said. Inside Egypt, the media aimed to portray that social media was owned by foreign powers. Since America’s image is damaged within the Arab world, this led to scepticism in the use of the new medium. However, as dissatisfaction with the government grew, the population realised once again the misleading statements the state-run media had made in trying to convey that Khaled Said was an agent of foreign powers.⁵ Many

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http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67693/lisa-anderson/demystifying-the-arab-spring

⁵ Wael Ghonim, “Revolution 2.0 the power of the people is greater than the people in power”, New York 2012, p.79.
people were overwhelmed by this event, leading to outrage within the Egyptian population.

It was Wael Ghonim, a Google Executive, who understood how to convey this sense of indignation into a message for the Egyptian people. He created the Facebook group ‘We are all Khaled Said’, a page devoted to the expression of the feelings of people and later on the main instigator of the wave of protests.36 For the Egyptian Facebook users it was a space to vent their feelings of indignation and anger. Furthermore, it unleashed a sense of freedom, which was defined by Wael Ghonim as the “breaking of the psychological barrier of fear”.37 ‘We are all Khaled Said’ was not the catalyst for the social movements that would take over in the Arab world, but it played a crucial role in mobilising the Egyptian population.

3.2.2 Tunisia’s ‘Jasmine Revolution’

Five months after the death of Khaled Said the tension was still edgy in Egypt. Mohamed Bouazizi, a Tunisian street vendor, set himself on fire in front of the governor’s office on 17 December 2010 to protest after being abused by two police officers. After his suicide, unrest broke out in Tunisia that ultimately toppled the Tunisian leader. Bouazizi’s death served as an inspiration for the Egyptian public by causing horror and wonder. According to many newspapers such as the ‘New York Times’, Bouazizi is considered to be the instigator of the Arab Spring. Images of exuberant protesters in Tunisia inspired Egypt.38

http://www.nzz.ch/aktuell/international/khaled-said-1.10832367

http://www.ted.com/talks/wael_ghonim_inside_the_egyptian_revolution.html

The first occupants of Tahrir Square shared many aspirations of the Tunisian people and had a similar background: they were underemployed, the youth was educated and it was eager for change. The religious fervour and political ideologies separated the citizens from its government. It goes without saying that this bond between both countries found support through digital media and was a vital factor for a quick mobilisation of the Egyptian public.\textsuperscript{39}

3.2.3 The Lead-up to the Egyptian Uprising

Egypt has the largest Internet-using population in the Arab region with around 85 million active Internet users.\textsuperscript{40} Like Tunisia, it has a considerably big and active online public sphere. The population uses these spaces to vent their fury, as it is the only public space where autonomous discussion can occur. Hence, the Internet is very important in non-democratic states. When the Muslim Brotherhood’s online pages were banned, they moved their server infrastructure to the UK in order to keep their readers updated with political matters.\textsuperscript{41}

To prepare for a possible ousting of Mubarak, opposition groups studied Gene Sharp’s nonviolent revolution book ‘How to Start a Revolution’\textsuperscript{42}, in which he argues that “nonviolence is a singularly effective way to undermine police

\textsuperscript{39} Howard & Hussain, Democracy’s Fourth Wave, 2013, p. 21.


\textsuperscript{41} Howard & Hussain, Democracy’s Fourth Wave, 2013, p. 20-21.

states”. Sharp’s list of 198 non-violent ‘weapons’ circulated in Tahrir Square during the demonstrations.43

3.2.4 The Egyptian Revolution

The revolution broke out on 25 January 2011, ‘National Police Day’. It had been planned for many weeks and was the result of an increasing uproar on the Internet. In the last week of January Mubarak tried to disconnect his citizens from the World Wide Web. This manoeuvre had a mixed impact and is considered a desperate action of Mubarak in order to preserve his power.44

As a response to the regime’s Internet shutdown, Google and Twitter teamed up to provide the Egyptian public with a messaging service, called ‘speak-to-tweet’. The idea behind it was to keep the people tweeting by leaving a voicemail on an international number given by Google.45

After 16 days of protest, Mubarak eventually resigned as president and handed over the power to the army.46


3.3 Timeline

6 June 2010: Khaled Said, an Egyptian blogger, is beaten to death and becomes the inciting power behind the important Facebook group ‘We are Khaled Said’.  

17 December 2010: Mohamed Bouazizi sets himself on fire, becoming the catalyst of the Tunisian revolution and further the Arab Spring.

13 January 2011: Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, the president of Tunisia, resigns, leading to a wave of hope for political change throughout Egypt.

25 January 2011: On National Police Day, also known as the ‘Day of Revolt’, protests erupt with tens of thousands of non-violent protesters around Egypt.


28 January 2011: ‘Friday of Anger’ Demonstrations continue to spread and the military is deployed leading to the use of violence. The Internet is turned off for the day.

31 January 2011: Mubarak refuses from stepping down and Internet access across Egypt is still poor. International pressure from the US and Europe starts to grow by calling for free and fair elections. Google launches ‘speak-to-tweet’ technology.

47 Al Jazeera, 2011

48 Ghonim, 2012, p.79.


2 February 2011: Violent clashes around Tahrir Square lead to 1,500 injured people and Google improves its aforementioned ‘speak-to-tweet’ technology.
5 February 2011: UN says 300 people have been killed.
7 February 2011: Wael Ghonim is released from prison, which resulted in even bigger gatherings at Tahrir Square.
11 February 2011: ‘Friday of Departure’ After 16 days of protests Hosni Mubarak resigns as president and hands over power to the army.

### 3.4 Understanding this Revolution

It is important to highlight the meaning of a revolution and put it in context with the subject matter, as it helps in drawing a conclusion on the role of social media in political movements.

A revolution is a fundamental change in power or organizational structure. According to ‘Die Zeit’ unconditional criteria need to be met: The desire for change needs to be accepted throughout the population and the impact it has on the country must be of a protracted kind. Furthermore, the consequences of a revolution ought to make political, social and economical alterations in order for it to be a sweeping upheaval.\(^{52}\)

Howard makes his point clear by stating, “Social media became a proximate cause of political revolution precisely because a significant community of users was already comfortable using digital media before the crisis.”\(^{53}\) All these aspects have been fulfilled in Egypt and eventually led to the fall of Mubarak.

Kurzman holds the view that revolutions occur when both the structural opportunities and perceived opportunities for success are in place. Regimes need to be insubstantial and the insurgents have to be aware of their chances for


\(^{53}\) Howard & Hussain, Democracy’s Fourth Wave, 2013, p. 27.
Richard N. Haass pointed out, “Mubarak’s departure is a significant but not decisive development. To be sure, it closes a prolonged era of Egyptian politics. It also marks the end of the first phase of Egypt’s revolution. But it is only the end of the beginning. What begins now is the struggle for Egypt’s future.” It goes without saying that an accurate evaluation of the events in 2011 can only be made in retrospective and the 11 February is still early to consider the results. Haass however shares the opinion that for the time being, it is fair to say that Egypt has not undergone a complete revolution, but rather it is in the middle of the process.

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55 Haass, 2011
Figure 5: Tweet by Anonymous

4 Role of Social Media in Political Mobilisation

4.1 Information Infrastructure

The following subchapters will analyse the geo-data of tweets and further give evidence of how Egypt’s online political sphere is arranged.

4.1.1 Geo-data

The events of Egypt did not remain silent within the international community. Networks such as Twitter helped raising awareness of the movements and played an important role as a bridge between Egypt and the world by drawing it into Egyptian events. By making the world aware of Egypt’s problems, Twitter touched a fragile point in Mubarak’s regime. During the protests, pictures and videos of Tahrir Square were persistently uploaded and made available for the world to see. By showing everyone what was happening in Cairo, the web and cameras protected the people from Mubarak who was not able to intervene with violent measures. Howard analysed tweets on the topic of political change in Egypt and found a shift in their geo-data. Two weeks prior to Mubarak’s resignation, 34 per cent of the tweets were coming from people who identified themselves as being outside of the Arab region. But as public engagement grew, the percentage of people tweeting outside the region had dwindled to 12 per cent. A vast majority was tweeting from inside Egypt, the Arab region or had refused to share their location, which is a typical strategy for tech-savvy activists.\(^{56}\)

\(^{56}\) Howard & Hussain, Democracy’s Fourth Wave, 2013, p. 55.
4.1.2 Egypt’s Online Political Sphere

The structure and content of Egypt’s online political sphere is mapped in Figure 7 (for the exact numbers refer to Appendix A). The graphic depicts the major Egyptian political websites and their connections to other web pages during November 2010. The shaded circle represents the volume of pages within that site. Each dot stands for an external link arising from the parties’ websites. In the case of two dots connecting, it is a site that two parties are linked to and any link positions political parties together. We can clearly see that the political parties are all aligned around social networks. More than 20 per cent of the 928 outgoing links from political parties were to social media sites. What is more, before the uprising, the political actors had more links to Facebook than they had to each other. These findings lead to the conclusion that the major political actors fervently use social media and it is also the place where Egyptians go to practice politics.

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58 Howard & Hussain, Democracy’s Fourth Wave, 2013, p. 58.
59 Howard & Hussain, Democracy’s Fourth Wave, 2013, p. 56-60.
4.1.3 Linguistic Change

As time went by, social media conversations in Egypt underwent a linguistic change. Prior to the National Police Day, most of the content about protest coming from social media was in English. However, after the inciting protests grew, the language switched to Arabic in order to keep the rising feelings of national pride and Arabic pride.61

4.2 Organisation of Protest

Egypt has a young, tech-savvy population, which is one of the reasons that technology has been an effective tool for democracy advocates. The median age is 24 and 33 per cent of the population is under 14.62

4.2.1 The Five Phases of Mobilisation

Howard asserts that throughout the Egyptian Revolution five phases of political engagement emerge: The first is a preparation phase in which the users operate

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61 Ibid. p. 52.
62 Ibid. p. 48.
on social media to find each other, build solidarity and determine shared political goals. This is followed by an ignition phase. It involves an inciting event that is ignored by the state-run media and arouses deep resentment among the users. A phase of street protests that are all coordinated digitally is next, leading to a phase of international buy-in. Here social media is used to draw in international media and the worldwide community. This all culminates in a climax phase. In Egypt, Mubarak surrendered and met public demands. However, this is not always the case, since the strained relations may lead to a protracted stalemate or an even more rigorous ruler than before, as multiple cases during the Arab Spring have shown.\footnote{Howard & Hussain, Democracy's Fourth Wave, 2013, p. 26.}

With the integration of multiple digital tools in the public life of many Egyptians, Internet users were able to reach a much larger number of people. According to Ghonim the regime of Mubarak was scared of the abundant mass of interaction on the web: “If today 10 demonstrators show up, then maybe 100 will show the day after and 1000 the day after that, and so on.” Mubarak considered the ‘snowball’ effect, previously mentioned, to be a real threat. Haunted by this, he shut down the Internet, which further restrained the tensions between the opposition and the government forces.\footnote{Ghonim, 2012, p. 107.}

### 4.2.2 Changing the Political Landscape

Since the media landscape in Egypt had been rigorously controlled by the Mubarak administration, many users had turned their attention to the blogosphere on the web. New information sources gave them a valuable alternative to the state-run media. Renowned newspapers related to most of the Egyptian public and yet blogs helped shaping the political debates within the country and what is more, it also gave minorities a voice. People who usually would not...
find their cultural understanding of events on news portals were no longer thwarted in their desire to participate in politics.\textsuperscript{65}

Probably the most impactful mean of organisation was the rearrangement of opponents. The regime had long had many political enemies, but they were a fragmented group. With the use of social networks they could identify goals with other users, build solidarity and become a unified alliance of opponents with much greater ease.\textsuperscript{66}

4.3 Authoritarian Use of Networks

“Perhaps the best evidence that digital media were an important causal factor in the Arab Spring is that dictators treated them as such.” – Philip Howard, 2013\textsuperscript{67}

Social media does not always disadvantage authoritarian regimes. While the Internet is broadly used to mobilise protesters, regimes can take action with counter-insurgency strategies, such as controlling the people and eventually stopping the outflow of political power.

4.3.1 The Reasons why Regimes Interfere

During election periods Egyptian citizens are known to upload videos and photos of votes being counted, giving proof of bribery and forgery. In order to preserve their legitimacy, governments interfere with social networks. They justify their actions by claiming that they are protecting the purported ‘public good’ and state institutions. In Egypt, the most common cause cited to restrict social media was dissuading criminal activity. Regimes suppress the dissidence of activists and eliminate propaganda for the simple reason to stay in power and drive away from accusations of corruption.\textsuperscript{68}

\textsuperscript{65} Howard & Hussain, Democracy’s Fourth Wave, 2013, p. 64.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid. p. 67.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid. p. 69.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid. p. 82-84.
4.3.2 Counter-Insurgency Strategies
Although blocking the Internet access might seem like a powerful tool for the government to manage a crisis, truth is, it has a nasty impact on the national economy and political pressure from the international community becomes inevitable. When Mubarak decided to turn off the Internet, it cost Egypt 4 per cent of its annual GDP or about $90 million loss of revenue from global transactions.69
Overall, the Arab Spring changed the way regimes look at social media and led to innovations and developments in regimes’ strategies for managing the online sphere.70 The US Department of State has remarked that Arab regimes have employed so called first-, second- and third-generation strategies. First-generation strategies include buying censorship software from Silicon Valley and setting it up in their respective country. Further, second- and third-generation strategies involve more powerful and sophisticated approaches, such as overflowing activists’ or human rights’ sites with requests in order to overload the servers and prevent activists to have access to the site. Additionally, regimes can spread viruses which are detrimental to activists’ computers and networks.71

4.3.3 Disconnection in Egypt
On 27 January 2011 Mubarak took down the mobile networks (refer to Appendix B). The fact that UK-based Vodafone abided by his rules and turned the networks off, was heavily criticised within Egypt. Furthermore, the government used the network to send misinformation and instructions to protesters.72 This clearly shows that regimes use social media for social control.

70 Ibid. p. 79.
71 Ibid. p. 81.
72 Ibid. p. 70.
Howard portrays in his book the idea of social media as being both, liberating and confining. Although the Internet opens new spaces for political discussion and delivers opportunities to participate in politics, it also carries a lot of danger with itself. Authoritarian regimes enclose the space for discussion by controlling it. As stated by Al-Jazeera, regimes created a ‘virtual lynch-mob’ and used Facebook groups to hunt down activists and the organizers of protests. Social media challenges a regime’s legitimacy in a fundamental way. Egypt was unable to monitor the activity of users and by shutting down the Internet it provoked an even stronger wave of demonstrations.\(^{73}\)

A disconnection may lead to more attention from global leaders and non-governmental organisations. When Egypt got off the net, the world community noticed and primarily created awareness of the political situation in Egypt. When the Internet was turned on again, groups outside of Egypt influenced the organisational aspect of the revolution. In these times, banning political parties just means that they will transfer their activity online and coordinate the page from abroad.\(^{74}\)

In conclusion, it is important to point out that regimes have powerful possibilities to counteract against its citizens. The success of a regime’s ability to control them however depends on the methods used. The application of second- and third-generation strategies is clearly more sophisticated and supposes a real struggle for activists. Whereas simply shutting down the Internet has an encouraging effect on the whole population.

### 4.4 Citizen Journalism

The content flowing over the Internet was for many users of a peculiar kind. They shared their personal stories and linked them to photos or videos and hence inducing a sense of community and intimacy.\(^{75}\)

\(^{73}\) Howard & Hussain, Democracy’s Fourth Wave, 2013, p. 86.

\(^{74}\) Ibid. p. 84-85.

\(^{75}\) Ibid. p. 53.
Astonishing stories emerged from online journalism that described the lives of Egyptians in the middle of the turmoil. Although the government supervised the web, people still used it as a space to vent their feelings, share grievances and basically convey everything that was of public concern. Unlike traditional news media, digital activists could reshape the information and interpret them with their personalised views. In spite of the fact that this kind of journalism was not always objective, it had a responsive impact. The simple realisation that another Egyptian was tortured to death was crucial in turning the attention against the regime.76

4.4.1 We are all Khaled Said

The Facebook page ‘We are all Khaled Said’ was one of the most visited sites with hundreds of thousands of followers during the Egyptian Revolution. Wael Ghonim, a Google executive located in Dubai, and his friend, Abdel Rahman Mansour, operated it. The group was the first to take part on protests and eventually ended up organising 25 January, the start of the revolution. Ghonim related the success of the group to the stories they shared, “People found the fusion of images, lyrics, and music inspiring and moving. It was different from the regular practice of lawyers and human rights defenders, who used facts and statistics to garner support. Instead the video created an emotional bond between the cause and the target audience. Clearly both are needed.”77

Unlike any other news media, citizen journalism provides the public with inspiring personal stories and puts even more pressure on a regime. As Ghonim declared “Anything that is visually documented is evidence for the whole world to see.”78

Furthermore, Ghonim mentions that there were differences between activists and the non-politicised elderly age group. The older generation tended to use rebellious language, which was hard to understand for those who had not gone through similar experiences. The result was a gap between activists and their

76 Howard & Hussain, Democracy’s Fourth Wave, 2013, p. 92-98.
77 Ghonim, 2012, p. 87.
78 Ibid. p. 79.
audience, which limited activists’ abilities to mobilise a certain segment of people.\textsuperscript{79} According to Ghonim this divide turned out to be useful, since no one, especially not the government, expected a big turnout on protest day.\textsuperscript{80}

4.5 Protest Participation in Tahrir Square

In order to evaluate the role of social media during the Egyptian Revolution it is important to analyse who used networks to organise and obtain information. Many phenomena have been previously discussed and reflect the possibilities and dangers that this media brings with it. However, the success of social media is left up to the people who use it and it is therefore vital to examine who used it and how they worked with it.

In the Journal of Communication Wilson and Tufekci conducted a survey to determine how and to what extent social media was being used by protesters. They examined the use of the Internet on Tahrir Square during late January and February 2011. In total, 1,050 interviews were carried out with people who took part in the Tahrir protests. Their research focuses on how they learned about the protests, how they planned their participation and how they documented it by using social media.\textsuperscript{81}

4.5.1 Who where the protestors?

In Table 1 we can see Wilson’s interview results about who participated in the protests. The 1,050 people who were interviewed ranged in age from 18 to 67 years, equalling an average of 29 years. 75% of the protesters interviewed were male and 25% female. In direct comparison between genders, we can see that women are in average 2.5 years younger, usually better educated and are more likely to have Internet access on their phone and at home. Wilson pointed out that the protestors themselves were mostly well educated, with 60.3% having an university or college degree, 9.6% a postgraduate degree and only 14.1% less than a secondary degree. One third of all protesters had attended preceded-

\textsuperscript{79} Ghonim, 2012, p.111.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid. p. 113
\textsuperscript{81} Tufekci & Wilson, 2012, p. 363.
ing protests and about 35% had previously been involved in political organisations as maintained by Wilson.\textsuperscript{82}

Table 1: Users of Social Media\textsuperscript{83}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( n = 792 )</td>
<td>( n = 258 )</td>
<td>( N = 1,050 )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean age</td>
<td>29.1 (9.3)</td>
<td>26.6 (7.6)</td>
<td>28.5 (8.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean education</td>
<td>5.1 (1.6)</td>
<td>5.6 (1.2)</td>
<td>5.3 (1.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent with Internet at home</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent with Internet on phone</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent present on first day of protests</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent who had previously attended protests</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Education scores ranged from 1 (no education) to 7 (postgraduate degree).*

4.5.2 Media Usage & Hearing about the Protests

The respondents used different types of media, shown in Table 2. 92% of those polled, reported using phones for general practices and 82% for communicating about the protests. Around half (52%) had a Facebook profile and almost all of them (51%) used Facebook to communicate about protests. Twitter usage is considerably lower with 16% of protesters having a Twitter account and 13% using it for communication. At this point we can observe that women are much more involved in social networks, especially to communicate. TV and phones were the most popular type of media for both, use in general and for communicating about protests. 72% of those who used mobile phones also used Facebook. The vast majority used e-mail & text messages for general purposes but not as much to communicate about protests.\textsuperscript{84}

\textsuperscript{82} Tufekci & Wilson, 2012, p. 368-369.

\textsuperscript{83} Tufekci & Wilson, 2012, p. 369.

\textsuperscript{84} Tufekci & Wilson, 2012, p. 369-370.
Table 2: Percent of Protestors using different Media\(^{85}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use In General</th>
<th>For Communicating About Protests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male (n = 792)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satellite TV</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 presents logistic regressions that show the likelihood that the “use of a particular media source [...] contributed to whether a respondent participated in protests”.\(^{86}\) This statistical classification model takes into account different factors such as age, education or gender. It is used to determine the probabilities in which a certain event occurs dependent on various factors.\(^{87}\) Models 1 and 3 involve age, education and Internet use, whereas models 2 and 4 incorporate individual groups of media.

The older respondents who had Internet at home were associated with having participated at previous protests as well as attending protests on the first day on Tahrir Square. However, thanks to the models 2 and 4, it is evident that the connection between having Internet at home and protest participation is conveyed by the different use of media. So for instance, people who had taken

\(^{85}\) Tufekci & Wilson, 2012, p. 370.

\(^{86}\) Tufekci & Wilson, 2012, p. 371.


http://www.methodenberatung.uzh.ch/datenanalyse/zusammenhaenge/lreg.html
part in prior protests are more likely to use print media, Facebook, Twitter and blogs. Further, they are also more likely to have joined protests on the first day.  

Table 3: Impact of General Media Use on Participation in Protests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Attended Protests on First Day</th>
<th>Previously Attended Protests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Model 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>1.007</td>
<td>1.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1.294</td>
<td>1.291*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1.047</td>
<td>0.997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet at home</td>
<td>1.453*</td>
<td>1.318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet on phone</td>
<td>1.092</td>
<td>1.031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogs</td>
<td>1.354*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.274*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satellite TV</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.540*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text messaging</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.536*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.214***</td>
<td>0.342*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log-likelihood</td>
<td>-682.616</td>
<td>-670.172</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Logistic regression coefficients.

*p < 0.10. **p < 0.01. ***p < 0.001.

4.5.3 Analysing the Results

In order to provide this case study with the necessary data of protesters, I have added three more tables to the Appendix (Appendix C, Appendix D and Appendix E), which will serve as additional information. The analysis of the results will be based on the information of all six tables and a final discussion will be held in the final chapter of this study.

Almost half of those polled first heard about the uproars from someone face-to-face. The other half found out about the protests through various platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Blogs or satellite TV. More than 25% of the respondents had first heard of the protests on Facebook and about one quarter used Facebook to spread photos and videos. This highlights the impact that

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89 Tufekci & Wilson, 2012, p. 371.
Facebook had on the respondents. Furthermore, Twitter and blogs were mostly used to communicate about the protests and telling others what was happening. The respondents who were familiar with the use of Facebook, Twitter or blogs were also more likely to attend on the first day of protests.\textsuperscript{90}

The fact that a quarter of the sample consisted of women shows that they wanted to take part in the political movements. Nevertheless, the men were more likely to participate in protests on the 25 January. Several women declared in Wilson’s interviews that through Facebook they were able to express their views and take part in politics without having to attend the events.\textsuperscript{91}

Wilson’s examination only assessed the first day of the Egyptian Revolution and not the following days of revolt. Wilson argues that in autocratic states the most dangerous protest is a small one, since it allows the regime to suppress dissent and punish their opponents. Unlike in democratic states, where slowly growing protests are tolerable, “in authoritarian regimes, high participation on the first day is often necessary to initiate the larger cascade that ultimately results in the uprising’s success.” Two thirds had never before been involved in any kind of protest. This emphasises the great desire the public had for change.\textsuperscript{92}

Half of the respondents were documenting and sharing their stories and news on online platforms. These actions are considered as citizen journalism and can be a powerful tool for activists, as previously mentioned in chapter 4.4. To conclude, Wilson and Tufekci assert, “Social media mediated many kinds of ties and brought individuals news, information, and the social support needed to spur participation in political protest”.\textsuperscript{93}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid. p. 375-376. \\
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid.
\end{flushright}
4.6 Arab Social Media Report

The Dubai School of Government launched a project, called the ‘Arab Social Media Report’. The report provides information about the online sphere in the Middle East. In its edition of May 2011 ‘Civil Movements: The Impact of Facebook and Twitter’, it analysed more than 10 million tweets and 190,000 Twitter users. Combined with Facebook & Google data, this report gives evidence of how social media and the Internet were used within the Egyptian Revolution. Additionally, they conducted a survey with 126 Facebook users from Egypt, which further enhances the value of this report.

4.6.1 Facebook Usage in Egypt

Facebook had a user penetration rate of 7.66% during the protests. Throughout the protest period though, the number of Facebook users in Egypt grew by a remarkable 29% (refer to Appendix F). During the same time in 2010, the growth rate of Facebook amounts to 12%. The protests seem to have led to an increase in Facebook participation, but the statistic does not include for what purpose Facebook was used. The statistic further shows that during protest periods in other countries, a rise in Facebook usage occurred. 94

In its survey, the Dubai School of Government asked 126 Facebook users different questions. Firstly, what they thought was the main reason to use Facebook. And secondly, what impact they thought the Internet shutdown had on the protests. The answers to both questions can be seen in Appendix G and in Appendix H.

Almost 85% of those polled, used Facebook for political matters. What is more, 30% declared that they used Facebook to organise protests.95


Asked about the impact the Internet shutdown had on the protests, 56% of all the respondents stated that it had been positive. It made people more anxious and active. Almost 30% held the view that the shutdown had a negative impact, mainly because it disrupted communication.  

Considering social media’s role as citizen journalism, it is important to point out that 95% of the users polled, got their news from social networking sites. The fact that the respondents were tech-savvy Facebook users however, has to be taken under consideration.  

4.6.2 Twitter Usage in Egypt  

Twitter penetration in Egypt amounts to 0.15%, about 130,000 users. There are two possible reasons for this paltry percentage of users. The first one is that the distribution of Twitter users is mainly concentrated around Cairo (51% of all Twitter users) and in Alexandria (8%). The remaining 40%, however, are spread all over the country with less than 1.5% of penetration in each region. The other reason is that Twitter never launched an Arabic site, which deterred many prospective users.  

The countries in the Arab Spring had an impact on each other, e.g. in the case of Tunisia and Egypt. After scrutinizing the top Twitter topics over the first months of 2011, Egypt stands out with two specific topics: #egypt and #jan25 (refer to Appendix I). Both of them build the top two Twitter trends with 1,400,00 and 1,200,000 mentions, respectively. The Dubai School of Government states that “this gives a clearer idea of what the Twitter conversation […] was about, and that, to a large extent, social and political events ongoing at the time did indeed drive the conversation”.  

96 Ibid. p. 6-7.  
97 Ibid. p. 8-9.  
98 Ibid. p. 16-17  
100 Dubai School of Government, 2011, p. 21.
Last but not least, in Figure 8 the daily tweet volume is put into correlation with the mentions of #jan25 in Egypt. The volume of tweets shows an increase on 2 February, after violent clashes led to 1,500 injured people. The peak was reached on 11 February, the day of Mubarak’s resignation. The Internet blackout was a challenge for protesters, since Internet services and information infrastructures in Egypt were not able to work properly. To Twitter that did not make much difference. Although the amount of tweets was reduced thanks to Google’s ‘speak-to-tweet’ technology, protesters with a mobile phone were still able to keep tweeting. This explains why the quantity of tweets still kept up with almost 10,000 daily tweets during the Internet blackout.

![Figure 8: Daily Tweet Volume and Mentions of #jan25 in Egypt](image)

What really stands out in Figure 8, is that throughout the 16 days of protest almost all the tweets from Egypt contained a mention of #jan25. This demonstrates that the conversations held on Twitter were mostly about the revolution itself.

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Figure 9: Tweet by Bjørn Borresen

5 Conclusion

“This is why I no longer have the control over the country that I once had.” - Mubarak to diplomat in-flight over Cairo, pointing to the forest of television antennas below, 1995

Reseaching and working on my graduation work has been a challenging, but fulfilling experience. My research skills have experienced a big improvement in the areas of primary and secondary research methodologies. My personal understanding in this field of study has gained much in-depth knowledge. Furthermore, what marks out this field of study, is its combination of historical research and communication theories that have not been fully explored yet. Overall, this study has helped me gain very valuable analytical skills.

The role of social media in political mobilisation has been heavily debated over the past years. It is hard to say whether the protests would have taken place without the presence of social media. What we know is that socioeconomic problems are pivotal to start a revolt. In Egypt’s case those issues spread on social media and had a strong impact on the citizens. Although the rebellions only took 16 days to oust Mubarak, the discontent needs to be built up over a certain period of time in order to have a bigger impact. Also, the information infrastructure on the web needs time grow and expand. Therefore it is fair to say that the lead-up played an integral role for the revolution.

Social media can be both, liberating and confining. Rather than simply considering the role of social media, we have to question the fragility of Mubarak’s government. It would be a mistake to consider the Internet a liberating tool without analysing Mubarak’s interference in social media. The tenuous link between the web and the regime’s interference, is proof that Mubarak was not prepared for an uprising. Techniques of censoring the web were unsophisticated, supposed damage to the national economy and turned

102 Howard & Hussain, Democracy’s Fourth Wave, 2013, p. 89.
out to be motivating for the Egyptian population. Although the government made an effort to take control over the Internet, it failed in doing so. Shutting down the Internet had an inspiring impact on the Egyptians. The simple fact that Mubarak made such efforts to block content, shows that social media plays an important role in delivering political information.

Social movements organised on social media are invasive and harsh at the same time. Since there are different groups on Facebook, the leadership in organising the protests was distributed among many users. The complex structure of the Facebook groups turned out to be useful for activists, because they could hide from state security while at the same time coordinate protests.

In the two surveys conducted, social media’s centrality to the political conversation is described. Almost all of the Tahrir protestors used the Internet and more than half of them had a Facebook account. At this point it is important to state that half of the respondents had heard about the protests through Facebook, Twitter or blogs. The survey further shows that social media provided the necessary infrastructure in order to create deep ties of communication. What is more, social media is a cheap, easy-to-use and liberal resource. It is used to document and share the events. Apart from raising people’s voices from all walks of life, social media raised international awareness, and consequently managed to increase the pressure on Mubarak’s government. The probably most lasting influence of social media is that people get used to consuming and creating political content with no limitations.

Although the Internet proliferation in Egypt is the biggest in the Arab area, there were still a lot of people who did not have access to a mobile phone or the Internet. Nevertheless, the people who did were precisely those who had the ability to change the regime. This elite public were middle-class, educated and urban people who often came in contact with democracy and human rights in other countries. What is more, the youth had many tech-savvy activists. They
were indispensable because they helped organising and setting up the information infrastructure on the web.

The Egyptian Revolution was fuelled by socioeconomic discontent and political dissent. Social media provided a platform to vent people’s dissatisfaction with the government. It played a crucial role in conveying people’s frustration. So in that sense social media was the catalyst – by encouraging political conversation. The simple assumption that social media fosters democratic movements, seems legitimate. The ability to express different opinions and ideas is a democratic principle. However, as change continues to proceed in Egypt, we can see that after many years of repression, the Egyptian public is struggling with the multitude of opinions. After being forced to accept the regime’s opinion for decades, the citizens need to first understand what it means to ‘have freedom of speech’ and endorse the variety of views. Social media does only spread democratic ideas to a certain extent. On a virtual basis, users usually read what they want to hear and news articles are likely to be biased. The result is that people talk to other people who share the same opinion. it is clear that social media fosters political conversation, but at the same time it lessens its effectiveness. On the other hand though, social media encourages people to spread their opinions on political matters. Opinions that call for help and were often never mentioned out of fear.

Further research in the field of post-uprising Egypt is necessary to examine the role of social media in shaping the political landscape and democratising a country.

“And at the end of the day, bullets usually trump tweets.” – Nicholas D. Kristof

The most devaluing argument to the role of social media is that it needs people who are willing to risk their lives. It implies after all, that people, who take out to the streets and are brave enough to protest, will eventually make the revolution happen – and not tweets. This shows that social media was not a singular

103 Kristof, 2009
cause for the revolution, but it still played a pivotal role in accessing information and providing a platform for discussion.

_Social media was the main instigator of the Egyptian Revolution and its presence fostered democratic movements._ All things considered I have to admit that my hypothesis turned out to be partially wrong. Social media was not the main instigator of the revolution that swept across Egypt. However, it encouraged conversation about the political issues that mattered. Socioeconomic discontent and political dissent were the true reason why the Egyptian public took to the streets. Nonetheless, social media’s role cannot be devalued. It created an alternative press and facilitated communication between different political actors, which then joined forces. Further, it helped activists in getting together and provided a new, handy means of organisation.

The assumption of the democratic nature that is often attributed to the Internet needs to be treated with caution. Social networks have been acclaimed as a peacemaker. Although social media usually fosters democratic ideas, the simple existence of social media in a country does not necessarily lead to change. When Facebook was invented, Mark Zuckerberg did not have in mind to democratise the world. Not all merits can be awarded to social media. It needs people who are willing to promote change. They take the risk of being imprisoned, tortured or death. This is the reason why TIME’s person of the year 2011 was not Zuckerberg or Larry Page. The award was given to ‘the Protester’ – a tribute to all those who fought and died in hope for a more democratised world.
Figure 10: TIME Person of the Year 2011

http://swampland.time.com/2011/12/14/morning-must-reads-person-of-the-year/
6 Appendix

Appendix A

Table 4: Online Structure of Egyptian Political Parties, Before and After Revolution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Party, URL</th>
<th>Before Revolution</th>
<th>After Revolution</th>
<th>Before Revolution</th>
<th>After Revolution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pages</td>
<td>Volume (MB)</td>
<td>Volume (MB)</td>
<td>Volume (MB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 6 Youth Movement, 6april.org</td>
<td>1.297</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communist Party of Egypt*, cppegypt.tk</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>3,379</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egyptian Greens, egyiptangreens.com</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kefaya Movement*, harakemesria.org</td>
<td>4,372</td>
<td>4,522</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Association for Change*,</td>
<td>1,983</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>taghyeer.net</td>
<td>1,343</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Democratic Party, ndp.org.eg</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>2,015</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Wefid Party, awefidparty.org</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive National Unionist Party, el-ahaly.com</td>
<td>1,583</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialist Labour Party, el3amal.net</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>615</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim Brotherhood (Arabic)*,</td>
<td>6,123</td>
<td>7,948</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ikhwanonline.com</td>
<td>4,372</td>
<td>4,579</td>
<td>739</td>
<td>386</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Groups marked with an asterisk (*) were illegal political parties until recently.

Appendix B

Table 5: Egypt: Internet Traffic Between 18 January and 2 February 2011

![Graph showing internet traffic between Jan 24 and Feb 5]


105 Dubai School of Government, 2011, p. 3.
### Appendix C

#### Table 6: Media Source Where Respondent First Heard of Protests and Participation in Protests\(^ {106}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Attended Protests on First Day</th>
<th>Previously Attended Protests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>1.010</td>
<td>1.034***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1.273</td>
<td>1.072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1.025</td>
<td>1.135*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet at home</td>
<td>1.334</td>
<td>1.525*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet on phone</td>
<td>1.105</td>
<td>1.185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>0.830</td>
<td>1.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>0.438***</td>
<td>0.502**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>0.811</td>
<td>1.060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other media</td>
<td>0.924</td>
<td>1.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.281***</td>
<td>0.065***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log-likelihood</td>
<td>−675.694</td>
<td>−646.304</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Logistic regression coefficients.

\(^{106}\) Tufekci & Wilson, 2012, p. 372.

### Appendix D

#### Table 7: Impact of Media Use to Communicate About Protests on Participation in Protests\(^ {107}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Attended Protests on First Day</th>
<th>Previously Attended Protests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>1.012</td>
<td>1.035***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1.437*</td>
<td>1.130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.996</td>
<td>1.078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet at home</td>
<td>1.233</td>
<td>1.440*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet on phone</td>
<td>1.071</td>
<td>1.120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogs</td>
<td>1.574*</td>
<td>1.376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail</td>
<td>1.313*</td>
<td>1.154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-Face</td>
<td>1.214</td>
<td>0.613*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>1.411*</td>
<td>1.200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>1.531*</td>
<td>1.158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print</td>
<td>0.961</td>
<td>1.353*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satellite TV</td>
<td>0.714</td>
<td>0.784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text messaging</td>
<td>1.116</td>
<td>1.180*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>1.414*</td>
<td>1.235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.140***</td>
<td>0.088***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log-likelihood</td>
<td>−662.300</td>
<td>−639.839</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Logistic regression coefficients.

\(^{107}\) Tufekci & Wilson, 2012, p. 372.
Appendix E

Table 8: Media Used to Document and Share Personal Protest Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Attended Protests on First Day</th>
<th>Previously Attended Protests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Model 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>1.010</td>
<td>1.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1.261</td>
<td>1.241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1.017</td>
<td>1.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet at home</td>
<td>1.434</td>
<td>1.367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet on phone</td>
<td>1.065</td>
<td>1.062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>0.538***</td>
<td>0.822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog</td>
<td>4.284*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail</td>
<td>1.491</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>1.570*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>1.166</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print</td>
<td>1.666</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text message</td>
<td>3.197*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>1.250</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.321***</td>
<td>0.213***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log-likelihood</td>
<td>-671.640</td>
<td>-663.340</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Logistic regression coefficients.

*p < 0.10. **p < 0.01. ***p < 0.001.

Appendix F

Figure 11: Growth Rate of Facebook Users during Protests 2011, compared to 2010

---


Appendix G

Figure 12: The Main Usage of Facebook during the Civil Movement\textsuperscript{110}

Appendix H

Figure 13: The Primary Impact on the Civil Movements of the Authorities' Blocking the Internet and Facebook\textsuperscript{111}

\textsuperscript{110} Dubai School of Government, 2011, p. 6.

\textsuperscript{111} Dubai School of Government, 2011, p. 7.
Appendix I

Figure 29: Top Twitter Trends in the Arab Region Q1-2011 (number of mentions)

Figure 14: Top Twitter Trends in the Arab Region Q1-2011 (number of mentions)\(^{112}\)

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\(^{112}\) Dubai School of Government, 2011, p. 21.
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“Ich, Daniel Domingues, erkläre hiermit, dass ich die vorliegende Maturitätsarbeit eigenständig und ohne unerlaubte fremde Hilfe erstellt habe und dass alle Quellen, Hilfsmittel und Internetseiten wahrheitsgetreu verwendet wurden und belegt sind.”

“Ich bin damit einverstanden, dass eine Kopie meiner Maturitätsarbeit bei einer Anfrage nach aussen gegeben wird.”