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Can Social Networks Create Social Capital in Politics?

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DEDICATION

To my parents and my brother that are the people that I love the most in this world. To my friends of my life, Adri, Feli, Felo, Kike, Ale, Isa and Vicky. Without their help I would not have accomplished this. Finally, to all the people that in a way or another helped me with this research paper.

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RESUMEN

En esta investigación se quiere probar que se puede crear capital social a través del internet. Específicamente a través de las redes sociales. Con varios ejemplos de creación de capital social a través de redes sociales, se ha intentado demostrar que las redes sociales hoy en día influyen mucho en la vida diaria y más que nada en la vida política de muchas personas del mundo. Lo que se ha logrado determinar y establecer es que, sí hay como crear capital social en las redes sociales, siempre y cuando existan ciertas características que se cumplan. Como por ejemplo, un buen nivel de educación, una buena penetración del internet en el país, la participación activa de la gente en política y que haya algún tipo de situación adversa o que necesite que la gente se una para que se cree este capital social.

ABSTRACT

This research paper attempts to question if Social Capital can be created through the Internet, specifically, through Social Networks. There are various examples of Social Capital creation through Social Networks. The paper will attempt to show that Social Networks nowadays influence a lot in our daily lives and increasingly in the trends around the world. What this paper will achieve is to determine and establish that it is possible to create Social Capital in Social Networks, if certain conditions are accomplished by the State, including a high-level of education, a wide scale access to the internet, the active participation in politics and that occasionally catalyzing event that encourage online participation. Through these conditions and events social capital is created.

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INTRODUCTION

In this thesis what we are trying to understand is how political parties, society and technology –specifically Social Networks-, affect politics and how they manage to create Social Capital. The main challenge with this study is to understand how Social Networks develop in each country, how immersed they are in the society and what the usage of Social Networks in society is. With this background what I want to prove is how in different continents, specifically in certain countries like Ecuador, Egypt and the United States, Social Media has developed, and how it has influenced in political activities such as campaigns and massive movements. I will analyze how Social Media has area and how its influences compares in each country, how it may compare in-between the other States in political areas and the influence of the new Mass Media instruments for the creation of Social Capital.

With this being said, the main topic here is the creation of Social Capital through Social Networks and how this new phenomenon has led to a new way of practicing politics throughout the world. The main challenge of this topic is if Social Capital is created or not through Social Networks. What I hope to prove is that people can create Social Capital with Social Networks. Such Capital comes from the new movement and the new strategies Political Marketers create the grass root campaigns instigated by citizens to promote their points of view. Nowadays, we can see how every interesting or important issue is published in Facebook, Twitter, and even in Pinterest (new social media that informs you through images). We can see that in every single area Social Networks influence our daily lives. Facebook and Twitter, the two biggest Social Network companies, are providing

instant information on the Web. “Facebook has more than a billion monthly active users as of December 2012” (Key Facts-Facebook Newsroom, 2012), and Twitter with more than 500 million users (Lunden, 2012), are nowadays the most quick, agile, democratic, and easy way to get information or news from around the world. Nevertheless, we cannot forget the traditional media, and how it has lost a lot of viewers because of what Social Networks have achieved in the last few years.

Another area I will analyze is how Social Networks influenced in the Ecuador 2013 elections is compared with the elections of the United States of 2012 and 2008, and finally how they influenced in the movement of the Arab Spring and its elections specifically in Egypt. This comparison is important because with it we can observe how socially matters and the importance of Social Networks in each State. Social Networks depend on the accessibility and penetration that the internet has in aforementioned countries. One of the main problems that Ecuador has is that access to the internet is very low and that is why I think that Social Networks do not play a critical role, in the electoral process. In Ecuador what is more important is how the candidates reach the people through their campaigns, and how they interact with the people they meet, as well as their presence in traditional media. In Ecuador, because of the lack of access to the Internet, people do not have the possibility to have their own Social Networks or they have no idea about what a Social Network is.

The idea for choosing this topic is to make a comparison of how Social Networks work in countries that are more developed and how this affects in those countries politics and how in countries that are less developed because of their lack of technology, Social Networks does not yet work a politic tool. Hence, I will refer to the creation of Social Capital with some statistics and with data obtained

from Facebook, Twitter, the “Observatorio Ciudadano de Medios de Comunicación” and “Participación Ciudadana”, the polls done in the US election, and the statistics of Socialbakers regarding the overthrow of president Mubarak in Egypt and the process after that of democratic elections.

Social Networks are nowadays a huge instrument of information and an instrument used to move people in favor or against policies, or some other social, political, economic and cultural areas. I will prove how Social Networks do not work in States like Ecuador and how the people that are able to access to the Internet and to a computer can be influenced to create Social Capital. Therefore, with this, I want to establish that Social Capital can be created in a developed country through Social Networks. Why is Social Capital created through Social Networks? In this technological era, the hyper-connection we are living in gives us the ease, and more importantly, a low-cost of engaging people in a political party or political movement. If people that are connected to the web read something that interests them in a Social Network, they will probably align themselves with the party that shares their ideology and beliefs. A clear example is how in the Arab Spring, a small group of people organized themselves to promote the right of liberty and democracy in their State. How did they promote what they wanted to do? With a small amount of followers in Facebook and Twitter, they started creating and promoting these new ideas of liberty and democracy in Egypt. When people of that State realized that what this small group was promoting could be achieved, they shared the idea, and started spreading it to all of Egypt, and more important to all the States that were experiencing the same situation. The government tried to stop this, with policies of prohibiting and banning the Social Networks. But what happened? It was too late what they acted as, the idea had

already spread. The people managed to continue using Social Networks for the expansion of their ideas. Here we have a clear example of how Social Capital was created through Social Networks for the liberation of the countries that participated in the Arab Spring.

I chose this topic because after a couple of weeks of research I realized that there is a huge lack of information in this field. There are very few papers about Social Networks and the creation of Social Capital. Therefore, through case studies that already occurred in the last six years we can examine different scenarios in countries that are thousands of miles apart, have very different cultural makeup's, and most importantly have different levels of internet penetration and different traditions of using social media in politics.

With this study I hope to prove how Social Networks do influence the creation of Social Capital and most important the influence it has in politics nowadays. Social Capital is generated through the new mass media movement, and specifically by how people are using these new instruments to promote candidates, how this has a large impact in some States while in some other the influence it has is lower or does not exist, and finally how in some determined moment in time can be very important in promoting these new tools. The solution to the problem raised in this research paper is that one can create Social Capital through Social Networks and it can be used in political campaigns or political rallies. With this being said, if Social Networks affect politics, can Social Capital be created through these instruments?

Due to the fact that there is a lack of literature for debating any point of view about the creation of Social Capital by Social Networks, my proposal is that: Yes, we can create Social Capital through Social Networks. I think that this is possible

because, as we have seen in certain places in the world Social Networks have created Social Capital. Specifically, we have seen social capital created in the Arab Spring where it was not only one country affected but there were 18 countries that were influenced in some kind of way: from riots and the overthrow of regimes to other minor protests like in Western Sahara –speaking about less developed countries-. In another case, we see the creation of Social Capital in the United States influencing in election time. What I want to do is to prove that through statistical data, technological instruments, and case studies Social Capital can and has been created.

The purpose of this research is to inform people and the public in general that it is possible to use Social Networks for the creation of Social Capital in politics. In Ecuador there has not being any study such as this, and I know that it is a study that is very necessary for the people that work in Political Marketing.

In my point of view I think that Social Networks do affect the creation of Social Capital. Because nowadays we live in a hyper-connected world. Also, the creation of Social Capital often exists in communities that are close to each other, and that share certain characteristics there will not exist a creation of Social Capital; such as, culture, points of view, religion; therefore, without community it is impossible to create Social Capital. As I mentioned before, I want to prepare a study that can be helpful for scholars that are interested in this topic, to the general public, and above all, to the Political Marketers that help candidates in their campaigns.

With all of this mentioned before I am going to support my theory with some studies about authors that have worked in developing the theory of Social Capital

and Social Networks, I offer a rebuttal of some others that sustain that is not possible to create Social Capital.

LITERATURE REVIEW

First of all, what I am trying to demonstrate is that there is not a lot of literature that can show us that Social Networks can create Social Capital. To begin, I want to give you the main concepts of what a Social Network is, what Social Capital is and how both concepts nowadays are intertwined, when we talk about politics.

The first definition made about Social Capital is from Bourdieu. He defined Social Capital as the “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (Bourdieu, 1980). He also mentioned that, “the profits which accrue from membership in a group are the basis of the solidarity which makes them possible” (Bourdieu, 1980). Most Social Capital therefore is built from an interest that is created by an actor (politician) for the crowd. Through this instrument, the crowd or people of a certain territory or State will go with one or another tendency, according to their political beliefs and convictions. How politicians create these instruments or strategies is through the investment in certain areas and by the creation of a network or campaign that will call upon fundamental values, political strategies and through giving the people proposals that might attract them into becoming possible supporters.

Another concept that has been around for a long time. Is the Sociological concept, that refers to Social capital defined as (1) a source of social control, (2) a

source of family-mediated benefits, and (3) a source of resources mediated by nonfamily networks (Portes, 1998). In a contradistinction, Coleman tells us, first, that he wrote in defense and celebration of the community ties that still remained in place; second, he asked for the replacement of primordial social structures that had already disappeared elsewhere with purposefully constructed organizations where the economic incentives had taken the place of the disappearance of social capital. Thus, he realized a whole series of new schemes through which teachers and parents would be economically rewarded for the "value added" to society produced by their child-rearing and educational efforts" (Coleman, 1988; 1988b; 1993a; 1993b). What Coleman explains say is that if the community should defend their ties, if they are still in place, they will maintain their values? Also, Coleman sustains that economic incentives have damaged the creation of Social Capital. Why is this true? First of all, if people start receiving money from one candidate or from another, their political alliance or their alignment in any area will be subject to the money that the candidate or person of interest will give them. Social Capital is created by the construction of an identity of each person and of a community that will follow some patterns or behavior that will always be the same.

According to Ostrom, the concept of Social Capital puts in acknowledgment various factors that are not new, but that generally were not taken into account, because of the neoclassic economic boom and the theory of rational choice. These factors are: confidence, norms of reciprocity, networks and the forms of civil participation or the institutions that are formal and informal. (Ostrom, Ahn, & Olivares, 2003). Another point of view comes from Putnam and Woolcock. For them Social Capital refers to norms of reciprocity and networks/associations which can promote cooperative actions and which can be used as social resources for

mutual benefit (2000; 1998). I will deal with reciprocity and associations in turn. Reciprocity is of two types: specific (also known as balanced) and generalized (Putnam, 1993, pág. 172). Specific reciprocity refers to a simultaneous exchange of items of equivalent value (e.g. workmates exchanging holiday gifts). “Generalized reciprocity, which is of interest here, refers to “a continuing relationship of exchange that is at any given time unrequited or imbalanced” (Putnam, 1993, pág. 172). “Now consider the constraining effects of class and politics on bridging social capital. For one thing, to establish running socio-cultural associations require that people contribute free labor. But daily laborers are busy with their work. If they don't labor, they don't eat. They have small time for associations. They are not members of Putnam's bowling clubs! Apart from time, people also need money to run associations. And, money is something poor laborers don't have much of” (Das, 2004) .

Going a little further inside the topic I want to discuss, the proposal is how to create Social Capital for the election processes. Blucher depicts elections as social choice mechanisms in which a group chooses one option among many that are available (Blucher, 2007) . “In such a setting two possibilities exist. Either one option is socially preferable, in which case competitive elections are sub-optimal because they allow the possibility that the socially-preferable option will not win; or there are two (or more) options that are equally desirable, in which case a competitive election between (or among) those options is irrelevant, because any outcome will maximize social utility” (Blucher, 2007). With regards to Social Capital, we can talk about the theory of Rational Choice. In which, each voter is going to elect the candidate that best suits his interests. These interests are developed or shown through the proposals that each candidate provides. And with these

proposals the candidates start creating a movement or a group of people that follow their line of thinking. “Contemporary political theory, the so-called rational choice model, starts with the assumption that actors know what they want and can order their wants transitively. (These formulations are probably equivalent. To know what one wants requires one to choose the best from among several goals and, failing to attain it, to choose the second best, etc. To order three goals is to decide that one is better than either of the other two and that a second is better than a third, which is exactly a transitive ordering.)” (Riker, 1995). Riker describes exactly how important these goals are and how they depend on the influence of the individual, as well as the role of how transitivity plays in this area. If a candidate knows how to maintain his line, his way of thinking and most important, his proposals, people are going to identify with him, and they are going to win the confidence needed for that candidate to create Social Capital in his favor. How does the choice would work?

“The choice of means is much complicated by the fact that actions by one actor produce outcomes in conjunction with actions by others. In choosing among possible actions, therefore, each actor must consider what others may choose and must evaluate the potential equilibrium outcomes from the several individual choices. This means that given the potential equilibria when the actor and others choose, the actor chooses action leading to the most satisfactory of the anticipated equilibria actually available, given others’ choices” (Riker, 1995).

With this been said, I want to show how this theory works jointly with the Creation of Social Capital. The theory of Rational Choice, as mentioned before, is the theory that takes place when one person or voter in this case, votes for one or another candidate according to his political views, his way of thinking, and finally because of how much he likes one or another of the candidates. This theory relates a lot with the creation of Social Capital, because of the factors that affect

the choice of people and how this Social Networks will affect the creation of Social Capital for the rational election of people.

After all of this said, one will question how Social Networks and Social Capital are connected nowadays. First of all, a Social Network is defined as a social structure made up of a set of social actors (such as individuals or organizations) and a complex set of the dyadic ties between these actors. The social network perspective provides a clear way of analyzing the structure of whole social entities. The study of these structures uses social network analysis to identify local and global patterns, locate influential entities, and examine network dynamics (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). With this definition we have a more clear view of what are Social Networks, now we can talk of how Social Networks work and how the analysis of them is an interdisciplinary academic field which came out from social psychology, sociology, statistics, and graph theory.

George Simmel authored early structural theories in sociology emphasizing the dynamics of triads and "web of group affiliations (Scott & Davis, 2003). Another characteristic that should be taken into account is how education affects in the political participation of the younger generations. A well educated population will more actively engage in political associations or in political participation (La Due Lake & Huckfeldt, 1998). It is important to make the young generations be active in politics, because they are the ones that use Social Networks the most, and they are the ones that nowadays, move the majority of new information due to the fact that they have Smartphone's, and they are always refreshing all their Social Networks. They share, retweet, show to other people the information they care about. For a candidate these is very important, if a young boy or girl sees one of their announcements or adds in Facebook or Twitter, and he or she is politically

active, and, if the boy or girl likes the candidate they probably are going to reshare that picture with a good or bad comment.

The important thing in this is that maybe some friends may like or may not like the post. But the candidate is gaining political recognition. Moreover, if these young boys or girls are politically active, they are going to comment, they will say if the candidate is good or bad, what the proposals are, if they share a common interest, or if the young boys and girls just think that the candidate is awesome or if he stinks, as they would say in their common slang. According to some investigators, as educational levels increase, so to do the skills and resources that supports higher levels of political participation (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). Viewed from a different vantage point, individual education provides the intellectual and cognitive skills that reduce the costs of participation (Downs, 1957), thereby shifting the incentives in favor of individual engagement. "Well-educated citizens are more likely to possess a knowledge base that makes it easier to unravel the intricacies of the political process, and they are more likely to possess the cognitive skills that make it easier to absorb and process complex political information" (Rosenberg, 1998). To support a small bit the theory about how adolescents influence in the creation of Social Capital, according to La Due Lake, "the results suggest that politically relevant social capital is indeed generated in personal networks; that it is a by-product of the social interactions with a citizen's discussants; and that increasing levels of politically relevant social capital enhance the likelihood that a citizen will be engaged in politics. Further, the production of politically relevant social capital is a function of the political expertise within an individual's network of relations, the frequency of political interaction

within the network, and the size or extensiveness of the network” (La Due Lake & Huckfeldt, 1998, pág. 571).

So now what I am trying to show with this is how and what Social Networks have to do with Social Capital, as the internet grows and as our society becomes more and more hyper connected. Social Networks are nowadays one of the most important tools for political campaigns and for political movements. Why is the case? It is because Social Networks are free to access; do you not need to spend money in opening an account, nor, you do not have to spend money to publish your proposals, pictures, videos, posts or any content the candidate. For this, what the candidate should do is hire a good group of graphic designers for the images of his Facebook, Twitter or any other Social Network and a great Community Manager, that is the person that is in charge of managing the candidates Social Networks. It is very important that the Community Manager is very strong, because he or she creates the strategic plan of how the Social Networks are going to work and how they are going to be align or not in the future campaign of the candidate. A Community Manager is responsible with the Director of Campaign to create this plan and the strategy that they should use so that they can create Social Capital through this instruments. “The social capital that inheres in FOIN's network, formed through more than thirty years of social organizing, must be understood within the context of cultural politics; that is, contestations over material practices and their associated symbolic meanings” (Escobar, 1998).

Culture is one of the main factors that influence Social Capital. If people are well educated, they are going to be more participative in all the areas that refer to their society. One clear example is how Facebook was created as a network for college students inside the United States. In England a group of students created

a group inside of Facebook to protest against HSBC and the poor treatment they were experiencing as graduate students. "A Cambridge University student and vice president of the student union named Wes Streeting set up a place on Facebook to complain about the policy, calling it "Stop the Great H S B C Graduate Rip-Off!" Similar to the Flyers Rights story, thousands of students signed up in a matter of days" (Shirky, 2008). Another great example of this is how SMO's work and how Social Networks have changed their politics for good of all the population.

"In order to test the mediating role of trust, two dichotomous variables were constructed. Those who reported they "lost trust in statewide-SMOs" were coded as 2 while those who did not lose trust were coded as 1. Similarly, those who "lost trust toward town government" were coded as 2, while those who did not lose trust were coded as 1. The correlates of social networks were examined by introducing three SES variables. Those who earned a BA and higher were coded as 1 on the variable Education and 0 if they had less than a BA degree. Those earning a family income of \$100,000 and more were accorded a 1 for High Income and 0 for less-than-high income.6 Finally, those who

Graph 1

Social Networks and Sustained Activism in Local NIMBY Campaigns

Table I. Results of Separate ANOVAs From Selected Variables, by Goal-Outcome of SMO (Watchdog, Proactive, and Fixed-Goal SMOs)

Measures	Fixed-Goal SMOs ^a	Watchdog SMOs ^a	Proactive SMOs ^a	F Ratio
Lost trust toward town government	1.49	2.00 ^s	1.75 ^s	14.95*
Lost trust toward state-level SMOs	1.29	1.57 ^s	1.57 ^s	4.7*
"Ownership of a social problem" ^b	-0.55	0.73 ^s	0.29 ^s	24.87*
Total no. of local networks	1.58	0.97	1.64	2.3
Total no. of nonlocal networks	3.00	0.37 ^s	2.00	4.6*
Total no. of internal networks	6.6	35.10 ^s	15.10 ^s	38.3*
Education	0.67	0.40	0.43	4.00*
Occupation	0.58	0.40	0.29 ^s	3.71*
High income	0.22	0.07	0.00 ^s	4.93*

^a Values are means.

^b When factor scores are used in ANOVA tables, they produce relative and not absolute means. The negative sign in front of the mean score for members in fixed-goal SMOs (-0.55) means that it is less than the highest group mean. The mean for watchdog and proactive activists is significantly higher than the mean for activists in fixed-goal groups.

^s Mean is significantly different from mean of fixed-goal SMOs at $p < 0.05$, using Scheffee test.

* $p < 0.05$.

reported a Professional or executive occupation were given a value of 1 while those who did not report such occupations were given a 0 value” (Shemtov, 2003) .

Another cause of the generation of Social Capital is the earnings that each person has. Because depending on how much they earn, they can be interested in others areas of life. A well fed family or family that can cover their basic needs would be more willing to participate in other areas of the society. Putnam (Putnam, 1993, págs. 178, 163-164), who takes a rational choice approach to social capital, seems to suggest that the only obstacle to cooperative action is that people are self-interested. As Putnam tells us, people’s self-interest is the factor that creates Social Capital. Mostly it happens when people have a higher level of education, but we cannot disconnect to the less educated people, because they are the ones that live the “true reality” of the errors that the government commits, so they will join as a group in each community that they live in, so that they can protest and ask for the rights they deserve. “It is quite clear that class solidarity growing out of common class position is an important factor underlying reciprocity. Some laborers have a class consciousness. That is, they are conscious of the fact that they are a class which is excluded from the ownership of means of production and whose livelihood therefore depends on wage work. Reciprocity is partly based on this consciousness and the empathy it generates” (Das, 2004). With this empathy that is generated when people work together and start doing things in favor of their community and close society. That is what Social Networks work for. They connect the people of the world, but mostly people of their existing networks so that they can interact and exchange opinions, ideas, and the bad aspects of their community. The benefit is that it is easier; it takes less time because you can interact with your community through their cell phone, computer, or any other

device that has the ability to open Facebook, Twitter and any other Social Network. It is also more effective, because you can meet with people of your community while being in your house and there is no need to arrange an event to meet personally.

With this been said, I am going to explain three case studies in which Social Networks affected the creation of Social Capital. First of all, it will be the Elections of 2008 in the United States, specifically the Obama Social Networks, the second case study will be Egypt in the Arab Spring and the third and final case study will be Ecuador in the elections of 2013, with the specific cases of the candidates, Rafael Correa and Guillermo Lasso.

CASE STUDY: UNITED STATES

In the United States the first time that Social Networks were used a political campaign was in 2008. It was the best campaign in technological innovation according to CNN and NBC. It was a campaign that had as a Director of Publicity and Promotion to one of the biggest and renowned persons in this area, Chris Hughes. He is the one that developed the strategy for “Obama for America” in 2008. He worked hand by hand with Rahaf Harfoush. This campaign started as any other campaign. They needed to do fundraising, and create the teams for the coordination of the tactics that they were going to use for the dissemination of the Obama proposals. The most important topics for McNamara are building the image – setting the candidate apart, the campaign logo, how to wisely spend the money that they earn through the fundraising events that they will do, also the strategy consists in identifying the common mistakes that the candidate could make. But in my case, the most important factors that I am going to take into

account for this paper is the usage of Message Delivery like in example, direct mail, electronic media (television and radio), phones, web site, earned media, press releases, email campaign, blogs, and any Social Network (McNamara, 2008).

Hughes and Harfoush made this campaign very personalized since the beginning of the campaign when they made Obama, the only Democratic candidate to secure a personalized short code of 62262, which spelled his name. The other candidates relied on a randomly generated short code to engage supporters. Clinton used 70007, and Edwards, code was 30644 (Harfoush, 2009). The campaign was so well thought that they used the numbers for people to remember the name of their candidate. “The Internet and an extraordinary social movement enabled him to come to power and youth were the engine of his victory” (Harfoush, 2009).

President Obama is one of the pioneers in government 2.0, a new model in which the citizens contribute ideas to the decision-making process—to get them engaged in public life. This is made always by a communication strategy that takes place in the networks he manages on the internet. Like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, the blog and the webpage. “Courtesy of the Internet, public officials can now solicit citizen input at almost no cost, by providing web-based background information, online discussion, and feedback mechanisms” (Harfoush, 2009). This new internet-based tools are a great success because they helped Obama to gain a bigger number of voters. “President Obama seems to understand that a social movement of young people is not a liability, but rather something he’ll need to bring about real change” (Harfoush, 2009).

One of the great things of the internet is that, there are very few rules that govern the content of the Internet although information posted should still be true and valid if posted by someone from the campaign (McNamara, 2008). Because there are almost no rules on the Internet, it is easier for the candidate to promote their campaigns in this place. It is also easier because; there are not many legal complications. Therefore, they also save money that can be used in other areas that could help for their campaign. “Although blogs are not widely read by the general public at large, even if a blog is one of the more nationally known blogs, the people who do read the blogs can be influential. Many times news stories will begin in the “blogosphere” because information that is not yet suitable for print, or unsubstantiated information, can circulate on the Web. As time progresses, blogs develop their own sources” (McNamara, 2008). The blogosphere is where each candidate should find the needs of the people and after that apply it to the proposals they are going to make, so that the people that are going to read the most visited Social Networks would identify with the problems that the candidates have identified and they will align according to their point of view.

One of the best tactics used by Hughes was the video with famous people that became viral in YouTube. This video was aired before Harfoush started working in the campaign of Obama. She tells us in her book that:

“I hunkered down in my Toronto apartment and headed over to YouTube to see what all the fuss was about. Shot in black and white, the video featured musical artist Will.i.am from the Black Eyed Peas accompanied by a slew of celebrities singing along to one of Senator Barack Obama’s speeches. It wasn’t the faces of the rich and famous that had me sitting up. It was the message of hope of and change coming from a man that until that moment I had only studied from a distance” (Harfoush, Yes We Did! An inside look at how social media built the Obama brand , 2009).

This video became so viral, that all the people that saw it started believing in the message of President Obama and in the proposals of hope that he made. This was the first hit that the Obama campaign achieved. This video was watched by more than 5 million people in the US, according to the YouTube Channel of Will. I.Am, the producer of the video and one of the stars that helped Obama win the campaign. According to Harfoush, “the Obama campaign marks a new age of innovation that could shift the way we approach democracy itself, especially within government institutions. The team’s brilliant use of technology to build relationships, transmit information, and organize offline action has redefined modern politics” (2009).

“For many organizations, this campaign has validated social media as a viable strategic tool. As new technologies continue to impact the way consumers engage with corporations, endless opportunities exist for smart executives who can leverage this new medium to create meaningful and authentic relationships” (Harfoush, 2009). The new technologies are the ones that are creating this new movement towards the creation of Social Capital. The world nowadays is hyper connected, and this hyper connection is the main tool that politicians are using for “spreading their word” towards the masses. This is reflected in the Obama campaign as Harfoush tells us in, “that already, groups were popping up on social networking sites like Facebook in support of his campaign. Obama’s newly revamped website now featured an official blog, a campaign schedule, a video channel called BarackTV, and a social network called my.barackobama.com. A mere twenty-four hours after his announcement, 1,000 grassroots groups had already been created using the site’s online tools by supporters who wanted to use the site for their own organizing” (2009). If these groups were appearing all alone

and without any kind of payment from the Obama campaign organizers. If any economic incentive was given to these people, we can see clearly that Social Capital was being created only because a lot of young people support the new idea of a new and renovated United States that Obama proposed in his speeches all around the country.

In 2007, “Yahoo’s community-powered knowledge market, “Yahoo Answers”, invited Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, and John McCain to engage the site’s 60 million members in a conversation around various issues. The site’s premise was simple: users log in and ask a question which is then opened up and answered by the community. This was the first time a tool like this was used in the political process. Hillary Clinton was the first to engage. She asked voters, “Based on your own family’s experience, what do you think we should do to improve healthcare in America?” (Harfoush, *Yes We Did! An inside look at how social media built the Obama brand*, 2009). Over 38 million people responded to this question. Through this data, it is proven that people were engaging in political areas through the internet. In the United States we can see that Social Capital was created even though, the campaign was just starting and with no one funding it. A great amount of groups of supporters appeared in the Social Networks and even more appeared in when the campaign organizers started paying for the support and hiring people to control the media that was circulating in their own Social Networks and in the groups that were allies with this Social Networks. Harfoush tells us that for a good Social Network strategy, “the people spend some time in these online places and listen to the conversations that are taking place. Observe how users within this community interact online and spot any area of opportunity where your social media initiative could help address an unmet need. This will

provide some motivation for users to participate with your online community” (2009, pág. 31).

CASE STUDY: EGYPT IN THE ARAB SPRING

Almost immediately after the overthrow of Tunisia’s dictator, the Internet was abuzz with speculation over what might happen next (Carvin, Distant Witness, 2012, pág. 45). Hosni Mubarak had enjoyed dominance over Egypt for three decades. He seemed as steady as a pharaoh carved in rock. People in Egypt started realizing that this government was authoritarian and that this was and has been a long lasting problem that they started protesting. A great example of this is the story of Khaled Said:

“He was beaten to death by police in the city of Alexandria. By all accounts, he had done nothing – except upload footage he recorded of police appearing to collaborate with local drug dealers. Police took their revenge by grabbing Said at an Internet café and smashing in his head; they claimed the cause of death was suffocation due to swallowing a bag of hashish. As photographs of Said’s swollen, disfigured body circulated online, a small group of anonymous activists created a Facebook page called “We Are All Khaled Said”. Within weeks, more than 200,000 people joined the group, literally waiting for their marching orders” (Carvin, Distant Witness, 2012).

When the protests very started to gather as a movement was in “January 25 protest, using YouTube, Facebook, the Twitter hashtag #jan25, text messaging and word-of-mouth. Ten days before the event, save-the-date tweets started popping up via the #sidibouid hashtag, spreading the protest announcement to many people who had closely followed” (Carvin, Distant Witness, 2012), these were the people that started spreading the word around all the Social Networks.

This was the first spark in Tunisia that led to the other revolutions and followed Egypt. In this country a man named Alaa (nickname in Twitter), was the one that led all the starting campaigns. He was put into prison, and then he fled to South Africa. But this person is the one that “began to think about how to build a network of sources in Egypt, Alaa seemed like the obvious starting point. He was well connected with bloggers and dissidents, many of whom would show up on January 25 for the first protest. I decided to follow the digital trail that might lead me to some of his closest associates: his Twitter account” (Carvin, Distant Witness, 2012). Because of the many connections around the world, Alaa’s friends of “Global Voices community members swung into action. They began to publicize his arrest far and wide, encouraging bloggers around the world to make a huge stink out of it. A blog dedicated to securing Alaa’s freedom helped us keep abreast of the situation and suggested ways to shame the Egyptian government into releasing him” (Carvin, Distant Witness, 2012).

These revolutions and the creation of Social Capital were mainly created through Twitter and the retweets. “Retweeting is a common activity on Twitter in which people share a tweet from someone else with their own followers. It’s the Twitter equivalent of forwarding an email to a group of people” (Carvin, Distant Witness, 2012). Alaa said the network of Egyptian activists took shape in my head – into something like the flight route map in the back of an airline magazine, and that every day I discovered more people, so I created a Twitter list dedicated to Egypt. “Twitter allows you to create collections of Twitter accounts – friends, favorite athletes, and politicians, whatever – and have them appear in a Twitter timeline of their own. That way, I could concentrate specifically on the people on that list rather than sorting through the noise that usually accompanies an overall

Twitter timeline” (Carvin, Distant Witness, 2012). With these mechanisms in Egypt people started creating Social Capital. With the groups of Twitter that let the costumers make groups of people that can create certain alliances like happened in all the States that participated in the Arab Spring.

“Mubarak thugs are riding in on CAMELS AND HORSES?! What the fuck do they think this is?! The Arabian Nights v 2.0?!” – @litfreak (Carvin, Distant Witness, 2012).

“With this in the night of February 1, Cairo was on a knife’s edge. In the wake of the initial rally, police killed many protesters on January 28, leading to larger demonstrations around the country. For three days running, the Egyptian government took the dramatic step of shutting down the Internet, hoping to avoid a repeat of Tunisia” (Carvin, Distant Witness, 2012). Because of the problems or alliances –Social Capital- that was created in Tunisia; Egypt decided to shut down the Internet. They preferred to cut the access to this mass media instrument, so that the revolution in Egypt did not grow so much. But it was too late when they did that. The Social Networks already were working and started with the spreading of the information. “I went to Al Jazeera’s website, hoping to find streaming live coverage. The first thing I saw was a swarm of men on horseback, some armed with batons and swords, charging one of the streets leading into Tahrir” (Carvin, Distant Witness, 2012).

“Ali’s tweets left no doubt that his life was in danger. Whenever he stopped tweeting for several minutes, I feared the worst; each tweet could be his last. And he was just one of the tens of thousands of people around Tahrir” (Carvin, Distant Witness, 2012). According to Carvin, if Ali stopped tweeting it meant that the worst had happened. Information of this type toured around the world and that is why,

the author tells us that Social Capital was created in that State and almost all the people that were tweeting knew what was happening in Egypt, and could follow updated information.

Another quote that Carvin tells us, that he took from a blog that said:

“It was just shy of 5: 30 p.m. in Cairo. Only another hour or so of daylight remained; the battle continued to rage. In Tahrir, protesters chiseled roads, sidewalks, walls – whatever they could find to arm themselves with makeshift projectiles. Up the road toward the Egyptian Museum, government thugs were doing the same” (Carvin, Distant Witness, 2012).

“It was also impressive to see how social media (Facebook) managed to unite these young Egyptians, even though protesters knew that they would face resistance, ‘rubber bullets and organized barricades’ from the ruling authority (Sanger, 2012). It is demonstrated that people could join if the societies are passing through a catastrophe or prosperous times. Twitter and Facebook created the necessary cohesion for the young people to go outside to protest and not care so much about their own security, for the freedom of their State and for justice. The International Business Times stated that the primary reason for the protests that succeeded in toppling Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak (and Tunisian President Zine el Abidine-Ben Ali) was economic (White, 2012). Because the citizens realized that President Mubarak had a great fortune from illegal funds that he was taking from the State’s account to his personal accounts. “The family’s wealth — speculation has put it at anywhere from \$1 billion to \$70 billion — has come under growing scrutiny since Mubarak’s Feb. 11 ouster opened the floodgates to three decades of pent-up anger at the regime” (Karin, 2011). With this amount of money this family had enough to buy whatever they wanted. All the funds that the family had were frozen. “The young Egyptians want quick economic reforms which will provide them with employment but this hope appeared to be far-

fetches. Though Mubarak's dictatorial regime is gone, the army still remains the de facto ruler of the country until elections were held" (Kabir, 2011).

In Egypt, the Social Networks were the main source of information in those days of internal war. All the television and radio frequencies were interfered by the government; so that people could not receive new information and from various points of view. Only the State information was aired. So here is where Social Networks entered and helped the young citizens to be informed and to fight for their freedom and the reforms they wanted; so that President Mubarak stopped stealing from their country.

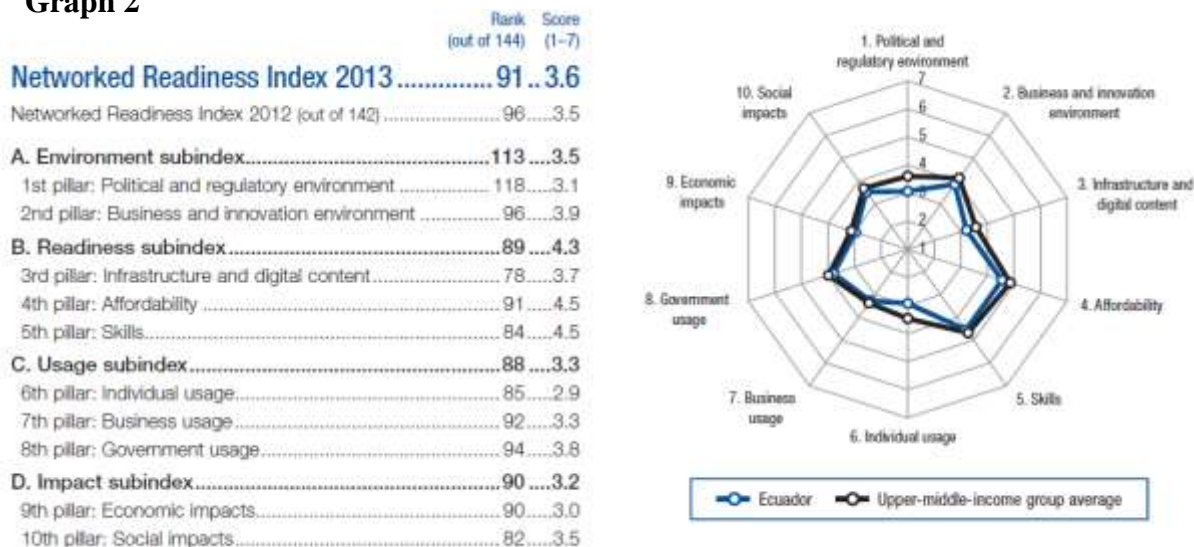
CASE STUDY: ECUADOR

Do Social Networks work in Ecuador and can they create Social Capital?

First of all, there are two problems that Ecuador has. First, the penetration of the internet is very low and secondly, the education that has Ecuador is not high quality, therefore, people are not interested in participating in politics, because they are not well informed or because of their lack of education, they do not care about politics, so they are not active participants. According to the World Economic Forum (WEF), Ecuador occupies the 96th State out 142 States, in matters of Network Readiness, with a score of 3.58/7. Ecuador is not so badly connected, but it is not one of the best States in what refers to Internet accessibility and penetration. Ecuador is not so badly positioned because it has a plan called "Estrategia Ecuador Digital 2.0 and BB Plan". This is according to the Appendix A of the Global Information Technology Report 2013. Because Ecuador has this "plan" it is not so badly positioned, for the reason that the government is

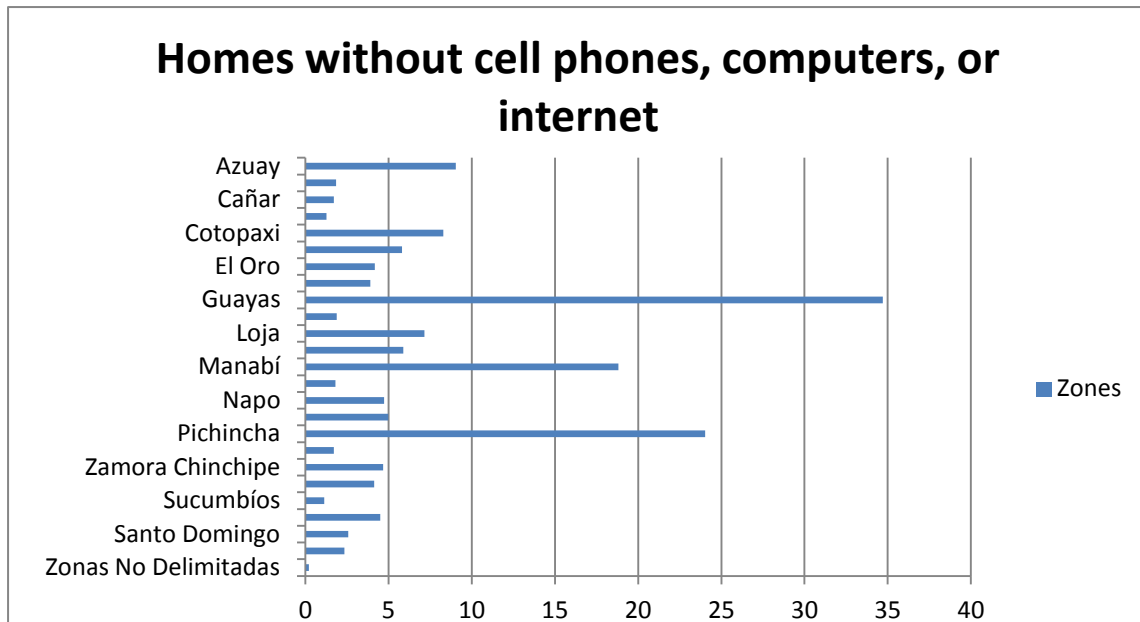
working on a strategy to improve the penetration of internet in Ecuador. Also according to WEF, Ecuador was in 47th place, with a rate of 8.3 percent, in matters of mobile internet services (Bilbao-Osorio, Dutta, & Lan, 2013).

Graph 2



Source: World Economic Forum

In education matters, Ecuador is not so well positioned, when it refers to internet penetration and knowledge. “In Ecuador 29% of the population is digitally illiterate. Only in Bolivar (province) there are 65803 persona, that represents the 45.8% of the totality of the population of this provinces with more illiterates in technology areas, while Pichincha and the Galapagos are the provinces with less digital illiteracy with 17.4% and 9.9% respectively” (Censos, 2012). If we speak in terms of illiteracy as a global term of education, Ecuador is not in its best rates. Its statistics have improved, but nevertheless, there are a lot of people that are not educated, well educated or that have finished some advanced level of education. The percentages are for illiterate people 6.75%. This rate is for the people that is over 15 years and does not know how to read or write (Censos, 2012).



Source: Censo de Población y Vivienda 2010 INEC.

With the statistics presented before, I am going to analyze how it affects to the creation of Social Capital and moreover, the creation of Social Capital through Social Networks. Ecuador contains a lot of problems of education and internet penetration. With these two tools not available in the country, it is very difficult for a candidate to create Social Capital through Social Networks. People in Ecuador are not very interested in participating in political areas. Even though, in Ecuador voting is mandatory, there is an absenteeism of 18.61% of voters. Meaning that 2.172.799 people did not vote in the last elections that took place in Ecuador in 2013 (Elecciones 2013 Febrero 17, 2013). If people are not interested in voting, they are less interested in participating in the process before, during and after. The indifference the population presents is one of the main problems that Ecuador has in what refers to election processes.

If people are not interested in participating in politics, it is very difficult to create Social Capital. Social Capital is created by the insertion and participation of the population in politics. Moreover, the lack of internet penetration does not permit that the candidates reach more people, with easier methods and cheaper

tools, like Facebook and Twitter. People that have access to internet are the middle-upper class, and these people already knows who are the candidates that they are going to vote for, or the candidates point of view and political proposals. Rafael Correa has 1.015.390 followers in Twitter. He has tweeted 4146 tweets, in the elections day we can see how the more influential candidates developed followers that day.

Graph 4



Source: <http://www.socialbakers.com/>

Rafael Correa and Guillermo Lasso were the candidates that created more Social Capital in Social Networks. But the people that follow them are the people that in their majority knew already that were going to vote for them. In Ecuador Social Networks are limited for politics, that almost all the followers or Facebook fans are the people that already like.

Graph 5



Source: <http://www.socialbakers.com/>

Graph 6



Source: <http://www.socialbakers.com/>

As demonstrated in the graphics that are above, the candidates that generated more expectations and more Social Capital in Ecuador are the two candidates that were the most voted. People started following them. Because of their new way of showing their proposals. Consequently, for Guillermo Lasso, that was the candidate of the right that offered a total change of political policies from the ones of Rafael Correa, was the hard opposition. But nevertheless, he got less than 23% of the votes and Rafael Correa had the 57.17% of the votes.

I can conclude that in Ecuador the creation of Social Capital through Social Networks was due to the fact that the most prominent, powerful, and wealthy candidates. Were the ones that invested more and had a Community Manager that had a good strategy to get closer to the people and that the people should and wanted to follow them in Twitter or Facebook? It is possible to create Social Capital through Social Networks in Ecuador, but this Social Capital will be very limited and will not be so effective, because of the Social Capital that was already created before the official campaign days.

THEORY

In my point of view, Social Capital can be created through Social Networks. It is important to take into account that to create Social Capital the population of a State should be well educated and should be well connected to the internet. If these two factors are accomplished by a State, it is very easy to create Social Capital. People that are interested in politics are more willing to join a tendency only by reading the proposals of the candidate in any Social Network. Moreover, with the access to internet, the population is more willing to share, tweet or retweet the policies and proposals that their favorite candidate does. With the case studies analyzed before, we can see that Social Capital can be created in any situation.

According to Sabilia, the first Social Network that appeared in the internet was e-mail, this was a better and easier way to communicate and it stopped with the usage of phones or fax. After that, as the companies realized that email was so successful they invented the instant messaging services, like msn, and yahoo messenger. And because people liked to be connected so much, the current Social Networks were created, MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, and others less known. People started losing their need for privacy and with this loss, they started showing what they want, what they like, and also, what they do not like (Sabilia, 2009). This shows us how people, because of their zest to share their lives, led Social Networks to be so successful. If people share their religious views, their hobbies, sports, television shows and movies that they like, why would they not share their political views? Politics is one of the most important areas in every person's life. Therefore, if people also share what they like or dislike in politics, they are going to influence or at least inform their friends about what is good or

what is bad according to their point of view. Consequently, this will cause more discussion and more participation in any area. Even more, in politics that will always be debatable, there are many points of discrepancy and agreement. With these kinds of discussions that take place in forums in Social Networks, people can express whatever opinion they have without any fear or restrictions about their opinions. This freedom is another example of why Social Capital can be created so easily in Social Networks, if people are very interested.

The United States is the perfect example of creation of Social Capital with Social Networks. Obama with “my.barackobama.com” became the preferred platform to continue and extend the organizing they had already been doing. It allowed them to connect with Obama supporters outside of their personal networks, and amplified their organizational efforts to an unprecedented level. Some of these groups were started even before Obama had officially declared his candidacy” (Harfoush, 2009). People are so passionate about politics in the United States, which as mentioned in the book of Harfoush that people even before Obama was an official candidate to the elections of 2008. Another example of this is,

“One great example is Students for Obama, which was a Facebook group created in 2006 by Bowdoin College student Meredith Segal. She was so inspired by Obama’s 2004 Democratic National Convention speech that she started the group to petition the senator to run for president. The Facebook group’s popularity quickly grew as thousands of new members joined the cause. When an actual campaign became a real possibility, members strategized on how they could best support Obama and turned the group into a Political Action Committee. By the time Obama officially threw his hat in the race, Students for Barack Obama had an astounding 62,000 members on Facebook and chapters on over eighty college campuses across the country. Far beyond a simple Facebook group,

it had become a powerful online network of connected young people capable of using the internet to draw large crowds of supporters” (Harfoush, 2009).

The political movement is so big in the United States that even people that are not voters offer themselves as volunteers for the campaigns. The movements are so big that it “grew to over 550 campus chapters and introduced high school representatives from every state” (Harfoush, 2009). Also, in the Obama campaign, another great example of this was that “Obama team reinforced the ethos of a community-powered campaign by letting supporters connect and share messages with each other. Nothing is more convincing or more powerful than hearing a story from someone just like you” (Harfoush, 2009). Any kind of person could be contacted or contact Obama to propose changes and policies. Most of the times, the advisors were the ones that answered this proposals, depending on the area or topic that the proponent had. In some very few, but specific cases Obama answered to the proposals himself, one great example; and here we can see the intelligence of the Director of Campaign, was that he used one conversation to attract more followers. A proponent was recorded and her proposal was so good that he called this girl. “To her delight, the campaign informed her that she would have the opportunity to have a one-on-one phone call with Barack Obama himself. Her call with Obama was recorded and posted on the blog, allowing voters to hear a more casual and informal side of the senator” (Harfoush, Yes We Did! An inside look at how social media built the Obama brand, 2009).

In Egypt, the creation of Social Capital through Social Networks was even bigger. “With each incoming tweet, the better I could visualize the situation on the ground. Even though I had access to Al Jazeera’s feed, it was showing only a couple of hotspots in a combat zone stretching more than a mile along the Nile.

The people tweeting from Tahrir had their own extraordinary perspective – but it was limited to each immediate field of view. There was no way for them to report on what was going on everywhere“ (Carvin, Distant Witness , 2012). The tweets per minute in the hottest days were almost 45 tweets per minute (CSO, 2012). The young generation was the one that tweeted the most, but people from 30 years to 55 years also tweeted a lot, to achieve one goal, overthrow Mubarak from power and create a new democratic government. (Mishra, 2011). All the people started fighting for one reason, and the reason was democracy, justice and a more equal country for all. This protest generated so much information that it became a trend in Twitter. All the things that happened in Egypt and all the Arabian countries that participated in the Arab Spring. “Twitter, it turns out, doles out tweet quotas to users. If you tweet too many times in a given period, it temporarily suspends you. The idea is to discourage spammers, but now it was preventing me from covering one of the most dramatic days of the Egyptian revolution. No wonder: I was probably approaching my 1,000th tweet of the night” (Carvin, Distant Witness , 2012). There was so much information that was happening in Egypt, that the author was blocked by Twitter due to the fact that he was tweeting too much. He was not spamming or misinforming people, he was tweeting all the things that were happening all around Egypt.

Finally, the creation of Social Capital in Ecuador is a matter of time. The government nowadays is investing a lot of money in education and technology. The future generations, because of this investment will grow to be more political and more interested in participating in this. According to various people that I asked during the process of doing this research paper, they told me that in the present families are more involved in politics, and discuss more about that, than in

early times. With this we can say that Social Capital was and is created more and more. And with the new investments and new technologies that the government is bringing, Ecuador is going to be a very politically active country. Young generations are more prepared, more political, therefore, with more internet connections, more penetrations and more access to computers. Social Capital will be created with Social Networks.

According to Foucault, there exists juxtaposition, because there are three types of persons in a society. The “lons” that are the ones that are only citizens that cannot do anything. The other type, are the wise ones, that are the ones that have the knowledge to create things and to congregate people with knowledge. And the last category are the rich and powerful, that are the ones that have the political and economic resources, but they are not the ones that possess the capacity to create or to innovate, for this reason that they do not possess the knowledge or wisdom to do that. (Foucault, 2009). Internet has created a new kind of person. A fourth kind, that is the virtual person. The virtual person only can create Social Capital with the people that are close to them, inside the same region or the same State. It is very difficult to create Social Capital with a person that lives in Australia and a person that lives in Ecuador. They do not share the same values, problems, politics, and education. Therefore, Social Capital can only be created with people that are close, or share an interest or a community.

People that have an interest in any topic can, and will create Social Capital through Social Networks. It can be in politics, in art, in music or in any other area. In politics, Social Capital was created in the United States and in Egypt, because the people were tired of the regimes or policies they were living in for a very long time. In Ecuador, Social Capital was created; in a smaller amount; because of the

interests people had for the State, that the candidates offered. The problem was that this Social Capital is not durable. This Social Capital created in the networks only works for a certain amount of time and after that it dissolves. In the United States and in Egypt, the Social Capital that was created still persists because they are looking still for a change and until they do not see that change that the people want. Social Capital will maintain its power when it has the acceptance of the people.

CONCLUSIONS

As the paper shows, through the three case studies it is proved that Social Capital can be created, if certain conditions are accomplished. A high-level of education and well connected society to the Internet, are the two main factors to create Social Capital. Why is this so important? It is because through a high-level of education and a well connected society, people are going to be more participative in politics. A society that has a higher-level of education, are the people that will discuss about politics in a deeper level and with this discussion what it is going to be generated is a bigger society that is interested in what is happening to their country. People that discuss politics are the ones that participate and do care about what is going on and how people can help to change the issues that the country is living in that moment.

A great example of this, is how in the United States, after President Bush and his policies had affected, not only the image around the world, but also, had destroyed the economy of that State. Therefore, when Barak Obama ran for President of the United States, people started believing in the message of hope and that a new era will come if he was the winner of this election process. People that had a high-

level of education started realizing that a change was needed in the democracy of this country. With the people that were highly educated and that had access to the internet, a massive movement started because of the change they wanted. Young people were the ones that wanted more this change. Therefore, in the hyper-connection that the United States lived in, it was easier to spread the information and to pass these concepts of hope and change. People were so interested and amazed because of the new strategy that Obama was presenting as a candidate, that also that was a great success. It is well said that, the one that hits first, is the one that hits harder. With this quote, what I try to explain is that because Obama was the first one to use Social Networks as a tool for a campaign, he is the one that will always take the glory about a campaign 2.0.

Another case in which Social Capital was created is in Egypt in the Arab Spring. Where, because of the dictatorship and because of Wiki leaks that is the responsible for leaking the information about the illicit enrichment of President Hosni Mubarak. People were so mad at this that a small group of young people started moving Social Networks, to encourage other people of their own age and older people to get out to the streets and protest for the freedom of Egypt. There was one man that was fundamental for this revolution, his nickname was Alaa in Twitter and he was imprisoned, due to the fact that he instigated people to protest against the government. There was so much information around Twitter, that there were almost 45 tweets per minute. With this statistic, it is proved that people were really immersed in politics and mostly in helping their country to get a real democracy and moreover, to get out to the streets and protest for a new country and a new government that will not steal from them.

Finally, in the case of Ecuador, the creation of Social Capital is very limited because of the lack of a high-level education and because of the lack of internet access that exist in the country. People that are politically active, is a very small group, and this small group do creates Social Capital, but only in their closest networks. Also, the creation of Social Capital through Social Networks is only in the middle-upper class that the people that are most educated, that has access to the internet and that is politically active. People only share what they are interested in, and one of the most important things, is that they only share the things of the candidate they like and share the bad things about the candidate they do not like. There is not so much discussion and the only discussion that usually happens is people against and people in favor insulting each other.

For instance, there is a creation of Social Capital, it will always depend on circumstances, but if there is a high-level of education and a wide scale access to the internet. People will participate more actively, due to the fact that, if they possess more information, they will be more curious and this curiosity will take them to discuss or to fight for their beliefs. If people, have beliefs, they will fight for them and search for a group to support them and there is where Social Networks plays an important role nowadays. People can search other people that share their beliefs inside their own country or region and with this interact between each other and if they feel that some of their beliefs are being violated, they will go out to the streets to protest and to show what they want.

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