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From Tweets to the Streets

New Media and Political Engagement
- A Case Study of Amnesty International and the Egyptian Uprisings

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"Twitter of course, don't topple governments, people do"

Evgeny Morozov, 2011

"If you want to liberate a society just give them the Internet"

Wael Ghonim, 2011

Acknowledgements

Abstract

Despite the so-called 'great retreat', in which people arguably are distancing themselves from the political sphere and civic engagement, the last two years has seen an upsurge in political activities. Outside the realms of institutionalised politics, i.e. political parties, lies a whole terrain of alternative political activities, including social movements and media institutions. Following the Egyptian revolution in 2011 there has been increased attention on the democratic potential of new media with the coining of terms, such as "Facebook revolution" and "Twitter revolution". The question remains, however, to what extent new media can facilitate political empowerment and participation. Through a case study of Amnesty International and the Egyptian uprisings this paper will argue that faced with few attractive political opportunities, the Egyptian people created their own democratic space, a digital public sphere, where they could impact on society. This paper further argues that new media facilitates communication, rapid information exchange and education by opening up operational spaces for marginalised groups who might otherwise be excluded from the public sphere due to power hierarchies. Furthermore, new media challenges mainstream media's hegemony and information monopoly by increasing the number of voices in public deliberation. However, it will be emphasised that despite the technology-as-progress discourse, one should not place too much value on new media as facilitator for social and political change. Nevertheless, based on a broad definition of the political, that acknowledges maximalist forms of democratic participation, we may begin to understand the democratic potential of new media.

Table of context:

Introduction

New media has received a lot of attention in both academia and mainstream media following the Arab spring in 2011. Hundreds of thousands of people mobilised support and action and managed to topple existing totalitarian regimes in four countries, including former president Hosni Mubarak in Egypt. The coining of the term "Facebook revolution" in reference to the Egyptian uprisings have sparked wide debates regarding the value of new media in democracy processes, as indicated by the two quotes on the front sheet of this paper, and further begs the question: What is the value of new media in terms of political engagement?

General low political participation has led to the coining of the term *the great retreat*, in which people are arguably abandoning their civic responsibility as there has been witnessed a decline in political engagement, particularly amongst younger generations (Boggs, 2000 in Dahlgren, 2009:23). Despite these claims, however, alternative political activities, including social movements and alternative media institutions are increasing (della Porta, 2012:41-42). Due to continuous dissatisfaction with political elites, people are to a greater extent getting involved within spaces they are more likely to make a difference. These recent developments result in a broadening of the *political*, which includes microstructures as well as macrostructures and acknowledges *maximalist forms of democratic participation* not reserved for political elites, in turn increasing the number of political actors (Carpentier, 2011:17;39). Faced with few attractive institutional opportunities people have to a certain extent re-defined politics within their existing realities, i.e. the "personal is political" (della Porta & Tarrow, 2005:14; Carpentier, 2011:39). Within this new, broad political paradigm lies a whole realm of alternative political behaviour, and with these developments in mind it becomes possible to explain the role of new media in political and social changes.

Based on a case study of Amnesty International and the Egyptian uprisings, this paper will explore the potential for new media to empower people for greater political engagement. To that end this paper will first present the reader with an overview of existing literature on media and democracy and participation as well as a theoretical backdrop to better place this research within existing debates. Here it will be shown that new media- and communication technologies are seen as changing contemporary understandings of democracy. To better understand the context, a short overview of the Egyptian uprisings is presented as well as an introduction to Amnesty International and the organisation's policies. The analytical section

of this paper considers the value of new media as a tool for political empowerment through communication and information exchange; education; state resistance; its ability to challenge mainstream media; and the relationship between social movements and NGOs, focusing specifically on the Egyptian uprisings and Amnesty International.

This paper aims to investigate the value of new media in democracy processes in terms of increasing political engagement. While acknowledging the role of new media it will be demonstrated how political and social change is still reliant on human agency, thus the ability to move easily between offline and online relations is key. It will be emphasised that new media as a tool is given value by its context, thus its potential is asserted by contemporary understandings. By recognising maximalist forms of democratic participation (Carpentier, 2011:17) however, new media can be understood as a vital part of modern politics.

In order to establish the potential for new media to empower people for political engagement this research aims to answer the following research questions:

I.   What is the role of new media in contemporary social movements (as exemplified through the Egyptian uprisings)?

II.   What is the relationship between new- and mainstream media in democracy processes?

III.   Can activists have an impact on the international 'NGO agenda'? Are NGOs and social movements working together to a greater extent than before? To what extent are Amnesty International's working methods affected by developments in communication technology?

The Egyptian case poses as particularly interesting due to the current political climate, both in terms of the uprisings that led to the overthrow of the former regime, but also the social and political turmoil that has followed the revolution. Furthermore, a completed internship with Amnesty International provides me with local knowledge of the organisation; its strategies and current campaigns; and a connection with its employees, providing valuable empirical data to my research. The twofold focus on social movements and NGOs represents a novel research approach on political engagement within contemporary understandings of the political sphere, and will add valuable perspectives on the democratic value of new media.

Theoretical Framework

In order to fully comprehend the phenomenon of media for democracy and political engagement it is important to approach these wide concepts on the basis of a set of theoretical concepts. These theories will be drawn from previous work on media and democracy; media and participation; (new) social movement theories; power; non-governmental organisations (NGOs); and political communication. These concepts have been chosen in order to attempt to explain the role of media in social movements and the democratic potential of new media in democracy processes.

Key terms

To begin with it is important to operationalize key terms that will be frequently used in the following analysis. Both the existing literature and people interviewed for this thesis use different concepts interchangeably. These concepts include social media, new media, citizen journalism, mainstream media, traditional media, activist, and human rights defender.

For the purpose of this thesis *new media* will be used to cover a broad set of practices facilitated by technological innovations of Web 2.0. These practices include social media sites (Facebook, Twitter), blogs, and other video- and file sharing sites offered by the Internet, e.g. YouTube. The architecture of Web 2.0 is characterised by its ability to break down barriers between production and consumption and allows for "broad social participation" (Dahlgren, 2009:158). These terms are recognised by the ability to participate *through* the media (Carpentier, 2011:67). *Mainstream media* will be used to describe the practices of the mass media, i.e. state owned newspapers, TV-networks and radio where production is reserved for media professionals "characterised by specific forms of expertise and skills, institutional embeddedness and autonomy, and the deployment of management and power strategies to achieve specific objectives" (Carpentier, 2011:68). Even though these definitions might emphasise the dichotomy between new- and mainstream media, these terms will be used for the purpose of separating the two practices. *Citizen journalism* will be used to describe the practice of citizens documenting and reporting on issues from a subjective perspective. In correspondence with the definition presented by Nip (2006), citizen journalists are defined by 'ordinary' people "gathering content, visioning, producing and publishing news products" (Nip, 2006 cited in Dahlgren, 2009:177). Citizen journalists use a variety of different media platforms, including both new media and mainstream media to promote their views and are

recognised by their ability to participate *in* the media (Carpentier, 201:68).

As for the differentiation between *human rights defender* and *activist*, according to Amnesty International: "human rights defenders must accept the universality of human rights. Human Rights Defenders is a term of art that trigger specific obligations by states" (Amnesty International, 2013 by Skaare). A human rights activist on the other hand: "is anyone who acts to promote human rights and is not a legal term of art" (ibid). For the purpose of this thesis the term activist will be used as a generic term when discussing the Egyptian uprisings. In this context, an activist is defined as someone who is actively participating in political and social resistance, which also includes the defence of human rights. The term human rights defender will only be used in relation to Amnesty International's policies in the case study, because this is the official definition in the organisations policies. Even though in some instances it might be more appropriate to use human rights defender than activist based on the definitions presented by Amnesty, the term activist will in this case be used to be able to cover a broad group of people without differentiating between them. This is further supported by the fact that the Egyptian activists interviewed for this thesis refer to themselves and the rest of their networks as activists.

Further, as this thesis bases its discussion around the context of the Egyptian revolution it is important to establish what is understood by this broad term. For the purpose of this thesis the Egyptian case is defined as a *social revolution*. This implies a revolution that has caused changes in both political and social structures (Skopcol, 1979:4). As the 18 days of continuous protests led to the overthrow of the regime the political repercussions are evident. Although it is too early to establish the long-term social changes in Egypt, it will be argued that the increase in political participation has had social effects on the Egyptian society. Facilitated by new media technologies, the political sphere is no longer reserved for political elites and it can be argued that there has been a shift in social structures. "Social revolutions are rapid, basic transformations of a society's state and class-structures; and they are accompanied and in part carried through by class-revolts from below" (ibid). Thus, *revolution* will be used to explain the 18 days of protests that led to Mubarak leaving office. Seeing as this is a wide term with many different associations, the use of the term revolution will be kept to a minimum. Rather, *protests* will be used when discussing the physical and intellectual resistance against the regime on single-events, while the term *uprising* will be used to cover the general political and social turmoil in Egypt over the last years up until today.

Media and democracy

The study and corresponding debate on media and democracy is extensive, both within the media field and within the field of democratic processes.

> The media are a prerequisite – though by no means a guarantee – for shaping the democratic character of society; they are the bearers of democracy's political communication beyond face-to-face settings (Dahlgren, 2009:2)

The role of the media in the modern era as providers of information, and as facilitators for public debate and political participation places the media firmly within the democracy paradigm. Peter Dahlgren states that alterations in the media have clear impacts on our notion of democracy (2009:161). This perspective is further emphasised by other scholars who add that political life has become so embedded within the domain of the media to such an extent that media is in fact transforming democracy (Castells, 1998; Meyer, 2002; Harnam, 2000 in Dahlgren, 2009:35).

> This view does not mean that politics does not exist outside the media, or that politics has been reduced to a mere media spectacle. Is does, however, posit the political actors who want to accomplish things requiring public visibility will always turn to the media (Dahlgren, 2009:25).

The central role of media in democracy processes adds valuable perspectives to the discussion on the democratic potential of new media. Can one exist without the other, or has the media developed to such an extent that political participation is dependent on the media? This question illustrates the crucial role the media has, and emphasises the need to fully understand the media scene and its role in society, in order to grasp contemporary politics. This will be further elaborated on, as the objective of this thesis is to understand the role of new media in contemporary democracy processes.

"'Democracy' is not a panacea for all human problems, but it offers the most compelling principle for legitimacy – 'the consent of the people' – at the basis of political order" (Held, 2006 cited in Dahlgren, 2009:14). Dahlgren argues that the engagement of citizens is what gives democracy its legitimacy and vitality (2009:12). Dahlgren differentiates between *received citizenship* and *achieved citizenship* where the latter is based on *political agency* and

suggests that it is when things are not working as smoothly as we might like that it triggers larger citizen involvement (2009:62;14). Dahlgren further adds that democracy emerges as a result of political struggle and rarely occurs as a "gift to the people from the powerful circles" (2009:2).

Over the last decades there has been an on-going discussion related to the lack of civic responsibility and political engagement by citizens, especially younger generations. The coining of the term 'me-generation' has been used on the younger citizens of today, arguably not involving themselves in political matters, thus ignoring their civic responsibility. This decrease in civic engagement has been called *the great retreat*, and been explained as a withdrawal from the arena of common concerns and politics, and a decrease in collective consciousness and identities (Boggs, 2000 in Dahlgren, 2009:23). Recent developments in political resistance challenge the great retreat. For instance, the large-scale mobilisation and protests in Egypt – particularly young Egyptians, illustrates that citizen participation is still very much alive. Socioeconomic oppression and injustice reignites political participation. The increase in political participation in this case can thus be described as political struggle towards democracy.

It is essential to recognise that many of the social, cultural, political, and technological conditions for democracy are in transition. Instead of holding on to historical notions, it is important that we incorporate these realities into contemporary understandings of democracy (Dahlgren, 2009:14). The potential of the Internet in democratic processes has been thoroughly debated during the last two decades, where the expectations for its development were rather modest to begin with (Dahlgren, 2009:160). In contradiction to these first predictions, however, the Internet is emerging as a clear factor in promoting participation, and it has been suggested that political engagement increases with the spread of the Internet (Dahlgren, 2009:170).

It is difficult to discuss the development of communication technologies and democracy during the last couple of decades without drawing on globalisation theories. Globalisation is characterised by increased international flows of economies, cultures, people and information

(Witteborn, 2010:358). Although a highly contested term[1], the fast-growing dissemination of new technologies has had a significant impact on how people communicate across borders. Communication and information exchange in and between different actors involved in the Arab spring greatly contributed to large-scale mobilisation, and not to mention had an enormous impact on the information going out of the region. As pointed out by an Egyptian activist: "When Tunisia erupted, we were dazzled. It was as if the light had been switched on and as if Tunisia had opened possibilities for us which we didn't know were there" (Negm, 2011 in BBC, 2011). By being able to share ideas of resistance on a global scale, people are in turn influencing each other to stand up for their own, and others, freedom and justice. "The rapid dissemination of human rights ideas is, in fact, probably one of the most spectacular successes of globalisation" (Hylland Eriksen, 2005:27). In order to fully understand the uprisings that took place in Egypt, it is crucial that these developments are viewed in a socio-political context. This includes the changing nature of the media and its potential role in democracy processes. While there are no guarantees to what will happen in the future, Dahlgren suggests that the Internet can potentially help contribute to the long-term transformation of the institutions of democracy and the modes of participation (2009:161).

Alternative political activity

"Beyond the structures of established political parties lies an extensive political terrain comprising movements, civil society organisations, networks, and activist groups engaged in particular themes or with specific issues" (Dahlgren, 2009:15). The so-called great retreat, where there has been witnessed a decrease in traditional political activities, has in fact led to an upsurge in untraditional political activities like the ones mentioned above. It is suggested that increase in post-modern *individualisation* may be the reason why people distance themselves from traditional political activities, and to a greater extent get involved with personal life within spaces they are more likely to make a difference (Bennett, 2003 in della Porta, 2012:48; Smith, 2008:127). Individualisation is regarded as a development away from collective grouping and organisation, i.e. political voting, towards greater focus on personal autonomy and personal life (Dahlgren, 2009:28). This corresponds with post-modern

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[1] Even though globalisation is a highly contested term as critics point to a development of international capitalism and the homogenisation of cultures, for the purpose of this thesis globalisation will be looked at as enabling rapid dissemination of information, communication technologies and human rights.

sentiments where the individual is seen as the fundamental unit of society, rather than the family or the community (Mizrach).

> In this regard, it could be argued that individualisation is an indirect way to contribute to the engagement in the new forms of politics, as many citizens come to make political connections via personal commitments rather than overarching traditional ideologies (Dahlgren, 2009:28).

As a consequence of continuing dissatisfaction with political authority figures people are increasingly participating in political activities outside the traditional realms of politics. Political participation is thus no longer defined by traditional institutionalised structures, i.e. voting or party membership, but is characterised to a greater extent by activities that further the individual's own interests. Faced with few attractive institutionalised offers, people are - to a certain extent, redefining politics (della Porta & Tarrow, 2005:14). The increase in alternative political activities is evident in the recent large-scale uprisings in Egypt. This development can be explained by limited options in traditional political activities in the country, and will be discussed in the analysis.

Mainstream media versus new media

New media and alternative media are often defined against, and placed in a dichotomous relationship with, mainstream media. Mainstream media is considered to be state-owned, homogenous and as carriers of dominant discourses and reorientations, whereas, alternative media "…provide a different point of view from that usually expressed, that cater to communities not well served by the mass media, or that expressly advocate social change" (Waltz, 2005 cited in Carpentier, 2011:98). While mainstream media has been accused of focusing merely on dramatics in their news coverage, e.g. war, natural disasters and political instability, alternative media and citizen journalism arguably offer new local perspectives that have potential impact on the media scene (Gorman & McLean, 2009:274). The most obvious impact new media has had on political activity to date is disrupting political institutions by blurring the boundaries between mainstream- and new media through innovations such as political blogs and Wikileaks (Loader & Mercea, 2012:5; Nip, 2006 in Dahlgren, 2009:178).

Some scholars reject the term 'alternative media' altogether as it suggests that it is alternative to something else, i.e. mainstream media (Downing et.al., 2001), which in turn "limits the

potential of these media in their ability to resist the alienating power of mainstream media"
(Rodriguez, 2001 cited in Carpentier, 2011:100).

> (…) we must avoid stepping into the trap of using the (neo) liberal dichotomy between
> a problematized macro structure (whether the state or mainstream media) and a
> celebrated micro-structure of non-organised citizens (Carpentier, 2011:229).

The neo-liberal philosophy, which is based on economic progress favouring deregulation and
privatisation, sees mainstream media and its connection to large corporations as a threat to the
public good, thus ignoring the complicated relationship that defines the media scene today. In
fact, the dichotomisation between *mainstream* and *alternative* media is not always clear-cut as
their practices tend to crossover (Dahlgren, 2009:175). Even though new media represents
new forms of news dissemination, traditional media is still considered to be central in getting
a message across and influencing public opinion (Bennett, 2003; Gamson, 2004 in Bennett &
Segerberg, 2012:17; Waisbord, 2005:89). This emphasises the crucial balance between
mainstream- and new media in contemporary society, and will be elaborated on in the
following section.

A key element of democratic media is to spread knowledge. The development of new ICTs
(Information and Communications Technologies) allows citizens to generate, spread and
share new knowledge, which not only supplements but also challenges the monopoly of
mainstream media, in turn allowing citizens to produce their own cultural content, challenge
discourses and introduce alternative perspectives (Dahlgren, 2009:124; Gorman & McLean,
2009:251; Loader & Mercea, 2012:3). The focus is not merely on how to express your ideas
of resistance, but how to get these ideas across to a wide public (Smith, 2008:134). "We need
to continue to use our alternative media outlets to document the real stories that compel
change" (Hogue and Reinsborough, 2003 in della Porta & Tarrow, 2005:222). The
development of Web 2.0 has enhanced the possibilities for citizen journalism (Dahlgren,
2009:43) and facilitates deliberation through a series of different sites in which people can
make their voices heard; provide access to information; and facilitate interaction, and in turn
have an effect on the decision-making process in institutionalised politics (Carpentier,
2011:118-119; Gimmler, 2001 in Carpentier, 2011:119). Chadwick (2006) emphasises the
importance of pulling "citizens into spheres where their deliberations are likely to influence

the development of policy" (Chadwick, 2006 cited in Carpentier, 2011:119). This involves linking the public sphere with institutionalised politics (ibid).

Castells (2009) claims that there has been a power shift between the powerful and their subjects as everyone "equipped with a mobile phone, can record and instantly upload to the global networks any wrongdoing by anyone, anywhere" (Castells, 2009 cited in Loader & Mercea, 2012:44). Marginalised, disadvantaged or even stigmatised and repressed groups can benefit from the various channels of communication that are opened up to them, facilitated by alternative media outlets (Carpentier, 2011:97; Dahlgren, 2009:17). This will be further elaborated on in the analysis as it will be demonstrated that new media enables rapid reports of human rights violations between activists and Amnesty International.

Caution must be taken when discussing the impact of new media on society, as there is a tendency to overemphasise its role related to participation and interactivity. Mass media audiences were not as passive as they might be portrayed in 'mass society' theories, and it is important to understand the real reasons behind the democratic and participatory developments witnessed during the last years (Gorman and McLean, 2009:256). It is vital that media is seen in the context in which they originate: "'Social ills' have not disappeared with the extension of new technologies; 'real-world' politics have not been transformed by the advent of YouTube (…)" (Gorman & McLean, 2009:263).

These sentiments are further supported by other scholars who state that political engagement is not reliant on new communication technologies: "The acquisition of an IPhone or access to a social networking site does not in itself determine the engagement of citizens" (Loader & Mercea, 2012:3). Indeed, it is suggested that people who are politically engaged through various communication channels, are people already committed to a political cause, suggesting that the Internet and new media have limited potentials in reaching 'new' segments of the population (Loader & Mercea, 2012:4; della Porta, 2012:47; Sunstein, 2001 in Carpentier, 2011:119, della Porta, 2009:200-201). Political life *on* the Internet is usually an extension of political life *off* the Internet, thus the Internet is not seen as mobilising greater political engagement (Margolis & Resnick, 2000 in Dahlgren, 2005:154). The Internet then becomes a channel extending existing ideologies dominated by political elites.

As indicated above, there are many different views on the overall political, social, and cultural significance of new media. New media has been argued to be liberating and democratising by empowering citizens, promoting egalitarianism and tolerance, as well as taking back power from large corporations and "returning conversation to the people" (Gorman & McLean, 2009:231;257). Large flows of information sharing between people and organisations outside of mainstream journalism are complementing the traditional story-telling role of journalism, and the opportunity to bypass mainstream media arguably illustrates the democratic potential of new media (Dahlgren, 2009:173; Carpentier, 2011:121). The focus has, to a greater extent, moved away from the 'power of the media' and is now more concerned with the relations between media and the public (Dahlgren, 2009:28; Couldry, 2006 and Bennett, 2003 in della Porta, 2012:48).

Marginalised voices

According to *realist notions of security*, which has been the dominant tradition within international relations, states and military power are the main priorities when it comes to *securitisation* (Shehaan, 2005:5). Realist perspectives regard the anarchic state as the most important actor within society, and state that the primary concern of all states is survival. The key issue is to ensure that the state as a political actor is safe, i.e. the state is securitised. What happens when the state itself becomes the main source of violence and insecurity for its citizens? Agamben (2005) explains that, what he calls a state of exception, is where it is legitimate for states to use violence as an increase in state power due to a supposed time of crisis (Agamben, 2005 in Carpentier, 2011:24). Under the premise of *law and order* the rights of individuals becomes reduced or, in some instances, completely suspended (Keane, 2004 in Carpentier; Carpentier, 2011:24). This is demonstrated through the large-scale imprisonment and prosecution of activists during the Egyptian uprisings:

> Over 12,000 civilians were brought before military tribunals for having used their freedom of speech and freedom of assembly. The military courts did not ensure fair trials. Extensive violence was used to stop the protests. 860 were killed and at least 6,600 wounded. Torture under arrest and imprison continued (amnesty.no, 2013a).

In these cases, certain voices are favoured over others "while other (…) voices are discredited and become muted" (Agamben, 2005 in Carpentier, 2011:24). Particularly, if the state or government closely controls the media it can be almost impossible to express your opinions.

In this so-called state of exception can new media provide marginalised voices with a powerful tool to make themselves heard? "With the development of Web 2.0 technologies, more bloggers and civic advocates have begun using social-networking websites to expose government fraud and acts of brutality by the security forces" (Freedom House, 2012). New media represents in this case powerful political means in which marginalised groups can bypass the state controlled mainstream media and share their experience and resist state power. This will be further elaborated on in the analysis.

The digital divide

The democratic potential of new media is challenged by inequality. Even in the 21st century, there still exists huge discrepancies between rich and poor countries, where the lack of access to new technologies creates a division between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' - also known as the *digital divide* (Gorman and McLean, 2009:281; Dutta, 2012:19; della Porta, 2009:194).

> Lack of access to communication undermines the capacity of the poor to participate in democratic processes. Frustration and alienation over lack of means of expression lead to disaffection with the political process resulting in apathy or violence (Bellagio Symposium on Media, Freedom, and Poverty cited in Deane, 2005:191).

Additionally, the digital divide is arguably used as a strategic tool by governments to further their own purposes: "Just as literacy was as much an instrument of bureaucratic power as of social movement challenge, the new electronic technology seemed as likely to expand the toolkits of the powerful as to undermine them" (Markoff, 2001 in Smith, 2008:125). The attempt of former president Mubarak to stop the uprisings and critical voices by shutting down the Internet illustrates this point. By keeping people from communicating, the government attempted to take control of the uprisings.

The new technological innovations are predicted to have a huge impact on the future, but the majority of the world's population will not have access to this technology (Carlsson, 2005:210). Over 2.7 billion people worldwide use the Internet, which is approximately 39 per cent of the world's population. The digital divide is evident when comparing 'developing' countries, where 31 per cent are online, and 'developed' countries, where 77 per cent are online (ITU, 2013). In Egypt, approximately 35 per cent of the population have access to the Internet, excluding the majority (Internet World Stats, 2012). Widney Brown, the Senior

Director of International Law and Policy for Amnesty International, suggests that if everyone gains Internet access, it will be a huge step in the right direction in terms of human rights, justice and freedom (Brown, 2013). Brown is further supported by Egyptian activist Wael Ghonim who declared: "if you want to liberate a society just give them the Internet" (Ghonim, 2011 cited in Hofheinz, 2011:1417). These statements are in line with the *technology-as-progress* discourse that is based on technology as an independent force with the potential to realise utopias (Carpentier, 2011:269). Within this paradigm, media and information literacy are seen as crucial skills in terms of empowerment. By strengthening citizens' critical abilities and communication skills, it will contribute to social change processes (Tufte & Enghel, 2009:9).

> Young people's competence in using media, their ability to produce, understand and interact with the multiplicity of both new and old media formats and technologies have been instrumental in the manifestation of social processes of change (Tufte & Enghel, 2009:9).

The ideas behind the so-called digital divide are, however, contested. Granqvist (2005) points to a dichotomy between *us*, on the 'good' side, and *them*, on the 'bad' side, and how it is seemingly the solution to all inequality to help *them* across (2005:286). He further suggests that this urgent need to ensure equal access to ICTs in marginalised countries, which in turn will adopt them to the socioeconomic model of the economically powerful regions, reflects a modernist worldview where science and rationalism is valued above all else (ibid). This notion of ICTs as a possible solution for socioeconomic inequality arguably provides technology with too much power, and ignores the fact that it is nothing more than a tool, in itself free from value (Granqvist, 2005:287). The utilisation of new communication technologies during and following the Egyptian uprisings cannot be overlooked. However, despite Egypt's well-developed digital literacy, they are still affected by the digital divide. How did questions of access impact on the Egyptian uprisings? This will be further discussed in the analysis chapter.

Media and participation

Throughout the democratic revolution, which is the process in which democracy has been introduced across the world, efforts to increase participation have been key. In recent times these efforts have been concerned with alternative political activity, meaning participation

outside the realms of institutionalised politics. Carpentier distinguishes between *minimalist-* and *maximalist forms of democratic participation*, where in maximalist versions, participation plays a key role, and is not restricted to an elite section. Furthermore, in maximalist democratic forms the focus is on both macro; participation within the entire political imagined community, and micro; more local spheres like schools, community and family (2011:17).

Within the notion of democracy it is possible to distinguish between *the political* and *politics*. The notion of the political includes participation as more heterogeneous and multidirectional as it moves away from institutionalised politics. Not only does this increase the number of political actors, but it also broadens the field of political spheres to include less traditional spaces for political participation, including the subjective and emotional, i.e. "the personal is political" (Carpentier, 2011:39; Reguillo, 2009:33, della Porta & Tarrow, 2005:13).

> If we move beyond the traditional engagement with mainstream politics, such as voting, party membership, petitioning representatives and the like, and adopt a more fluid conception of democratic citizenship, a different focus and set of questions emerge that are more attuned to the potential changing perceptions of citizens who are less inclined to be dutiful and are open instead to a more personalised and self-actualising notion of citizenship (…) In this framework it may be possible to interpret the democratic potential of social media in a new light (Loader & Mercea, 2012:4).

Political activities can be argued to be moving away from the institutionalised towards private spheres, and political participation is subsequently increasing. The development of new media technologies facilitates this participation. In the analytical section of this thesis, the broad concept of the political will be further elaborated on, and used to try to understand how political participation can take many forms in democratic processes. It will be argued that in order to fully comprehend the democratic potential of new media, maximalist forms of democratic participation must be adopted.

The public sphere

"Democracy is made of rules for voting but, even more, of spaces for talking" (della Porta, 2009:265). The public sphere theory was first introduced by Jürgen Habermas in the late 20th century. The public sphere, which presupposes freedom of expression and assembly, involves a space where issues that are of relevance to the public can be openly discussed and examined

(Deane, 2005:178). A key aspect of the public sphere is that people are free and equal to speak their minds. This corresponds with the idea of deliberative democracy, which is:

> "(…) structured by the ideal speech situation, where everybody with the competence to act and speak is allowed to participate, everyone can introduce and/or question any assertion, and express his or her attitudes, desires and needs, and no coercion is used during the process (Habermas, 1990 cited in Carpentier, 2011:35)

Habermas' version of the public sphere is not the only one, indeed scholars such as Hauser (1998), Fraser (1990), Negt and Kluge (1983) and Gitling (1998) to name a few, have all developed alternative models of the public sphere. New developments within media and technology represents an alternative public space where governments have no control and thus can be seen as democratic – and in turn liberating for supressed peoples. Dahlgren deems this development the "cyber transformation of the public sphere" (2005:151). One of the most compelling attributes of this alternative public space is "a space where political currents oppositional to the dominant mainstream can find support and expression" (Dahlgren, 2005:152). These large virtual communities enable people from all over the world to take part in discussions and joint actions and provide them with greater reflection on one's view of the world. This renders globalisation a concept far beyond the political and sociocultural metaphors, and enables relationships across territorial boundaries (Reguillo, 2009:33). Habermas expressed reservations about a virtual sphere replacing the public sphere as it:

> (…) does not lead per se to the expansion of an intersubjectively shared world and to the discursive interweaving of conceptions of relevance, themes, and contradictions from which political public spheres arise" (Habermas, 1998 cited in Carpentier, 2011:119).

Although the initial Habermasian version of the public sphere might be somewhat out-dated due to the fluidity of 'new' public spheres – both physical and virtual- it still represents a viable starting point in the debate concerning participation and democracy and will be used to explain current political developments in the analysis.

The relationship between the public sphere and the media is complicated, and the development of new ICT has created a more media-centric approach to the study of these

concepts (Carpentier, 2011:86). One can distinguish between democratisation in and through the media, and the same can be said for participation in and through the media (Carpentier, 2011:67). Participation *through* the media sees the media as a public sphere where people can voice their opinions; engage in discussions and debates with other citizens (Carpentier, 2011:67). Participation *in* the media becomes possible when citizens are involved in the production of media output and allows them to be active and put into practice their right to communicate (Carpentier, 2011:68). This emphasis on the importance of collective decision-making, deliberation and dialogue places the media sphere within the political, thus operating with a broad definition of the political. This means that the media must be considered as an important contributor to deliberation within democracy. However, participation in and through the media does not necessarily have an impact on other societal spheres, and one should not ignore the complexities of society (Carpentier, 2011:255). This will be elaborated further on in the analytical section, as it will demonstrate that participation in and through the media does not guarantee change, participation or deliberation in other parts of society. In fact, it will be demonstrated that when former President Mubarak shut down the Internet, it had limited effect on physical protests on Tahrir square the following days.

New ICTs represent a new form of mobilisation tool or mobilisation structure enabling both recruitment and participation through the Internet (Carpentier, 2011:120-121). Furthermore, new ICTs and the interactive media allows for many innovations where citizens are "making space" for democracy (Dahlgren, 2009:124). This entails extending and transforming public spheres that used to be shaped in part by people's face-to-face encounters and the mass media, to include other civic spaces that provide communicative access (ibid). By operating with a broad definition of the political, these civic spaces can include different forms of new media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Reguillo (2009) argues that, in the absence of these technologies, when participation "calls for the body", youth agency weakens (Reguillo, 2009:34). These sentiments will be opposed in this thesis through a case study of the Egyptian revolution, as it will emphasise the essential online/offline relationship. Within this debate it is important to remember that, even though it is difficult to establish the historical beginning of participatory practices, it is "apparent that the history of participation did not start with the popularisation of the Internet" (Carpentier, 2011:353), thus one should be careful in putting too much emphasis on the development of new ICTs.

Political activity is usually shaped by the circumstances, resources, and practices that characterize people's lives; to engage in democracy normally does not mean to step out of one's existing frames of realities, or one's dominant habitus (Dahlgren, 2009:149).

This is important as it suggests that political activity is highly influenced by one's everyday life, and may represent a reason why new media such as Facebook and Twitter were used to the extent that they were during the Egyptian revolution, and will be covered to a greater extent later in the analysis.

When dealing with concepts of participation, questions of power arise. Focault developed a strategic model of power suggesting that power is practiced, not possessed, thus power relations are multidirectional and mobile (Kendall and Wickham, 1999 in Carpentier, 2011:139-140). The resistance of dominant power domains is considered to be a part of the exercise of power (ibid). In fact, when structural power imbalances occur, it is often attempted to increase the participation of the disadvantaged actors (Carpentier, 2011:352). The media monopoly of both production and distribution of media content can be argued to create an unbalanced power relation between so-called media professionals and 'normal' citizens. These subject positions carry with them certain meanings that may enable or disable their positions, in turn effecting the power relations between these actors in participatory processes (Carpentier, 2011:179). This unbalance is, however, challenged by the development of new media, which represents new channels where different voices can participate in public debates (Carpentier, 2011:147). "Through the media sphere, citizens can use their generative powers to become part of the societal decision-making processes, or to resist them" (ibid). The fluid nature of power entails that power can shift between opposing parties, and the very act of resisting power, as witnessed during the Egyptian uprisings, can be regarded as a power shift within the Egyptian society. Furthermore, by relying on new media technologies rather than mainstream media, the Egyptian activists also rejected the power of mainstream media and media elites. It is, however, suggested that this power struggle is never ending as new power relations are always at risk of becoming imbalanced (Carpentier, 2011:352). It will be argued that the Egyptian state is attempting to re-claim power by taking over the newly defined alternative public space developed by activists.

The changing nature of Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

NGOs, previously referred to as "the conscience of the world" (Willets, 1996 in Steffek & Hahn, 2010:1), are increasingly gaining power, and in some instances even challenging the dominant power of states (Steffek & Hahn, 2010:4). The founder and primus behind the Oslo Freedom Forum[2], Thor Halvorssen, recently emphasised the role of NGOs in international relations: "The largest human rights conferences in the world are organized by the UN Council for Human Rights, where some of the world's most notorious dictatorships are represented" (Halvorssen cited in Aftenposten.no 13.05.13). Halvorssen stressed the need for greater presence of organisations independent of power holders in questions related to human rights (ibid). NGOs have privileged access to international decision-making processes providing them with a valuable source of power (although a more indirect power than most states seeing as they have limited opportunity to exercise power in these processes) known as 'soft power'. "Soft power is the power to persuade and attract others – as opposed to 'hard power', based on coercive capacities and material resources" (Nye, 1990 in Staffek & Hahn, 2010:5). Within a broad definition of the political NGOs can be seen as political actors, and as possessing great power in terms of influencing international legislation.

Therefore, cooperation between social movements and NGOs is recognised as highly valuable. Seeing as how NGOs have established relationships with journalists and governments, international ties between activists and NGOs can ensure greater public attention for the social movement and its underlying causes (della Porta & Tarrow, 2005). In the past there has been noticed a tension between radical social movements and that of more moderate NGOs where the two see each other as ineffective and clueless:

> (…) while international NGOs being portrayed as lumbering dinosaur elites, often based in the North and unaware of realities on the ground, (…) activists are seen as ineffective rabble that sometimes misrepresents the truth to make political gains (Surman and Reilly, 2003 in Bennett, 2005:216).

It will be argued that this development has changed, and that social movements and NGOs are to a greater extent working together towards common goals. There has been a distinct change in attitudes from working *for* to working *with* which has an impact on NGOs' strategies

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[2] Oslo Freedom Forum is an annual gathering where leading organisations and remarkable individuals discuss prominent humanitarian challenges (Oslo Freedom Forum, 2013).

(Aamodt, 2013). By cooperating more closely with activists, NGOs as intermediaries between social movements and mainstream media, provide marginalized groups with a platform for deliberation.

Social movements

Despite the argued decrease in traditional politics, other types of associations are in fact growing in resources, legitimacy and members, with an increase in alternative political activities such as social movements (della Porta, 2012:41-42). Dahlgren refers to the term civic, which is associated with engagement in public life, and is thus seen as a cornerstone in democracy (2009:58). For citizens to engage, it is important that people see themselves as participants in a civic culture – enabling or threatening civic engagement (Dahlgren, 2009:102-3). This engagement is closely related to the way people identity themselves with a certain discourse, and is highly relevant when speaking of social movements (Carpentier, 2011:175). By identifying oneself with a cause and a larger social network people are part of a civic culture, which is made up of individuals, and is less reliant on the state. When external forces threaten civic cultures, it leads to political engagement.

Even though it is difficult to define social movements as a unified actor due to their very loose structure, some characteristics can be identified. "Social movements are increasingly described as networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups, of associations, engaged in political or cultural conflict" (Diani and Bison, 2004 in Smith, 2008:108). The Egyptian uprisings can, in accordance with this definition, be viewed as a social movement. The network made up by Egyptian individuals as well as local, national and transnational groups involved in a political conflict illustrate this.

New social movement theories emphasise the importance of agency and is more concerned with socio-cultural aspects, like human rights, rather than materialistic qualities that were seen as key characteristics of social movements prior to the 1960s (Dahlgren, 2009:108; Edwards, 2004). The decentralised organisational form combined with an increase in communication tools and skills visible in new social movements make the protests a more 'natural' part of activists lives, and can be described as *lifestyle politics* (Bennett, 2003 in Smith, 2008:126). New social movements therefore fit into a broad definition of the political, which includes microstructures, as lifestyle politics is seen as part of everyday life. To get involved in oppositional politics in Egypt was regarded as dangerous (this is further emphasised in the

analysis) therefore, rather than forming political parties Egyptian activists chose to organise themselves in social movements (Zohar, 2011). Social movements challenge institutionalised politics and present the possibility of "rule from below" (Vanden, 2007:17). Through wide-scale mobilisation social movements have the potential to impact on existing political structures and have, as demonstrated through the Egyptian uprisings, been able to topple totalitarian governments.

Mainstream media remains a valuable source in shaping public sensibility, yet the biased portrayal of social movements in mainstream media coverage underlines the importance of the development of new media (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989 in della Porta, 2012:45). Social movements have always been actively utilizing new media forms, and are, according to Gamson (1995) "media junkies" (Gamson, 1995 in Carpentier, 2011:123). "Protests are increasingly conceived, planned, implemented and evaluated with the help of the Internet" (O'Brien, 1999 in della Porta, 2009:197). Despite the valuable impact Internet has on protest movements, it is also noted that online and offline protests are strongly related, and in fact tend to reinforce one another. The ability to move easily between online and offline relationships enable transnational cooperation, it is not the technology alone (della Porta, 2009:198; della Porta & Tarrow, 2005:205).

> When we speak of 'online mobilisation' we are talking primarily of online efforts to move people to action – to protest, intervene, advocate, support. Such efforts are much more about relationships and community than information (Surman & Reilly, 2003 in della Porta & Tarrow, 2005:217).

The above discussion emphasise the value of human agency, despite the increase in technological innovations. As pointed out by cyber realist Evgeny Morozov, critical of the cyber-utopianism that has developed the last years: "Twitter of course, don't topple governments, people do" (2011:19).

Networks of solidarity

> Resistance is understood in terms of the cultural, social, political, and economic processes that are directed at transforming the global structures of material inequities

and the communicative inequalities that accompany these global structures (Dutta, 2012:3-4).

Activism and resistance is suggested to have become more an ethical calling than a choice as states are increasingly seen as unable to protect the common good (Dower, 2013 in Witteborn, 2010:359). Integral to resistance is communication, which reproduces and enables resistance and help develop resistive identities, which in turn stand in opposition to dominant structures of oppression (Dutta, 2012:8). So-called *networks of solidarity* between local, national and global actors are of vital importance for resistance movements. "The vision of the global common good cannot only be accomplished by individuals but needs institutional support" (Dower, 2003 in Witteborn, 2010:359). These networks create entry points for social movements, where they can voice their opinions, and in turn disrupt oppressive policies (Dutta, 2012:34). Indeed, the State of the World Population report from 2007 states that:

> (…) the battle for the Millennium Development Goals is being fought in the cities of developing countries. Young people will be in the forefront. Success depends on how well cities, countries and the international community strengthen and support them (UNFPA, 2007 cited in Reguillo, 2009:25).

By appealing to the international arena, activists are more likely to impact on the policies of their governments. Furthermore, international ties are seen as important as they enable exchange of skills, resources and people that can be very beneficial for all actors involved (Smith, 2008). The development of new technologies and the increase in social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter represent channels in which local movements can connect to their solidarity networks (Dutta, 2012:212).

> No government likes to have its dirty laundry aired in public. The power of shaming is the only mechanism we have for enforcing most international laws. For many activists appealing to international laws, the international arena is their only court of appeals and an important source of hope for changing the policies of their national governments. By bringing attention to the discrepancies between a government's practices and international standards, activists not only can help change the practices of their government, but they also generate more of the needed scrutiny on the

correspondence (or lack thereof) between local-level practices and global norms (Smith, 2008:167).

Evidence from the Arab spring demonstrates how social media was utilised, both on the ground at the actual protests, and to connect with national and international supporters. This demonstrates the vital role that social media played during the uprisings, which will be extensively dealt with in the analytical part of this thesis.

Conclusion

As opposed to traditional understandings of politics as being a part of an institutionalised system with elite actors, a broad understanding of the political entails aspects of the private life, such as family, schools, community – and most importantly oneself, facilitating maximalist forms of democratic participation. Due to increased dissatisfaction with traditional politics, alternative political participation is indeed increasing. As a part of this development it can be argued that people are re-defining politics. New communication technologies facilitate political engagement, and one does not have to be an elected representative from a political party to voice one's opinion. On the contrary, access to new media technologies, such as blogs, Facebook, Twitter or even a newspaper, citizen or mainstream, enables active participation in political debates. The impact of these new technologies on political participation has been thoroughly debated. Particularly during the last two years as the world has watched many Arab countries involved in what has been termed "Twitter revolutions" or "Facebook revolutions". A lot of the efforts witnessed during the so-called Arab spring have been credited to the dissimilation of new communication technology. To what extent can new communication technologies be given credit for the upsurge in political participation witnessed during the last two years? This thesis sets out, with this theoretical framework in mind, to investigate the potential of new media for political empowerment by analysing a case study of Amnesty International and the Egyptian uprisings.

Methods

This research was based on a triangulation of methods to ensure validity and credibility (Berg & Lune, 2012:6). Through a *case study* of Amnesty International and the Egyptian revolution I hope to be able to draw general conclusions about the democratic value of new media. Amnesty International was analysed through a *policy analysis* in order to get a comprehensive understanding of the organisation's current strategies related to social movements and new media. Additionally, representatives from the Egyptian uprisings and Amnesty International were *interviewed* in order to gain in-depth perspectives.

Methodology

This research was based on a qualitative approach, which is seen as *soft research* as it focuses on interpretations of social realities (Bauer et. al. 2000:7). Positivism, as a theoretical stance, dismisses qualitative research as a scientific method altogether as truth is to be discovered through methods that are independent of both context and content of the investigation (Kvale, 1996:61). However, as pointed out by Friedrich Nietzsche, social science research is all about interpretation (Nietzsche, 1987 in Berger, 2011:14). Thus, the epistemological stance of this research, which looks at the relationship between the researcher and the known (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013), will be influenced by social-constructivism. This paradigm is oriented by reconstructed understandings of the social world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013), which is appropriate in this particular case seeing as how the research is focused on human experiences and interpretations (employees at Amnesty International and Egyptian activists respectively).

The first-hand data was complemented by some second hand sources on media and democracy. This information was found in academic journals focusing on media and political engagement, e.g. International Journal of Communication, and newspaper articles and documentaries focusing particularly on the Egyptian uprisings. The theoretical part of this thesis was deductive while the empirical analysis was inductive. The combination of these two approaches allowed me to base the thesis on a theoretical framework, while at the same time allowed for certain modifications based on new developments in the empirical findings.

The case study

This thesis relied on a case study in order to investigate a more general phenomenon – that of new media's potential for political empowerment. The case focused on Amnesty

International, particularly one of Amnesty International current campaigns, namely their efforts directed at Egypt in relation to the Egyptian uprising, referred to as the MENA campaign (Middle East and Northern-Africa).

Yin (2009) defines case study research as a study of cases within real-life, contemporary contexts (Yin, 2009 in Creswell, 2013:97). Hagan (2006) defines the case study as "in-depth, qualitative studies of one or a few illustrative cases" (Hagan, 2006 in Berg & Lune, 2012:325). The focus on Amnesty International as an organisation fulfils the criteria for a case study seeing as how the organisation is bound by time and place, and is a part of a real-life contemporary context (Creswell, 2013:98). "Case studies of organisations may be defined as the systematic gathering of enough information about a particular organisation to allow the investigator insight into the life of that organisation" (Berg & Lune, 2012:342).

Stake (2005) differentiates between *intrinsic* cases and *instrumental* cases. The former are cases that are unusual cases in themselves that needs to be detailed. The latter approach represents cases that are chosen to exemplify and explain a larger issue (Stake, 2005 in Creswell, 2013:98). The focus of this research is on the larger issue of media and democracy through a case study and was therefore an instrumental case (Stake, 2005 in Creswell, 2013:98). By relying on more than one source of qualitative data, the case study research is more likely to become an in-depth understanding of the chosen case, thus produce more reliable results (Creswell, 2013:98). The data collected for the case study on Amnesty International was based on interviews, documents and audio-visual materials. A thorough case study involves both a description of the case, in this particular case Amnesty International, and a description of a specific theme or issue that will be investigated more closely, i.e. the MENA campaign with specific focus on the Egyptian uprisings, also known as an embedded analysis (Creswell, 2013:99; Berg & Lune, 2012:342). Seeing as how the MENA campaign in on-going it is beyond the scope of this thesis to analyse potential results and effects. Rather, the research will look at the context in which the campaign was developed and use it in an attempt to understand the value of new media.

The case study has in some instances been criticised as a research method because case study research involves choosing what to study rather than being a methodology in itself (Stake, 2005 in Creswell, 2013:97). This argument is, however, contested on several fronts by scholars who regard case study research as a methodology and as part of a larger research

strategy (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009 in Creswell, 2013:97). The case study can thus be understood as a "methodology, a type of design in qualitative research, or an object of study, as well as a product of the inquiry" (Creswell, 2007:73). A possible limitation of case study research is that the results from only one case may not be generalizable, thus not representative of the larger issue under investigation (Berg & Lune, 2012:341). This is, however, more related to statistical results than theoretical understanding (Flick, 2009:134). A further critique of the case study is whether or not the findings can be objective. But, as pointed out by Berg and Lune interpretation of the social world is not only required, but can also be desired in qualitative research as it adds valuable perspectives on the issue under investigation (2012:340).

Interviews

Verbal data is seen as one of the major methodological approaches in qualitative research (Flick, 2009:211). *Subjective theory* is the individual knowledge that a person has about a certain topic (Flick, 2009:156). This knowledge can thus be extracted and utilised in a research setting through interviews. "A goal of interviews in general is to reveal existing knowledge in a way that can be expressed in the form of answers and so become accessible to interpretation" (Flick, 2009:160).

Qualitative research interviews have been criticised for not being objective, due to the inherent human interaction necessary to conduct an interview (Kvale, 1996:64). The research interview can arguably produce interesting results, but is not a scientific method in itself (Kvale, 1996:59). This begs the questions of what science is. As pointed out by Kvale, even though there exists no universal definition of science, there are certain conceptions of science that are accepted: "It is understood that science should produce knowledge, and that this knowledge should be new, systematic, and obtained methodically" (Kvale, 1996:60). In accordance with these perspectives on science, the qualitative research interview was seen as a valid approach for this research.

Interview sample and justification

Five employees from Amnesty International Norway were recruited for the interviews (Aamodt; Buick, Kaada; Skaare; Tin). The Amnesty employees were chosen because they represent different sections within the organisation, which ensured a diverse data collection. The interviews were conducted in Norwegian and the quotes in the analysis are translated by

the researcher. Two activists who are involved in the Egyptian uprisings were also asked to participate in the interviews (Nabil and El-Nadi). Both El-Nadi and Nabil are active on social media and used new media technologies actively before, during and after the revolution. They were asked to participate in the research based on their personal experiences as citizen journalists and activists (see attachment 1 for further information).

The expert interview

In the interviews with Amnesty International's employees the interview subjects were more interesting on the basis of their knowledge on a specific topic, and less interesting as a person as a whole (Flick, 2009:165). Amnesty international employees represent, in this case, a group of experts on the current topic. This is grounded in Deeke' (1995) definition of an expert: "We can label those persons as experts who are particularly competent as authorities on a certain matter of facts" (Deeke, 1995 cited in Flick, 2009:165). The employees at Amnesty International provided in-depth information regarding the role of social media in facilitating contact with activists and human right defenders; the democratic potential of new media; and the relationship between NGOs and social movements. Expert interviews are often used to complement other methods (Flick, 2009:168), and the information and knowledge derived from Amnesty International's employees added valuable insight, information and knowledge in addition to the case study and policy analysis.

A limitation of expert interviews is challenges in terms of getting experts to agree to participate (Flick, 2009:168). Furthermore, it is required a high level of expertise about the topic under investigation from the interviewer him- or herself as it is vital that the interviewer manages to understand the complex issue and processes under scrutiny; to ask follow-up questions and to probe further when it becomes necessary (ibid). "The researcher is him- or herself the research instrument" (Kvale, 1996:147). My connection with Amnesty International Norway facilitated contact with its employees directly as well as provide me with a comprehensive understanding of the organisation, which addressed this limitation. A further limitation is that the group of chosen interview subjects might be too narrow seeing as how they represent the same group of experts (Flick, 2009:169). This limitation was addressed through the policy analysis, and activist interviews, which could confirm or contradict the information provided by the experts from Amnesty. Furthermore, it must be added that as I have a personal relationship with both the organisation and its employees might lead to a biased interpretation of the results from the interviews. However, this

limitation was countered by relying on scientific analysis of the interviews through qualitative data analysis.

Semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured style was chosen for the activist interviews as the focus of the interviews was concerned with concrete issues related to media and democracy, social movements and transnational networks. "If concrete statements about an issue are the aim of the data collection, a semi-structured interview is the more economic way" (Flick, 2009:172). The semi-structured interview is defined as "an interview whose purpose is to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena" (Kvale, 1996:6). The interview was neither a completely open conversation nor a structured questionnaire, but rather a sequence of themes that was covered in addition to suggested questions (Kvale, 1996:27; 124). These themes and questions were written in the interview guide beforehand, as the preparations before an interview are crucial in order to gain a thorough understanding of the theoretical and conceptual phenomena under investigation (Kvale, 1996:95).

The interview process

The interview process consisted of several steps. Firstly, the two sets of interview questions were written with the research questions in mind (see attachment 2). The questions were revised several times in correspondence with interview theories. The questions were further adjusted as I got more familiar with both the relevant theories and the interview setting. There are no standardised procedures when conducting a research interview, thus many decisions are taken "on the spot" by the researcher (Kvale, 1996:13). Secondly, a pilot interview was conducted in order to make sure that the questions were clear enough and to establish a time frame. All but one of the interviews were carried out via telephone or Skype. The interview with Egyptian activist Maikel Nabil was conducted face-to-face during Amnesty International's bi-annual general meeting in March 2013. Even though the telephone interview lacks "face-to-face nonverbal cues that researchers use to pace their interviews and to determine the direction to move in" (Berg & Lune, 2012:129), the telephone interview was seen as a viable method seeing as the interview subjects were located in geographically diverse locations. The interviews were recorded on my computer as well as on an additional recording device to ensure that none of the data would be lost. This also provides the research

with validity as one can go back and listen to the tapes. The last step of the interview process was data analysis.

Kvale (1996) suggests that transcriptions are interpretative constructions, and when transcribing from one context to another a series of decisions must be made regarding the process of transcribing (1996:163). Seeing as how the main purpose of conducting interviews in this particular research was to extract concrete statements related to Amnesty International's current strategies and policies, the transcriptions from the interviews with Amnesty's employees were not verbatim and word for word, but rather slightly edited in order to "condense the general meaning of what is said" (Kvale, 1996:170). Furthermore, seeing as I have a personal relationship with the employees interviewed from Amnesty as well as pre-existing knowledge on the topics we discussed (which in certain instances expressed itself through personal reflections and abbreviations), I felt that it was more important to focus on the meaning, rather than actual word-for-word transcription. The interviews with the activists, on the other hand, where the main purpose was to extract meanings and attitudes on concrete issues related to their personal life, were transcribed verbatim and word for word (see attachment 3 for an example).

The data from the interviews were analysed using Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA). "To analyse data means systematically to organise, integrate, and examine; as we do this, we search for patterns and relationships among the specific details" (Neuman, 2011:507). The analysis was conducted through two main processes: coding of data, where information from the interviews was coded and later categorised into main themes; and thematic analysis, where these themes were analysed against theories in order to create a relationship between the research data and the theoretical framework. Each transcript was revised several times in order to identify the relevant themes that could be abstracted from the interviews. The codes were identified in the interview transcripts based on repetition, metaphor, comparison (Ryan & Bernard, 2003:89-91), and relevance to the research questions to ensure that the codes were valid. "Codes serve to summarize, synthesize, and sort many observations made of the data (...) coding becomes the fundamental means of developing the analysis (...)" (Charmaz, 1983 cited in Seidel, 1998:4). The codes were marked in the transcript using Word's insert comment function, which made it easy to go back and review the codes. These codes were later combined and categorised into themes in a table (see attachment 4 for an example). "The themes are at a low level of abstraction and come from your initial research question,

concepts in the literature, terms used by members in the social setting, or new thoughts stimulated by an immersion in the data" (Neuman, 2011:511). Lastly, the themes were linked with theories from the theoretical framework in the thematic analysis: "Thematic analyses move beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focus on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data, that is, themes" (Guest et.al, 2012:10). The main themes identified from the interviews were: citizen engagement and alternative political participation; new media as a tool for communication and information exchange; new media versus mainstream media; state resistance and power; and solidarity networks. The themes identified from the interviews were used as a starting point for the analysis.

Ethical considerations

Every research setting, and especially interview processes involves ethical considerations (Kvale, 1996:172). Each interview subject was asked at the beginning of the interview if it was acceptable that the interviews were taped, and whether or not they were comfortable with being quoted by name in the thesis. Some of the employees from Amnesty asked to see the revised interviews before they were published to ensure that the information provided by them was interpreted correctly. All participants were explained that the thesis would be published in a university setting.

Policy analysis

"Policy analysis is a social and political activity" (Bardach, 2005:xiii). One of the main purposes of policy analysis is to provide different stakeholders "with an intelligent basis for discussing and judging conflicting ideas, proposals, and outcomes" (Fischer cited in Yanow, 2000:2). Unlike positivistic perspective, policy analysis is based on social constructivism in which is becomes impossible to stand outside of the issue under investigation. All knowledge is thus subjective and based on interpretations (Yanow, 2000:5-6). The 'truth' of policies is argued to be what is done rather than what is said (Yanow, 2000:9). This means that a policy analysis must include both intended ideas as well as how these ideas are understood by all involved parties. In the case of Amnesty International this means evaluating their policies and strategies as well as how these policies are implemented and carried out, and subsequently, how this is experiences by all parties involved. Bardach (2005) explains that the ordinary language of the organisation under investigation, and what he calls "issue rhetoric" becomes vital in any policy analysis (2005:1). This means that, in an attempt to review and analyse Amnesty's current strategies related to activists, it is important to 'read' these strategies in the

context of the organisation, i.e. the organisation's *local knowledge* (Yanow, 2000:17). This local knowledge derived from interviews with the employees where they themselves explained the strategies and policies related to the issues under investigation. Additionally, my connection with Amnesty International enabled me to evaluate the local knowledge at different levels.

When conducting a policy analysis there are mainly two types of sources used; documents and people (Bardach, 2005:65). A key in terms of relying on these sources is access, access to both official and unofficial documents as well as access to the 'right' people. Amnesty is funded by members, therefore all of their official strategies and policies are available to the public. Furthermore, seeing as how I have a relationship with the employees at Amnesty, access to both people and documents, official and internal, were made easily available to me. This is seen as an advantage as it enabled me to gain in-depth information about internal strategies that may otherwise not have been known to an external researcher. The policy analysis for Amnesty International was an *interpretative* policy analysis and was conducted by revising their existing strategies related to campaigns, communication and more specifically the MENA campaign. The policy documents were found on the organisation's website or sent via email by employees. The documents reviewed included: Strategic Goals 2010 – 2016; Communication Strategy 2012; Action Circular: Egypt; Campaign work 2013; and Action Strategy 2010, as well as internal documents related specifically to strategies on the MENA campaign and online articles found on the organisation's website. The main focus of the research was concerned with existing policies and strategies, and not about identifying problems and finding new policies. Therefore the analysis was *derivative*, related to what Amnesty is doing, rather than what they should be doing, i.e. *original* (Bardach, 2005:64).

The following questions were asked during the analysis: what is the strategy? Does it have a clear goal? Does it correspond with existing policies? Does it correspond with what the organisation is doing? The policy analysis focused on understanding Amnesty's current strategies related to social media, social movements and activists in an attempt to evaluate if these practices are implemented in reality.

Context

A brief description of the Egyptian uprisings will be presented to provide a backdrop to the analysis. Seeing as how the objective of this thesis is to be able to draw general conclusions about media and democracy, the analysis and description of the Egyptian case will be limited, and the focus of the research will rather be on the potential of new media and freedom of expression.

The Egyptian uprisings

On January 25th 2011 mass protests, mostly peaceful, broke out across Egypt. The Egyptian people were protesting against the 30 yearlong regime of President Muhammad Hosni Mubarak. The protests that broke out on January 25 – National Police Day – erupted as a result of continuous stifling socioeconomic conditions in the country with high levels of unemployment, corruption and limited political freedoms (Lotan et. al, 2011:1376). Following 18 days of massive protests, which included a civil resistance camp on Tahrir Square, President Mubarak left office on February 11th 2011, and since then Egypt has been through great upheavals. During the 18 days that led to Mubarak resigning over 860 people were killed and an additional 6.000 people were injured. Furthermore, estimates of 12.000 people were tried before military courts for having used their freedom of expression and freedom of assembly (amnesty.no, 2013e). In June 2012 President Mohamed Mursi from The Muslim Brotherhood was elected president after a contested period where SCAF (the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces) ruled. Under the rule of SCAF, as a state of exception, the Egyptian people went through additional prosecutions that were in some cases worse than the ones experienced under Mubarak's regime (amnesty.no, 2013e).

> The people did not choose the military council; they came with tanks and occupied the country. They killed civilians and demonstrators because they expressed their opinions. People were killed because they participated in demonstrations, they performed virginity tests on female demonstrators and they tortured and kidnapped political activists (Nabil, 2013 in amnesty.no, 2013f).

The situation described by political activist Maikel Nabil is a gloomy one, and does not represent the hard-won democracy millions of activists fought for during the 18 days of protests that toppled Mubarak, and the following period during the state of exception under

the rule of SCAF. Egypt is still a country in turmoil and the situation in Egypt today is still unclear. The new constitution was voted on in December 2012 and further threatens freedom of expression as it is prohibited to insult religion. Furthermore, under the premise of protecting the revolution the government can detain people for up to six months without trial (amnesty.no, 2013h). Deputy Director of Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa Programme, Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui, said that: "Provisions in Egypt's new constitution violate the country's international obligations to uphold freedom of expression and would have a devastating effect on free speech in the future" (Sahraoui in amnesty.org, 2012)

The coining of the terms "Twitter revolution" and Facebook revolution" has initiated wide debates regarding the role of new media in the Egyptian revolution. This is a discussion that will be dealt with extensively in the analytical part of this thesis. Nonetheless, in order to comprehend the current developments, it is essential to contextualise how these changes have come about. The media scene in Egypt represents a vital part of this context:

> Egypt has 23 million Internet broadband users, and 9 million (albeit partly an overlap of the former) mobile-phone Internet users. Approximately 80% of households have mobile phones; 30% of households have access to the Internet. After Facebook launched an Arabic version in March 2009, the number of users more than tripled in two years, reaching more than 5 million Facebook users (as of February 2011) (Aouragh & Alexander, 2011:1347).

The highly developed digital literacy in Egypt can be explained due to the "overwhelmingly young demographic" (Aouragh & Alexander, 2011:1347). This is important as it suggests a reason for why new media technology, such as the Internet and social media, were used to the extent that they were during the revolution. New media represented the preferred tools for the young activists involved in the protests in Egypt, because these were tools that they were already using in their everyday lives. As pointed out by Egyptian activist Maikel Nabil:

> I started blogging to speak about my ideas – my ideas can be political, they can be social, they can be personal, they can be whatever. I have been doing this from the beginning until now and I'm not blogging about politics all the time.

The question remains, however, to what extent it can be argued that social media contributed to the large-scale protests. As pointed out by Aouragh and Alexander (2011):

> Facebook became something one had to have. Egypt gained more than 600.000 new Facebook users between January and February 2011 alone. On the day the Internet switched back on (February 2nd), 100.000 users joined the social networking space and it became the most accessed website in the country (followed by YouTube and Google) (Aouragh & Alexander, 2011:1348).

These numbers illustrate the fast growing spread of social networking sites, like Facebook, during the revolution, and the extent to which social media can be argued to have contributed to the protests has been a widely discussed topic during the two last years.

> In fact, despite the media hype about "Facebook Revolutions," the Egyptian activists (…) rightly reject simplistic claims that technology somehow caused the 2011 uprisings, and they say it undermines the agency of the millions of people who participated in the movement that brought down Hosni Mubarak (Aouragh & Alexander, 2011:1344).

This will be further elaborated on in the analytical chapter of this thesis.

Case study: Amnesty International

The following section provides a description of Amnesty International, the organisation's history and its current strategies. Furthermore, Amnesty International's campaign directed at Egypt as a part of the overall Middle East and Northern Africa region is presented. Even though this thesis focuses on data derived from the Norwegian sector, it is still seen as representative of the organisation as a whole.

Amnesty International: an introduction

Amnesty International (AI) is the largest human rights organisation in the world with over three million members worldwide. "AI is today a major player in the international arena where human rights are discussed, and takes an active part in developing systems to protect human rights" (amnesty.no, 2013b). Amnesty was established as an organisation in 1961 following an initiative called *Appeal for Amnesty* started by Peter Benenson the same year (amnesty.no, 2013b). In 1960 Benenson read an article about two young Portuguese students who were sentenced to seven years in prison for toasting their freedom at a café. Shortly after Benenson wrote a letter to the Portuguese government to object the sentence and demand the immediate release of the two students. His letter was later published in The Observer where Benenson coined the term *the forgotten prisoners*. A term that was later changed to *prisoner of conscience* and is to this very day one of the pillars of Amnesty International. A prisoner of conscience is defined as: "Any person who is physically restrained (by imprisonment or otherwise) from expressing (in any form of words or symbols) an opinion, which he honestly holds and which does not advocate or condone personal violence" (Benenson, 1961 in The Observer, cited in The Guardian, 2001).

In his letter, Benenson referred to two articles from the United Nations approved Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 18 and 19 respectively[3]. Benenson wanted to ensure that

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[3] Article 18: Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in company with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance. Article 19: Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers (Benenson, 1961 in The Observer cited in the Guardian).

every country respected these fundamental human rights, and that the freedom and justice of each individual was ensured.

> What matters is not the rights that exist on paper in the Constitution, but whether they can be exercised and enforced in practice. There is a growing tendency all over the world to disguise the real grounds upon which 'non-conformists' are imprisoned (Benenson, 1961 in The Observer quoted in The Guardian, 2001).

Appeal for Amnesty became the beginning of Amnesty International as we know it today, where individual cases of human rights violations are chosen to represent large structural human rights issues. Following Appeal for Amnesty the organisation grew and expanded its mandate, which today includes not only prisoners of conscience, but also torture, the fight against death penalty, poverty issues and violence against women.

> When people all over the world come together to put floodlights on an attack, we have the power to stop it. We know that we have helped to prevent the torture, stop the executions and provide protection to the activists at risk. We know that we have succeeded in getting a large majority of the world's countries on our side in the fight against the death penalty, and we know that we have helped to change discriminatory laws in many countries (amnesty.no, 2013c).

Based on Amnesty International Norway's strategic plan 2010 – 2016 it can be concluded that Amnesty International Norway will increase their efforts related to freedom and expression and the attempts that are made in silencing opposition voices. This includes ensuring that prisoners of conscience are released and that political prisoners receive a fair trial; to protect human rights defenders and human rights activists; to ensure that governments and non-governmental actors respects and defends the freedom of speech, including freedom of expression online (AI, 2010). Further, Amnesty recognise the value of forming relationships with external actors, organisations as well as individuals, and state that:

> To ensure impact and increased efficiency we must enter into strategic partnerships with individuals and organisations outside Amnesty who have relevant expertise and resources. Amnesty must ensure equality and respect for rights holders in all its

activities. This can help build a stronger and more diverse defence of human rights (AI, 2010).

Communication is seen as a vital aspect of these partnerships and the organisation will strive to "strengthen networking and dialogue at all levels" (AI, 2010). These strategies have been highlighted as they relate to the issues covered in this thesis.

Amnesty International and Egypt: Spring Campaign 2013 MENA

"Amnesty International will in 2013 defend the right to freedom of expression in the Middle East and Northern Africa. By giving them attention, we will also give them protection" (amnesty.no, 2013e). Following two years of uprisings across the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA) there are still many issues facing people in this region. Even though the large-scale uprisings led to the tumbling of four dictators, there are still many instances of violence against activists and there is not a uniform development in the direction of democracy and freedom. Across the region there are numerous examples of people who are being prosecuted and imprisoned, threatened with torture and death penalty for expressing their opinions (amnesty.no, 2013e). "Violence by states and non-state actors, including armed groups, is taking a devastating toll on human rights" (AI, 2010). Amnesty demands that the governments should:

> Respect the freedom of speech, assembly, and freedom of association, stop persecution of critics, stop arrests, torture, disappearances and killings of protesters and activists, stop discrimination and ensure women's right to participate in political processes of change and stop executions (amnesty.no, 2013e).

Freedom of expression is the main focus for Amnesty when working with particular cases from Egypt. Within this strategy, the use of new media as a tool for self-expression is recognised, and needs to be protected:

> We have highlighted individual cases where abuse has been committed, and have prioritised atrocities against people that have been committed after having used his or her voice in digital media (Skaare, 2013).

> Amnesty monitors the situation, initiate campaigns and actions, lobby the government
> and use the opportunities for influence that we have in order to shed light on
> systematic violations of human rights, and also individual violations of human rights.
> Our investigators are in daily contact med key figures in Egypt (Buick, 2013).

As a stark contrast to the limited freedom of expression in Egypt, Amnesty attempts to voice the opinions of marginalised groups. With the slogan: "use your voice so that they can use theirs", the campaign encourages people to sign petitions on specific cases representing individuals who have been subject to human right violations, and condemn the repression that is going on in the country (See attachments 4 and 5).

> It is crucial for the development of the Middle East and North Africa that people who
> dare to speak their mind gets maximum support and attention from all of us who
> enjoys full freedom of expression. We can give them protection by showing those in
> power that we see the persecution they are inflicting. No power holders like that kind
> of attention (Tin, 2013 in amnesty.no/blogg).

@ MENA voices is a Twitter account managed by Amnesty International initiated in January 2013, two years after protests broke out in Egypt. "The idea behind @MENA voices is, perhaps, that it can have an increased democratic potential" (Skaare, 2013). The Twitter account continuously translate tweets from Arabic to Norwegian and English, and re-tweets messages from the MENA region in an attempt to create a link between supporters in Norway and activists who are located in the midst of action (Skaare, 2013). Manal Shaheen, an Arab speaking woman, is the one responsible for translating the tweets and re-tweeting important messages. "I am very pleased to have the opportunity to be a kind of bridge between activists in Norway and the Arab world, so that they can communicate with each other" (Shaheen, 2013 in amnesty.no, 2013k). "As a tool, it might be available for more people to express themselves than in traditional ways. That has value in itself, either as an additional supplement to other methods or on its own" (Skaare, 2013).

@MENA voices represents an interesting example of the direct communication between social movements and NGOs facilitated by new media. The value of this communication will be further elaborated on in the analysis.

Analysis

As demonstrated through the theoretical framework, the democratic value of new media is a widely discussed topic. The main objective of this thesis is to evaluate the potential for social media to empower people for political engagement. Based on the interviews, case study and policy analysis the following discussions will be based mainly on issues of media and democracy; political participation; mainstream media versus new media; networks of solidarity and social movements; and state resistance and power.

Political participation – maximalist forms of democracy

Prior to the revolution that led to the overthrow of President Mubarak the political climate in Egypt was dominated by political elites, favourable towards the regime. As for the public there was a general low interest in institutional politics due to the risks associated with oppositional politics (El-Nadi; Kaada). During the revolution and the two following years influenced by further uprisings against the rule of SCAF and the Mursi regime respectively, there has been an upsurge in citizen participation and political engagement in Egypt, refuting the so-called great retreat. These activities are not characterised as traditional political activities such as voting and joining political parties, but nonetheless seen as political behaviour. Dahlgren (2009) suggests that citizen involvement is triggered by dissatisfaction, meaning that political participation can be sparked by discontent regarding the present situation (2009:14). This might be a contributing factor in explaining the increase in political participation in Egypt in the last period. The underlying reasons for the revolution were present many years before the initial protests, and there was great dissatisfaction with the socioeconomic situation in the country, as well as Mubarak's leadership (Buick; El-Nadi; Nabil).

So what happens when people are unable to participate in traditional political activities because of the threats associated with it? In correspondence with Dahlgren's perspective on civic cultures, civic engagement was threatened by the totalitarian regime, which in turn sparked political engagement (2009:102-3). Faced with few opportunities to participate in traditional political activities however, activists were required to find new platforms to express the opposition's perspectives:

> (…) we don't have tools for freedom of expression or freedom of movement, the chance to build an NGO or civil society group is very, very difficult, it's close to impossible. And the freedom of expression, starting a newspaper or funding an NGO is almost impossible. (…) So somehow media and the Internet offers some alternative tools, because the original tools that were supposed to be there are not there. Alternatives in ways for us to make associations (Nabil).

> When you're prohibited from organising yourself politically, of course these new communication technologies becomes incredibly important. It allows you to distribute key messages to large groups of people in a very short amount of time (Kaada).

New ICTs provided the activists with the tools they needed to participate in the political sphere. Challenged by few attractive institutional alternatives, people re-defined politics and created their own spaces for democracy (Dahlgren, 2009:124). The act of creating space for democracy includes extending and transforming existing public spheres, which enhances civic engagement (ibid). The maximalist forms of participation presented by Web 2.0 provides people with an alternative platform in which they can voice their opinions, share information and facilitate interaction not restricted to political elites, which in turn can have an impact on the political agenda (Carpentier, 2011:118-119). The utilisation of new media technologies during the Egyptian revolution has been thoroughly documented. "The statistics speak for themselves: 1.5 million Egypt-related tweets in the first week of the January 25 uprising alone" (Aouragh & Alexander, 2011:1350). On the first day of the protests the Twitter hash tag #Jan25, which became the symbol of the protests, was reported being used in 25 tweets each minute (Eltantawy and Wiest, 2011:1216). The Internet provides activists with tools that enable great attention on key issues. By posting a video on YouTube, for instance, one can ensure tremendous support for important political causes (Skaare). This confirms the theory that political participation increase with the spread of the Internet (Dahlgren, 2009:170), and is further confirmed by El-Nadi who states that:

> (…) if we didn't have a tool like Facebook I don't think that this many people would have known the amount of incredible amount of information that they have been able to learn in such a short time.

The public sphere

As seen above, faced with limited opportunities for political participation activists chose to create their own space for democracy on digital platforms. These media platforms can be argued to represent alternative public spheres. The Internet made a revolutionary contribution to the public political sphere as it opened up for debate (Aouragh & Alexander, 2011:1348) and facilitated the shaping of public opinion through both mainstream and new media (Buick; El-Nadi; Tin). By increasing the possibilities for participation this alternative sphere represents an operational space where there is room for action, i.e. a *digital public sphere*. Even though this digital public sphere does not comply with all of the characteristics of the public sphere as defined by Habermas, it nevertheless possesses key characteristics of an alternative public sphere. During and after the revolution, the digital public sphere became an operational space for activists to engage in discussions and debates; mobilise support; encourage participation; share information and knowledge (El-Nadi; Nabil; Tin), and also as a platform in which they could share experiences with international actors and "connect with the world" (El-Nadi).

The public sphere is, however, a normative theory based on the premise of a space in which there is freedom of expression, and where issues relevant to the public can be discussed (Deane, 2005:178). The notion of the public sphere has changed as it moves away from face-to-face encounters and the mass media to new interactive media platforms. Access and participation still represent a vital part of deliberation and is crucial within the public sphere (della Porta, 2009:2). The democratic potential of digital public spheres thus becomes questioned when discussing issues of access. As pointed out in the theoretical framework the digital divide prevents a large part of the world's population from interacting on these digital platforms. The digital public sphere is further seen as highly vulnerable, as illustrated during the Egyptian uprisings when the Mubarak regime shut down the Internet. By relying on technology alone, one becomes exposed to external threats.

An interactive digital public sphere requires high levels of skills in terms of media technology, and not to mention access. Egypt has a high level of illiteracy, poverty and unemployment, which causes low levels of political literacy (El-Nadi; Nabil). Additionally, even though Egypt has relatively high levels of digital literacy (Aouragh & Alexander, 2011:1347), this is reserved for a small minority and there are a lot of people without access to computers, which prevents them from participating online (Nabil). The digital divide in

Egypt is illustrated through a study of the use of digital media on Tahrir during the protests where it is suggested that a "small group of Twitter users in Egypt generated a significant amount of content" (Wilson & Dunn, 2011:1269). This indicates that the actual use of new media as a communication and information tool was reserved for a small group of "power users" (ibid). Nevertheless, despite the challenges caused by the digital divide and low levels of political literacy, the Egyptian activists have attempted to address these challenges in different ways:

> These differences in society exist, but somehow people in Egypt, even in poor areas or illiterate people, they respect people who are engaged on social networks. So even if they are not able or capable in following what's happening they would search for someone following these things and ask: "please tell us what's happening there, what are you planning?" (Nabil).

> (…) activists took what's happening on social media and put that in presentations and went to poor areas, and explained to underprivileged people who didn't have Internet what the activists are doing on the Internet. And that helped raise an incredible amount of awareness about politics and participation and also about the importance of the Internet. So a lot of people are joining social media because of that effort, now (El-Nadi).

The former statements suggest that the digital public sphere was extended through face-to-face interactions. By explaining to people otherwise excluded what was going on on the Internet and social media, the activists attempted to overcome these challenges (El-Nadi; Nabil; Tin). The spread of news and information through the Internet could merge with more traditional ways of communicating (El-Nadi). As emphasised earlier the ability to move easily between online and offline relationships is key as the two reinforce each other (della Porta, 2009:198). Additionally, by being able to balance offline and online interaction, the vulnerability of relying on technologies becomes less prominent. This is pointed out by Nabil who emphasises that the loss of Internet access had little impact on the mobilisation for physical protests at Tahrir (Nabil).

Furthermore, social media was used as a means to encourage political participation and increase political literacy by educating people about key political concepts. This further

corresponds with Antje Gimmler's view where the Internet is seen as "providing access to information and opportunities for interaction, (…) by encouraging the exchange of services and information" (Gimmler, 2001 in Carpentier, 2011:119).

> If you put information in a short animated video, and that's what some of the activists have been doing since the revolution to educate people about the different types of parliament for example, and which one is more suitable for the Egyptian state (…) I don't think there was any other way you could have educated so many people about such a critical, but also difficult topic (El-Nadi).

The fact that the digital public sphere is complimented by 'traditional' public spheres based on face-to-face interactions corresponds with what Dahlgren predicted for democracy in the future: "(…) getting out of the present difficulties – lies in finding new ways to embody and express democratic values and principles, rather than trying to reconstruct circumstances that have become historically eclipsed" (2009:14). By adapting democracy processes in line with technology developments, people are better equipped at handling modern democracy. As suggested above the Internet has the potential to increase political participation and increase the number of voices present in discussions. Furthermore, by participating in alternative political activities activists have created space for themselves within the traditional political sphere. This is demonstrated through joining and establishing new political parties and organisations, which, according to El-Nadi, was something they did not think about before the revolution (El-Nadi). This illustrates how the digital and physical public sphere, i.e. online and offline relationships, reinforce each other.

By acknowledging maximalist forms of participation, we can begin to understand contemporary politics and by extension the contemporary political activities that have been going on in Egypt the last couple of years. Relying on a broad definition of the political, the media becomes a very important political tool. Within this notion, the act of making one's voice and one's perspectives heard by writing a blog, an article or even a Twitter message can be understood as something inherently political. By redefining politics and opening up new (digital) spaces for discussion, it can be argued that people have in fact been making space for democracy.

As a part of increased individualisation, our everyday lives become key in terms of political and citizen participation. As pointed out by Dahlgren: "Political activity is usually shaped by the circumstances, resources, and practices that characterise people's lives" (2009:149). This corresponds with the idea of lifestyle politics (Bennett, 2003 in Smith, 2008:126) in which people choose to engage in political activities within existing frames. It is argued that by using social media to mobilise support and encourage participation, the 'right' generation was targeted. This is supported by the fact that the majority of Egyptians are young (El-Nadi), the medium age in the country is 24 years (cia.gov), and "those were the people on social media" (El-Nadi). Challenged by limited institutionalised opportunities, the activists redefined the political sphere and created a new alternative operational space for democratic discussions on digital platforms *within their existing realities*.

Not a "Facebook revolution"

Even though Egypt has experienced a *social participation boom* following the revolution, and now "everyone is on Facebook" (El-Nadi), it is essential not to exaggerate the impact new media had on the revolution. Indeed, new media was used as a key tool in terms of mobilising support and exchanging information because it represents a tool of today. Yet as pointed out by Nabil:

> It's not a magic tool (…) I think revolutions have happened in history for many centuries until today and they will happen forever, and each time you use the tools and instruments of the new time, so when people in the beginning were using swords etc., now we are using the instruments available in our time.

Despite the value recognised in new media as a tool for political participation and public discussions, the coining of the terms "Twitter revolution" and "Facebook revolution" has sparked debates regarding the real role of new media in the revolution. New media technologies, including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube were actively used during the protests to rally support and to spread information (El-Nadi; Nabil; Tin). The assumption that these technologies somehow *caused* the revolution is contested on several fronts. "It wasn't a Facebook revolution that created the Arab Spring, it was rather a tool that enabled it" (Buick). The activists and Amnesty International employees interviewed for this thesis reject the idea of a Twitter revolution and emphasises that these were merely means that were used in the

democratic process without inhabiting a democratic value in itself, thus it is important not to overemphasise its impact (El-Nadi; Nabil; Buick).

> (…) in very closed off societies Twitter enables information flows, mobilisation, networking, etc. but it's essential to remember that Twitter represents a tool that enables resistance, but the heavier democratic processes happens elsewhere – both at government level but also at activist level (Buick).

The motives behind the initial protests were based on the socioeconomic context in Egypt and placing too much value on new media actually devalues the efforts that were put into the protests by the Egyptian people and simplifies the reasons for the revolution (Buick; El-Nadi; Nabil). New media was only a means and the underlying causes for the uprisings and the dynamics of the revolution were present "before people were so interested in social media" (El-Nadi). This corresponds with Carpentier's perspective on participation in and through the media as he states that it is important not to ignore the complexities of society and place too much value on media participation as it does not necessarily have an impact on other societal spheres (2011:255). The emphasis on new media as decisive tools for the revolution is further criticised by Nabil who states that: "(…) the event doesn't happen on Facebook, it happens on the streets, its just a tool to let more people know about it, to distribute information" (Nabil).

The above statement further refutes 'the great retreat' and the decrease in political engagement. The thousand of Egyptians who camped at Tahrir or actively participated in the protests challenge the claims that in the absence of new technologies youth agency weakens (Reguillo, 2009:34). This is further challenged by Nabil who explains how Mubarak regime's attempt to shut off the Internet had limited effects on the physical protests, and in some instances even amplified the opposition:

> Many people who opposed the revolution, when they found that the Internet was blocked they were very angry and went into the streets protesting. Even people who were for the regime went out into the streets because they were so angry when the Internet got shut off (Nabil).

New media versus mainstream media

In a repressive regime like Egypt where the state controls the mainstream media (El-Nadi; Nabil), new media enables communication, the exchange of information and planning of activities and events without interference from the state. The Egyptian media scene is seen as fragmented, but ultimately controlled by the state. Even though there exists private news corporations and satellite channels, seemingly independent from the state, they are all some how connected to either the president or the army, and are seen as biased toward the state (El-Nadi; Nabil). Therefore, Egyptian mainstream media, with the exception of Al-Jazeera, continued to report on the uprisings in support of the government, as the regime shaped the narratives.

> The Egyptian regime is fragmented so there are institutions of the regime that are fighting each other, but somehow they are having some kind of balance because most of them – or all of them – belong to the same regime. It's a kind of family fighting each other, but at the same time they are a family (…) when the whole state institution is fighting against democracy it becomes obvious that all of them are working together (Nabil).

As an important way to challenge existing discourses presented by mainstream media in Egypt, new media has become an important tool to introduce opposing ideas and ideas of resistance against the regime:

> (…) at the time when people were preparing for the revolution, of course traditional media was useless. They wouldn't carry this new at all. So the way forward was to use social media to rally interest, to post the event for the revolution, to ask people to comment and to join and to invite their friends, to discuss why people needed to go to the streets (El-Nadi).

New media was in this case used to spread information and to encourage people to participate. The many different 'voices' offered by new media is one of the most important qualities of new media as it allows citizens to introduce new perspectives and challenge existing discourses, particularly that of mainstream media (Dahlgren, 2009:124; Gorman & McLean, 2009:251; Loader & Mercea, 2012:3).

Social media gives people the option of making up their own mind, if you are a person who wants to find out the truth, or at least the closest thing to the truth. What you do is you can go on YouTube for instance, and look for videos of the same news piece from different news channels and find out their opinions and make up your own mind. And then you can also go on discussion groups or follow certain important personalities or activists in the country where the news happen (El-Nadi).

El-Nadi as a citizen journalist was interested in documenting what was really happening on the ground, i.e. 'the truth'. In the absence of traditional news coverage people relied to a greater extent on citizen journalists for information. El-Nadi explains how she was contacted by international actors who came to rely on her for information from the ground (El-Nadi). An important part of this was to introduce new perspectives and counter the existing image portrayed by mainstream media:

(…) when I showed my videos from Tahrir showing a lot of women and children and so on, people were shocked. They said "women? Were there women on Tahrir?" I said yes, of course I'm one of them – it's not as if I'm a man. So they said: "we never saw that in the media here. They only showed angry men shouting in Arabic, we had no idea what they were saying". So it only showed men, and it showed them angry, whereas in my videos you can see people singing and dancing and having fun (El-Nadi).

As pointed out by El-Nadi, mainstream media's portrayals of the events on Tahrir Square during the protests were very different from the experiences she had. This perspective emphasises the dichotomy between mainstream and new media in which mainstream media is seen as dramatizing the events, showing "panicky, crying women, someone had died for example or got injured" (El-Nadi), while she as an independent blogger or a citizen journalist would document a completely different story based on individual experiences. This is further illustrated by international media's initial portrayal of the protests on Tahrir as CNN presented the headline: 'Chaos in Egypt' on January 28th. Following a plead from Egyptian blogger and activist, Mona Eltahawy, however, they soon changed the focus of the stories with headlines such as: 'Uprising in Egypt'. "I urge you to use the words 'revolt' and 'uprising' and 'revolution' and not 'chaos' and not 'unrest.' We are talking about a historic moment" (Eltahawy, 2011 cited in Bhuiyan, 2011:16).

El-Nadi further states that mainstream media would report from Tahrir Square through a bird's eye perspective, while she was more interested in showing the individual people on the ground and documenting the reasons why they were there (El-Nadi). This differentiation places new media and mainstream media in a power dichotomy, where mainstream media is represented by the powerful state and the 'weak' public represents new media. Communication technologies arguably contributes in shifting this power balance between the powerful (the state, mainstream media) and the weak (marginalised groups, the public, citizen journalists) as "everyone equipped with a mobile phone, can record and instantly upload to the global networks any wrongdoing by anyone, anywhere" (Castells, 2009 cited in Loader & Mercea, 2012:44). This is further verified by El-Nadi who explains how activists actively used their cameras during the 18 days of protest at Tahrir to document their perspectives of the events (El-Nadi). From this perspective traditional and mainstream media are portrayed as biased, and experienced as dramatizing the events. Citizen journalism, on the other hand, even though emphasised that it is based on subjective experiences, is seen as a way to 'discover the truth'.

This utopian portrayal of new media neglects to account for the influence traditional media still have. The relationship between new media and mainstream media is not clear-cut, as there are many crossovers between the two practices. As pointed out by Nabil, one way for a blogger to gain credibility would be to be picked up and quoted by a news corporation:

> (…) if a blogger publishes documented data – newspapers will take it from him and that will give it more credibility. So if I say something and BBC copies me, that would give me more credibility, and they would have to refer to the source saying that they copied it from me (Nabil).

This proves to show how the two practices crossover and therefore to place the two media platforms in a dichotomy oversimplifies the current media scene. During the uprisings many international news corporations relied on social media sites for information directly from the protests on Tahrir. "Sites such as the blogging platform Tumblr allowed the rapid aggregation of a wide variety of material, so news organisations and others could easily browse and broadcast to wide audiences" (Alterman, 2011:112-113). Egyptian activist Hossam El-Hamalawy further confirms this:

If the best-known bloggers or online activists post something on their blogs, read by some thousands, it's more or less guaranteed that BBC, Al Jazeera, or other traditional media will grab the info and it will be read by millions. Information is thus going to spread (El-Hamalawy cited in MRZine, 2011).

As seen above, facilitated by new media citizen journalists and social movements have the power to change the agenda of mainstream news providers. But then again, by becoming a recognised source for a news corporation one would gain credibility as a citizen journalist. This underlines the power mainstream media still holds as a source for information and knowledge in society, and further underscores mainstream media's central role in influencing public opinion (Waisbord, 2005:89).

Nevertheless, there are certain advantages with new media as it allows activists to bypass mainstream media and offer opposing perspectives, in turn challenging traditional media's monopoly on information, which in Egypt is closely controlled by the state. Further, it facilitates contact with other activists as well as key international actors (this will be further elaborated on in the following sections). More importantly, new media educated people in Egypt on key political terms and provided them with outlets for political discussion, in turn increasing the political literacy and the level of participation. However, it cannot be argued that new media has made mainstream media surplus in society, as it still represent an important tool in terms of influencing public opinion. The increase in new media has surely had an impact on political participation and challenged mainstream media's hegemony, yet the two practices can rather be seen to reinforce each other. This mutual reinforcement highlights the dual function of both practices.

State resistance and power

"The power of the people is greater than the people in power" (Wael Ghonim, 2012)

As addressed in the theoretical framework, under the premise of law and order totalitarian states attempt to marginalise and silence oppositional and critical voices. As new communication tools develop, so do the technologies attempting to control and prevent its oppositional use. "As the information technology improves people's ability to make use of their rights, this technology is also used to restrict the right to privacy through increased censorship and surveillance" (AI, 2010). This development is evident through Mubarak's

attempt to shut down the Internet during the uprisings (El-Nadi, Nabil). By shutting down one of the key spaces for communication and information exchange, the Egyptian regime was attempting to control the protests. The Egyptian government have further recognised the potential of new media and are now increasingly using these digital platforms for their own purposes. The state has established official social networking sites that are an important part of their political image (El-Nadi). Furthermore, the state actively used social media to disrupt the protests: "One of our key weapons was spreading rumors to manipulate the street" (General Abdel Moneim Qato cited in Freedom House, 2012). The fact that the state has recognised the value of new media through establishing official social media sites can be seen as an attempt by the regime to claim control of the alternative public sphere. Additionally, new media is being used by the state to locate critical voices on the Internet so that they can be captured, and this points to the paradox of social media:

> "(…) you get a tool for freedom and for speaking your mind, but you also expose yourself to the authorities. They can find you a lot easier. So in a totalitarian state, it becomes a dangerous tool as well" (El-Nadi).

This is demonstrated by the many pseudonyms used by Egyptian activists on Facebook and Twitter during the protests: "he used Facebook undercover, without explaining who he is, fearing state security" (El-Nadi). As pointed out by the founder of Wikileaks, Julian Assange: "the Internet is not only a force for openness and transparency, it is also the greatest spying machine the world has ever seen" (Assange, 2011 cited in Comninos, 2011:11). Amnesty confirms this and states that despite the increase in new technologies for communicative purposes, the risk of surveillance deems the (not so modern) method of face-to-face meetings still very valuable (Kaada; Tin).

> There are some people (…) that are exposed and are actually being watched and who are afraid to use both e-mail and cell phones as a secure channel for the exchange of information. And then, of course, it becomes important with face-to-face encounters (Tin).

This corresponds with the importance of being able to move easily between online and offline relationships to enable transnational cooperation (della Porta, 2009:198). Furthermore, face-to-face encounters with exposed activists ensure a kind of seriousness and builds mutual trust

between Amnesty International and activists (Tin). Tin further explains how repressive regimes recognise the potential of new media and attempts to prevent people from using these channels:

> (…) this, shall we say, technology-based communication in a human rights context is attempted stopped. Stopped by many regimes that see how important it is, how much you can accomplish by just gathering public information. It's unbelievable really. What he does is to gather public information, but it is so dangerous, that they do not want him to continue. Or they try to stop him at least (Tin).

The above discussion indicates that the alternative digital public sphere, a new expanded operational democratic space created by activists as a marginalised group in society, is now taken over by political elites. "To a very great extent, unfortunately, a lot of our actions are for human rights defenders who are being persecuted around the world" (Tin). Amnesty has numerous examples of people who are being persecuted by the Egyptian regime based solely on their opinions and for employing their freedom of speech, like Egyptian video-blogger Ahmed Anwar. Anwar is accused of offending the Ministry of Interior and of "misusing the Internet" by posting a video where he mocked the police and criticised "police brutality and impunity for human rights abuses" (AI, April 2013). Anwar is currently facing up to three years in prison and a large fine. "It's ironic that 3 May is World Press Freedom Day and I'm facing trial the next day just for posting a video" (Anwar cited in AI, April 2013). Amnesty International will work to ensure that "governments and non-governmental actors respects and defends the freedom of speech, including freedom of expression online" (Amnesty International, 2010). "When you're talking about freedom of expression today, you're talking about freedom of expression online similarly as traditional perceptions of free speech" (Kaada). The Egyptian state is not only working to silence critical individuals, but also international organisations (Tin; Buick). In order to diminish international influence in Egypt, the regime attempted to "tighten NGO legislation and prohibit all organisations that receive money from abroad" (Buick). These new restrictions limits the space for both local and international NGOs to work on issues related to human rights and democracy (Freedom House, 2013).

Despite the risks associated with opposing the regime, under Mubarak, SCAF as well as president Mursi, people are defying personal perils and actively working for human rights and

democracy. As discussed above, the act of resisting and opposing power and structural injustice can be seen as an exercise of power (Kendall and Wickham, 1999 in Carpentier, 2011:139-140). The unequal power relation is attempted balanced by increasing the participation of the disadvantaged group and by highlighting violations inflicted by power holders (Carpentier, 2011:352). As suggested by Amnesty International: "When people all over the world come together to put floodlights on an attack, we have the power to stop it" (amnesty.no, 2013c). This corresponds with the idea that democracy follows as a result of political struggle and rarely emerges as "a gift to the people from the powerful circles" (Dahlgren, 2009:2). Based on this theory, power resistance is in fact an important part of democracy processes. The resistance against the Egyptian regime can thus be understood as an important attempt to shift the power balance in the country. The benefits of using new media technology as a part of this resistance movement is emphasised by Amnesty who explains that even after people have been detained and imprisoned by the state, their social media pages lives on: "(…) he is imprisoned, but his Twitter account, run by his wife, is still active" (Tin). This demonstrates the value of social media in that it can continue to be part of the critical discussion, even after the person who started the account is gone. Furthermore, despite the risks associated with using new media technologies as one is exposed to the regime, the increase in new media technologies in addition to the speed presented by new media poses a great advantage for the marginalised groups:

> (…) there are over 250 000 bloggers in Egypt, so somehow its too much even for any government to watch all of them and keep circling all of them, and even to arrest all of them. So the huge number of bloggers makes it somehow uncontrollable by the state to or any way to contain them (Nabil).

> When everything else shuts down, people still manages to distribute pictures from demonstrations and show how the police come down on the protests. And this information is spread in record time (Aamodt).

Solidarity networks and international support

"Working and finding partners is one of the tools we use in our activism, that's a normal thing" (Nabil).

Solidarity networks and transnational cooperation is seen as valuable as it enables the exchange of information, skills and resources (Smith, 2008). As previously mentioned communication is regarded as an important part of enabling resistance. The easy dissemination of information made possible by new media technologies counters existing power imbalances as: "(…) the hierarchy is broken down by social media, you have opportunities to contact people directly regardless of your position or systems you would otherwise have been prevented by" (Buick). This ensures that marginalised groups have a platform in which they can reach out to the international community, i.e. Amnesty for support. As pointed out in the theoretical framework, solidarity networks between social movements and international organisations create entry points in which activists can make their voices heard. This includes reporting on key events that, as pointed out earlier, might be neglected by mainstream media; to report on human rights violations and state violence; and to gain valuable perspectives from the outside. This information is then used by Amnesty to highlight the structural human right violations that are occurring, in an attempt to mobilise international support and action. This collaboration is enabled, amongst other factors; by new media as it offer numerous new channels for information and news dissemination, thus making transnational cooperation easier:

> (…) a large part of the enquiries we get now are obviously enquiries we would not get if not the communication channel had been there. I definitely think so, because the threshold to contact us has become lower. They see that I'm on Twitter, and we've also created this (…) @ MENA voices Twitter account, where we now receive direct enquiries from people in the Middle East (Tin).

As stated earlier, the fast dissemination of human rights is argued to be one of globalisations' greatest successes (Hylland Eriksen, 2005:27), and by further lowering the threshold in terms of contact and rapid information exchange, new media enables greater contact between activists and Amnesty International (Aamodt; Buick; Kaada; Skaara; Tin). This corresponds with Amnesty's policies in which they strive for greater contact with local human right defenders and activists:

> We have in a way changed our methods, moving from working *for* to working *with*. We don't want there to be a separation between 'us' and 'them'. I think this is a terribly important change (…) So it's a clear change of attitude where we work

together to bring about changes. And of course new communication technologies make this easier (Aamodt).

This relationship is important in terms of gaining attention and shedding light on crucial issues as the voice of the social movement is arguably facilitated through NGOs (della Porta & Tarrow, 2005). As emphasised in the theoretical framework, resistance is not just about your ideas, but rather how to communicate these ideas to a wide public (Smith, 2008:134). This in turn makes Amnesty an intermediary between mainstream media and the activist voices and can contribute in setting the agenda and influencing public opinion. As highlighted in the organisation's policies, they will: "work for greater visibility in the media on the issues we wish to put on the agenda" (AI, 2010). This corresponds with Smith's perspective regarding the power of shaming, as it "is the only mechanism we have for enforcing most international laws" (2008:167).

Furthermore, by opening up for direct communication with activists from Egypt through social networking sites, e.g. @MENA voices, Amnesty are implementing their communication strategy as they are ensuring "that the people we work for are heard, and facilitate (for) a diversity of voices" (AI, 2010). To what extent the Twitter account @MENA voices can be argued to be part of the digital public sphere, and being an enabling force in terms of political participation can be debated. Even though the site serves as an intermediary between Egyptian activists and the International (Norwegian) community by sharing information and attempting to mobilise wide international support for exposed groups and individuals, not all messages are re-tweeted, and this excludes certain voices. As a way to ensure maximum attention and action for a certain issue, Amnesty chooses to illustrate a wider, more structural human rights issue through individuals who have been exposed to human rights violation. As Amnesty is based on high levels of credibility, the organisation must go through a long process in terms of checking the credibility of its sources before making a public statement, which in turn can lead to certain voices or stories being excluded. This entails a screening process that influences the organisations' strategies. Despite best intentions, media frames (what attracts the media and the public); credibility; as well as questions of resources limits the democratic potential of these means as not everyone is represented. "It is clear that there still is a screening process in relation to the voices coming forward, what capabilities will appear. So time will have to tell what the real democratic value of this is" (Skaare).

Even though what @MENA voices, i.e Twitter, offers might not be compliant with the public sphere in the strictly Habermasian definition, the site still offers an alternative space for discussions. By relying to a greater extent on new technologies Amnesty are aiming to "strengthen networking and dialogue at all levels", which is highlighted as a strategic goal (AI, 2010). This is further confirmed by Tin who states: "Amnesty is to a greater and greater extent relying on the Internet and other communication tools in Amnesty's work" (Tin). This enables Amnesty to reach a much greater audience with their messages, which in turn are messages and reports from activist networks and social movements (Buick).

Another vital aspect of Amnesty's relationship with activists, and the organisation's values as a whole is solidarity communication (Buick; Kaada; Tin). "We see that solidarity (…) is very important in order to stay motivated, not only for people who are imprisoned but for their whole support system" (Tin). Maikel Nabil demonstrates the importance of solidarity as he expresses his gratitude towards Amnesty International after his release from prison:

> I am very grateful to AI for my release. I want you to know that (you) helped me to persevere and continue the struggle against the military leaders in Egypt. My message to you is that you helped me to achieve what I've done and you made me better (Nabil cited in amnesty.no 07.05.12).

As seen above, letter writing is a good way to demonstrate solidarity with prisoners of conscience, but this solidarity communication is also disseminated through new media technologies and enables direct dialogue with exposed activists and their families (Buick; Kaada; Skaare; Tin).

> She received a direct message where (he) thanks us, or Norway, for the support. From him inside the prison that is. And that has meaning in itself. These are opportunities we get through these new channels (Tin).

The above corresponds with Amnesty's strategic goals from 2010 in terms of entering in to strategic partnerships with organisations and individuals who are exposed to- or key in terms of abolishing human rights. The interviews for this research indicate, however, that there has been less contact with activists and human right defenders from the MENA region than aspired (Aamodt; Buick; Kaada; Skaara Tin). Amnesty has key activists that they previously

have campaigned for and stay in touch with (Buick), but it is difficult to establish or identify key groups in the MENA area because it is a relatively new priority area (Skaare). Nonetheless, everything indicates that the organisation will continue entering into these strategic partnerships in the future, as the value of these kinds of networks are recognised:

> I feel like the basis of everything we do is based on being able to identify with each other (…) and I think that bringing people closer together, and talking with the people who are experiencing these human rights violations and are out there fighting for them is vital, and we want the connection with these activist to be stronger (Aamodt).

The former discussion corresponds with Amnesty's overall goal of ensuring that "every person (should) enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards" (amnesty.org, 2013a). To achieve this goal it is essential that the organisation adapt to changes in society in order to "increase the impact of our human rights work" (ibid).

Discussion

The dangers associated with getting involved in oppositional politics have prevented many Egyptians from participating in the political sphere. Faced with few attractive political options in a totalitarian regime where there had not existed democracy for over 60 years, the Egyptian people redefined politics and created a democratic space for themselves on digital platforms. This digital public sphere allowed for critical discussions; the exchange of information; education on key political concepts; wide-scale mobilisation; and communication, both internally between activists, but also externally with international actors. Not restricted by power imbalances or social hierarchies, this operational space allows for wide-scale participation and engagement. However, as approximately 60 per cent of the Egyptian people lack access to this space due to the digital divide, the question of its democratic value poses itself. It has been argued that certain "power groups" with access to new technologies, and the media- and political literacy to match, are dominating this digital public sphere. Nevertheless, by complementing these digital platforms with the traditional public sphere characteristic of face-to-face encounters the challenges caused by the digital divide are addressed. This means that people who do not have physical access to a computer or are otherwise prevented from participating online can engage through the extended public sphere. This emphasises the democratic potential of the digital public sphere.

However, as the Egyptian regime have recognised the value of new media they are now using it to their advantage. Digital surveillance is a part of activists' lives, and it has become increasingly important to stay off the state's radar. This includes using pseudonyms on social media sites. By gagging free speech, silencing critical voices and discrediting them in the public light the state is attempting to repress oppositional voices. Nonetheless, the vast amount of new media channels and the speed in which information gets disseminated represents clear advantages, and further challenges the regime's attempt at controlling the information. Through international ties with organisations such as Amnesty International, new media facilitates direct contact, which in turn ensures that these human rights violations do not go unnoticed. Furthermore, as an advanced digital footprint, the social media site stays active after individuals have been detained, which indicates that the critical voice actually lives on despite the state's attempt at silencing it.

It can be argued that new media challenges mainstream media's information monopoly and provides the public with a wide range of voices. Mainstream media in Egypt is closely controlled by the state, and seen as biased towards the regime. New media facilitates the distribution of critical voices of resistance, and offers opposing perspectives to that of mainstream media. The many 'voices' offered by new media enables people to find the truth for themselves and counters existing discourses. However, to generalise new media and mainstream media's practices simplifies the current media scene in Egypt, as the two practices seem to reinforce each other. Even though new media and numerous citizen journalists are gaining credibility as news disseminators, mainstream international media still holds an influential role in terms of shaping public opinion. The dichotomy between new media and mainstream media thus becomes misplaced, and when analysing the impact of new media it is central to understand its context; and that includes traditional media practices.

As this research has demonstrated, new media represented a valuable tool for all parties involved in the Egyptian uprisings. It can be argued that activists, Amnesty International and even the Egyptian government all came to rely on it in some way or other. Nonetheless, they all reject the idea that new media has some kind of inherent democratic value, and that it is in itself value free. The theoretical framework further supports this where several scholars emphasise the role of new media as a *tool*. However, as argued by Silverstone (1994) all communication technologies carry with them a second meaning as an object, what he referred to as *double articulation* (Silverstone, 1994:123). This means that in addition to being strictly

a communications tool, new media carries with it certain cultural values. These values are asserted by context and thus established by the value people provide it with. These cultural values are neither universal nor set, and must be contextualised. By accepting maximalist forms of democratic participation, new media gains cultural value as an important platform for deliberative democracy. Therefore, by focusing merely on the 'objectness' of new media, one ignores its second meaning, which in this case can be argued to represent the democratic value of new media.

On a more critical note
Despite the value recognised in new media in terms of empowering people for political engagement it is important that the conclusions drawn from this thesis are contextualised within the broader political and social structures in Egypt, and may not be applicable to other cases. The role of new media in democracy processes relies heavily on regimes' attempts at controlling the information flow. As many governments in the Arab world encouraged Internet proliferation to boost economic development prior to the Arab spring, they arguably facilitated the spread of the Internet, in turn allowing it to become "a very effective weapon used by protesters and political activists to topple the regime in 2011" (Khamis, Gold and Vaughn, 2012). However, the attempts by the various regimes to resist these technologies vary. Even though the Egyptian regime tried to halter the protests by 'turning off' the Internet, it can be argued that it was already too late into the uprisings as the movement had already gained momentum. As seen in the on-going uprisings in Syria, for instance, where the media is even more controlled by the state than in Egypt (ibid), the Assad regime are relying on propaganda in response to the protests and accusing international media of "staging fake demonstrations in studio mock-ups of Syrian cities" (Black, 2012 cited in Khamis, Gold and Vaughn, 2012). The Syrian regime has also attempted to block Internet access several times to prevent the opposition from distributing information from the uprisings. Furthermore, the Syrian regime has developed its own "Syrian Electronic Army" (SEA), which is a regime-supported computer-attack team, with the sole purpose of "combating anti-regime messages in multiple ways" (Khamis, Gold and Vaughn, 2012). Thus access to new media technologies is even more restricted, and civic resistance is seen as more hazardous in Syria than in Egypt (ibid). This underscores the importance of reviewing these findings in context as the democratic potential of the Internet and new media is neither universal nor set and may come to depend on context.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis is to evaluate the potential for social media to empower people for political engagement. This was researched by relying on a case study of Amnesty International Norway, more specifically the organisation's efforts in relation to human rights violations in the context of the current democracy process and revolution in Egypt. The case study was complemented by a policy analysis, as well as interviews with Amnesty International employees and Egyptian activists. This thesis set out to investigate the value of new media in terms of political engagement through issues such as alternative political activities; digital public spheres; new media's relationship with mainstream media; new media's role as facilitating contact with solidarity networks; new media's role in terms of state resistance; and how Web 2.0 can be argued to facilitate greater citizen participation through maximalist forms of democratic participation.

Due to dissatisfaction with political elites and as a part of increased post-modern individualisation people are to a greater extent getting involved in alternative political activities within personal spaces, i.e. microstructures, where they have the opportunity to actually make a difference. Within a broad definition of the political lies a whole terrain of alternative political structures, including the media and social movements. As a result of few opportunities in terms of traditional political organisation, Egyptian activists chose to rely on alternative means to create a united front against the oppressive regime. This appeared through formation of a social movement. Seeing as how the political sphere in Egypt was dominated by political elites, favourable towards the Mubarak regime, by organising as a social movement activists were able to bypass state restrictions and extend the political sphere. This allowed them to participate in shaping the Egyptian society, and by extension contribute to the political revolution in which Mubarak was forced to leave office.

As a country struggling for democracy after almost 60 years of totalitarian regimes, new media represented an alternative operational space where people could take an active part in shaping Egypt's future. Through online discussions and information exchange the Egyptian activists managed to mobilise, educate and distribute information in record time. In correspondence with maximalist forms of participation where participation is not restricted to political elites or political issues related to macro-structures, new media facilitates greater citizen engagement. By lowering the threshold for political participation and increasing the

number of political actors, new media challenges the existing power structures in society. By further merging face-to-face encounters with online interaction the Egyptian people created their own space for democracy. The essential offline/online relationship is further emphasised as high levels of online participation does not necessarily lead to changes in other realms of society. This is demonstrated through the Mubarak regime's attempt to control the information by turning off the Internet during the uprisings, and the little impact this had on the physical protests at Tahrir Square. Despite the media hype about "Facebook revolutions", essentially the revolution was enabled by human and political agency. While acknowledging the impact new media served as a means for communication, information exchange and education, it must be emphasised that political agency and face-to-face interactions are still key in terms of political and social change, thus the ability to easily move between online and offline relations is vital.

This research further indicates that new media is a valuable part of state resistance as it opens up for information exchange in societies that may otherwise have been closed off. This allows for rapid dissemination of human rights violations reports, which in turn can help prevent new assaults. On the flip side however, as demonstrated in this research, as technology enables rapid dissemination of human rights reports, so do the technology, skills and resources attempting to resist it. As totalitarian states are increasingly recognising the value of new media they are attempting to claim power over the newly developed digital public sphere in an attempt to control the uprisings. This point to the paradoxical nature of new media as it represents a tool for freedom, while at the same time puts one in great peril under state scrutiny.

Despite the role new media played during the Egyptian revolution one should be careful not to exaggerate its democratic potential. As a part of a utopian, technology-as-progress perspective, technology is seen as an independent force with great democratic potential. In this notion new media can be seen as a means for democracy. As demonstrated through the findings in this research, both academic and empirical, this perspective provides technology with too much impact and devalues the political and human agency that was witnessed during the physical protests at Tahrir Square. However, new media can be argued to be double articulated, in which it represents both a physical object- in itself free of value, and as carrying a second cultural meaning dependent on context. This means that new media's democratic potential is established by the value we provide it with. According to maximalist

forms of democratic participation Web 2.0 is recognised as a valuable operational space facilitating political debates, information exchange and education. Within this notion participation is not reserved for political elites, thus can be seen as democratic as it opens up a space for deliberation, i.e. opening up for deliberative democracy. By contextualising new media within a broad definition of the political we can begin to understand its democratic potential. In this case new media is still considered a tool utilised for many (very) different reasons, but it is not seen as *value free*.

The complex relationship between new media and mainstream media as emphasised in the theoretical framework was confirmed by the interviews conducted for this thesis. New media challenges mainstream media's hegemony and information monopoly by increasing the number of platforms in which people can participate. Furthermore, new media lowers the threshold for communication and information exchange and offers different perspectives. As mainstream media was (and still is) closely controlled by the Egyptian state, an important part of resistance was to bypass traditional media, and then in turn also the state. New media facilitated this. The dichotomy between new media and traditional media was further emphasised in the interviews as new media was seen as enabling people to discover the truth, whereas mainstream media was seen as biased towards the regime and as dramatizing events. However, placing the two media outlets in a dichotomy undervalues the complex relationship between the two and how their practices tend to crossover. As illustrated through examples from the Egyptian uprisings citizen journalists and mainstream media came to rely on each other to a great extent and their practices merge in many ways. Even though new media has opened up numerous opportunities in relation to participation, mainstream media is still considered key in terms of shaping public opinion. Therefore, in order to fully comprehend the role of new media it is important not to generalise and dichotomise new media and traditional media, and rather analyse them in context to each other. This in turn allows us to fully grasp the potential of new media, not as replacing mainstream media, but rather as supplementing it.

Amnesty International's strategic goals emphasise the importance of gaining closer relationships with exposed activists and human right defenders. This is because it is vital in terms of attaining information about human rights violations from within closed-off societies and to show solidarity, which has been shown to have tremendous impact on exposed groups and individuals. The way Amnesty works is increasingly based on close connections with

activist networks and there has been a change in attitudes as the organisation has moved away from working *for* and are increasingly cooperating with activists and working *with* them on key human rights issues. To a larger and larger extent increases in enquiries, information and direct messages from activists are facilitated by new media technologies. New media enables otherwise marginalised groups, without a space to voice their opinions, a platform in which they themselves can make a difference. These platforms include new media outlets, as well as traditional ones. As NGOs arguably represent 'the voice of the movement' they have the ability to further activists voices and claims to a broader public through established relationships with mainstream media. This is mediated and well explained through the following: The focus is not merely on how to express your ideas of resistance, but how to get these ideas across to a wide public (Smith, 2008:134). Networks between social movements and NGOs can therefore be essential in terms of creating narratives and challenging existing discourses. However, media frames are still influencing what Amnesty choses to disseminate, which in turn leads to a screening process where certain voices are excluded. This limits the democratic potential of new media as is can be argued that certain voices are still neglected through Amnesty as an intermediary between activists and the public. Furthermore, although Amnesty maintains close contact with individual activists and local NGOs in Egypt, they have not managed to enter into strategic partnerships with local activist groups in Egypt, suggesting that, even though new media enables closer connections through direct dialogue, new media's impact has not yet been substantial in terms of transnational cooperation.

Based on the former discussions it can be concluded that new media can facilitate greater political engagement. Providing marginalised voiced with a platform in which they can take an active part in deliberative democracy within the digital public sphere demonstrates maximalist forms of democratic participation. This enables activists to bypass totalitarian regimes and to find the truth for themselves. New media is thus, in this context, understood to hold a democratic value.

Further research
This research indicates that the Egyptian regime is to a greater extent recognising new media as a valuable political platform, and is attempting to gain control of the digital public sphere created by activists. The issue of 'cyber wars' between the state and its citizens presents itself as a topic in need of greater investigation, and could add valuable knowledge about the role of new media and the Internet in contemporary conflicts.

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Attachment 1: Interview Subjects

Ane Aamodt is regional manager (region East) who works for visibility and activism within the organisation's prioritised campaigns.

Kristin Buick is web director with responsibility for Amnesty International Norway's website and social media sites, i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Flickr. She represents the information/communication department.

Tonje Kaada is an advisor in action- and campaign work with responsibility for the MENA campaign spring 2013.

Camilla Skaare is the Head of Campaign at Amnesty International Norway. The department is responsible for identifying relevant matters in which the Norwegian section will work for.

Ina Tin is the Senior Advisor on Middle East and Northern Africa. Tin has also specific personal experiences from Egypt as she has travelled with Amnesty's investigators there in the past.

Sahar El-Nadi is an author and public speaker who focuses on creative communication and cross-cultural issues. She is now sharing her lessons and personal experiences from the Egyptian uprisings. El-Nadi gave a lecture at Lund University during the spring 2012 and I was able to get in contact with her through Facebook (which seemed appropriate considering the topic of the thesis).

Maikel Nabil is an Egyptian blogger and activist who believes in liberalism, secularism, pacifism, peace and realism. Nabil was sentenced to three years in prison for offending the army under the rule of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) in March 2011. He was released 10 months later following massive international mobilisation for his cause, including Amnesty International. He has a close connection to Amnesty International and I was able to get in touch with Nabil through the organisation.

Attachment 2: Interview Questions

The following section has outlined the questions for the interviews. The first set of questions are expert interviews directed at employees at Amnesty International in Norway, and the second set of questions are semi-structured interviews directed at Egyptian activists. The main questions are indicated by numbers (1 -5), while the additional text is supplementary information in case probing became necessary.

Questions for employees as Amnesty International Norway:

1. What is your role at Amnesty International?
2. Could you please explain the different official definitions used by Amnesty International? (activist, human right defender)
3. How does Amnesty International work <u>with</u> human right defenders?
4. Has Amnesty Internationals approach towards human right defenders changed due to new innovations in technology? (Facebook, Twitter etc.)
5. To what extent does Amnesty International rely on information from grassroot movements and human rights defenders (activists)?
6. How does Amnesty International work for people who have been subject to human rights violations? Could you please explain your practices?
7. Do new media have an impact on setting Amnesty Internationals agenda? How do these strategies fit into the daily practice?
8. As a part of the strategic goals from 2010 it is stated: *spread actions/campaigns in new channels and arenas* (webpage, blog, social media, traditional media, other blogs, activism network – both text messages and email, on the streets and in the classroom). "*Amnesty will be the best organization in Norway on the use of new media channels. We will explore and challenge, and we will encourage the members for action on a broad front in all channels*" (Communication strategy, 2012). How is Amnesty implementing this strategy?
9. Have you experienced an increase in enquiries through new technologies?
10. What are your current strategies when working on cases in Egypt?
11. How has social media shaped the strategies when working with Egypt/Egyptian activists? (MENA voices)
12. Are these practices democratic? Do they encourage participation?

13. What is (in your opinion) the potential for new media to empower people for political engagement?

14. Has there been a development in the relationship between NGOs and social movements? (Amnesty and Egyptian uprising? NGOs are working with social movements towards the same goals?)

<u>Questions for activists:</u>

1. Can you please describe your participation during the 18 days of the Egyptian revolution? How did you experience it?

2. What is your relationship with new media?

- What do you think about the role of new media during the revolution? ("Twitter revolution", "Facebook revolution", traditional/mainstream media)

3. How would you describe the media scene in Egypt? Under Mubarak and under Mursi? (Strictly controlled?)

- Does the media scene in Egypt allow for political participation?

- Can you tell me what happened when the Mubarak regime blocked the Internet?

4. What are your thoughts on the unequal distribution of media technologies? (digital divide)

- In your opinion, is access to media technologies important for political participation?

5. Did you collaborate with any other actors during the revolutions? NGOs? Amnesty International? What role did they play?

- How did you communicate/share information with external actors? Did social media facilitate contact with them?

- Can you tell me about the relationship between the Tunisian revolution and the Egyptian revolution?

Attachment 3: Interview with Sahar El-Nadi

Thursday 18.04.2013 7.00 pm.

K: Can you please describe your participation during the 18 days of the Egyptian revolution? How did you experience it?

S: First of all, I've never been an activist before the start of the Egyptian revolution. As you know it was dangerous to get into politics, especially opposition politics. Of course if you wanted to be on the side of the government you were most welcome and you would become very rich and very famous an everything (laughs). But if you felt that you had something to complain about, of course that puts you in a very dangerous corner. And I'm sure your friends at Amnesty have been explaining to you why.

K: Yes.

S: Uhm, so I haven't been.. I've been very interested obviously in the wellbeing of my country and in politics and I read a lot about both sides of the story and about opposition and I read all the opposition papers and blogs and this kind of thing. And I have always been a writer but I've never written about politics before the revolution. Uhm, I went through a personal crisis right before the revolution, I got my divorce. And so I was going through a very bad psychological state and trying to get over my personal problems, but then as soon as the.. on Facebook we started seeing the invitation for the events on January 25 and so on. I was very curious and I kept reading the updates and I hoped that it would work out. To be honest with you I had my doubts that it would work out and I am a little older than the generation, I am 45 so the generation that started the invitation and wanted to go on the streets were people in their late teens to early thirties. So being a little older than they are I've seen more, you know disappointment maybe than they have (laughs)

K: Yeah..

S: I was a bit sceptical but I was completely supporting for that idea. Uhm, so as soon as it started… The first couple of days I things were very tense and bloody, and there were confrontations with the police and so on, so I wasn't in the streets, but I was doing what I do best which is writing. Uhm, and using social media to connect with the world. I have a good following and I am in contact with a lot of international journalists and as soon as it started obviously many of them wrote me and said what's going on and so on, and if its dangerous for you, you don't have to write. And of course it was dangerous for me at that time but I didn't mind. Reporting what was going on and explaining to them what is really on the

ground, which is not available in the media because the of course the local media at that time was not being honest about what was going on and they were making it sound very small and insignificant and so on at the beginning. So I did that the first few days, but then at a certain point, after about four days then I felt, I cant just sit home and do nothing, I really have to go. So I started going to Tahrir everyday.

K: mmh..

S: To support and to be a part of it. Prove that I am not afraid….

Internet connection lost.

K: Sorry, I don't know what happened, but I lost you for about thirsty seconds.

S: Ok, what was the last that you heard?

K: You were saying that you wanted to show that you were not afraid, so you started going to Tahrir every day after that.

S: Ok, and I said that I was recording and I took my camera with me, and I was recording what was going on in pictures and videos.

K: Mmm

S: Because I wanted to show that the picture in the media showed you a birds eye of Tahrir square, so it was a huge space full of dots, and those dots were supposed to be people. But what I wanted to do was to go down to ground level and show you the faces.

K: mm

S: Show you the individual people and ask them why are they there, what are they doing there, what's their story, what brought them to this place. And I learned a lot from this experience. And I use some of this pictures and videos in my lectures. So this is basically.. I went everyday, sometimes alone sometimes with my friends, sometimes with my father, to Tahrir and spent most of the day there until the curfew. And then I had to go, because if you stayed after the curfew there were no transportation and I live far away from Tahrir.

K: Yeah

S: So I never spent the night there. I wasn't camping there, but I was there every morning, spend the day and stayed until late afternoon or early evening when it was time for curfew. Then I went home.

K: yeah

S: And I was writing constantly on Facebook, when it was available. Because you understand that we had a disconnection from the Internet for a while.

K: yeah

S: so while we had no connection, I was recording my ideas. It was very overwhelming, so many emotions and so many ideas. So I was writing down some of my ideas, and as soon as we got Internet back, I was online and writing those things. I was also writing articles for a lot of.. international media uhm, mostly online because I wanted it to go out very fast. I didn't want to wait for publishing. Uhm, and then after the revolution, as soon as the revolution finished I started contacting different organisations around the world, because I wanted to go and speak and use my pictures and videos to show what was going on.

K: mm

S: and the first invitation I got was from Harvard, Uhm and when I got that invitation it was from the graduate school of education at Harvard university and when I got that invitation I asked my other friends in the states to arrange for more speaking arrangements for me. So I spoke at, in that same trip, I spoke at the University of Chicago, and Georgetown University, and several schools and NGOs and so on to explain to them what was going on and to ask their support in helping us rebuild Egypt. Not financially, but to share.. uhm, expertise on education, on economics, on social development, you know the areas where I can help with.

K: Mmm

S: and since then I've been making a point to do two things: when I travel to speak, I always use the Egyptian revolution as a source of inspiration to draw lessons from it.

K: mm

S: Universal lessons. So I don't just tell the story. I explain lessons in leadership, in equality, in tolerance between religions, in respect for women, in.. and I am teaching children participation and social responsibility. Things like that.

K: mm

S: And I use my experience as an example. So I explain the theory, I.. and then I use the application from the Egyptian revolution which makes it.. you know a novel way of using actual events that happened on the ground to explain universal concepts to people.

K: mm-mm

S: My main focus, as you know, is human development and human behaviour.

K: Yeah.

S: So this was the focus I took with me when I went to Tahrir Square. That was what I was looking for when I went there.

K: mm

S: ahm.. after.. from the end of the 18 days until now there were times when I was physically participating, there were other times when it was confusing, and I didn't know which side to take, so I just did not participate.

K: yeah

S: But in all times I was involved intellectually, and I am involved in shaping public opinion, on social media and in traditional media. I give lectures in universities here in Egypt, and in different venues, NGOs and so on. So I try to explain, you know, good behaviour to people, the changes that we need to adopt in order to improve our country. And I also use my experiences from traveling abroad to show people pictures also from the countries I go to, for example Denmark and Sweden and so on. That they have some solutions to our problems, for example in clean energy, in pollution, in traffic problems, in social security things like that

K: mm

S: So I, when I travel I try to take a couple of days on my own and ask my friends to show me around the organisations that do these things in their countries, and when I come home I do public lectures and do.. you know I do the reverse cycle (laughs)

K: yeah (laughs)

S: Take my experiences from Egypt abroad, and then abroad I learn a few things that I bring back. This is what I have been doing in the last (year?)

K: yeah (laughs). No, but that's very good. And you say that you're using social media to connect with the world, and also that you did that during the actual uprisings?

S: Yes, absolutely. I'm not big on Twitter.

K: No

S: I'm more active on Facebook because I'm a writer so writers find it very difficult to write in only under 140 characters (laughs)

K: Yes (laughs)

S: I need to use pictures and a lot of text and interact with people. You know when I write a comment I want a comment to explain what I mean and add a link to something, this kind of thing. So I like Facebook a lot more, it gives me a lot more flexibility, and I have several pages on Facebook. One of them is for my project 'don't hate – educate'.

K: Yeah

S: Which I started during the cartoons crisis in.. you know when Denmark published some cartoons about Prophet Mohammed in 2006?

K: Yeah

S: Yeah, uhm so I started that project since then and this is also one of the things I talk about when I travel. And I also combine that with experiences from the Egyptian revolution in relation to tolerance between Muslims and Christians, tolerance to women's rights, you know, respectful diversity of different social levels, because we have that a lot in Egypt, we have huge gaps between different social levels.

K: mm-mm

S: So, my experience from educating diversity among different cultures also applies to Egypt because the social gaps we have in society, the sub-cultures are almost like different cultures.

K: mm-mm

S: and we haven't learned to deal with these differences. So I try to do that as well. And I also use social media to teach people to, uhm, solve, uhm, clashes, you maybe saw that on my page that I was just giving a lecture about conflict resolution in social media discussions?

K: Yeah, I saw that.

S: Because now that we are discovering our differences for the first time, now that we have democracy for the first time, and we have political participation for the first time, some people are very good at handling it and learning quickly. And some people are overwhelmed.

K: mm

S: So they become aggressive, or tense or you know. They become too angry (laughs) when they write comments or whatever, so I explain to them how to use social media to gain things, not to lose people, to learn and to exchange information. But not to lose their friends over differences in opinion or difference in religion, or whatever.

K: mm-mm. So through social media people can exchange ideas and discuss things in new forums or..?

S: Yes. And they also… and I also send them simple messages. If you go on my page 'don't hat – educate'. I don't know if you – have you been there?

K: Yes, I've been there once, yes.

S: Yeah, go check out the pictures. What I try to do is attach a visual, uhm you know, message, to a visual picture. In order to get through to the people without too many words. To.. to educate them about a specific concept. For example, that white is not better than black or black better than white. You can say that in so many ways. What I do is I try to find a very catchy picture..

K: mm-mm

S: .. to express that message, and I post a short inspirational message, a few words, on top of it, you know like advertising. And what does is actually start dialogue, even without me

asking people to discuss with each other. Because people react to the picture, they post a comment and then somebody from a completely different country would read the comment and look at the picture and then get a new idea, and then they discuss with each other.

K: mm-mm

S: And this is part of what I do through my project, is you know push the buttons for people, to think, to reflect about the world they live in and about their differences and similarities.

K: These are very nice pictures, I'm just staring at them now (laughs).

S: If you go to the photo section you will see that I have filed everything under different albums, to make it easy for people to browse.

K: oh, good.

S: Yeah, so the albums are actually like the archives, they are albums for the discussions and the debated and there's an album just for inspirational pictures or art pictures related to diversity. And there's an album called 'read and watch'. You'll find that.. under the pictures you'll find longer captions

K: mm-mm

S: Because those are mainly documentaries and movies and pictures that are recommended for people who are more interested in diversity and different communication and more information about Islam and Muslims and these kind of things- so its easier to put them under pictures so that they don't get lost on the page. So that people can go and look like you're looking now, and people can find out what we're talking about.

K: Yeah, that's very interesting.

S: Yeah, that's why I like Facebook so much, because on Twitter things get lost and I can never find them again.

K: Yes, I am also very confused when I am on Twitter. I have an account, but I have never posted anything (laughs)

S: to be honest with you, during the Egyptian revolution Twitter was very important, because it was the media that would, you know, explain things or send information and (news very quickly on the fly?), so during the action Twitter is a lot more convenient than Facebook. And there's a very nice book, it might be good for your thesis- its called 'Tweets from Tahrir'

K: Tweets from Tahrir?

S: Yes, its actually a documents of the most important tweets during the revolution. It tells the story of the revolution through the tweets of the main people who were on the ground at that time. Really interesting book, and very moving. So during the revolution itself, Twitter was a

lot more active and a lot more useful than Facebook. After, when people were sharing impressions and information and pictures and videos I think Facebook was a lot better.

K: Yeah, that makes sense. But the use of social media, uhm, was it because you had to bypass the traditional media in some way?

S: of course. Yeah, of course, because the traditional media, until now, is controlled by somebody. During Mubarak's time it was definitely controlled by the state, even the private media because we have a lot of satellite channels owned privately by businessmen. But at Mubarak's time, these were all pro-Mubarak businessmen. So they still, they try to act, you know, as if they are very free, and that they have their own independent views. I never believed any of that because I worked in the media before so I know, unfortunately how manipulative the media can be, I mean everywhere in the world. The traditional media I mean. So as soon as the revolution started, right before the revolution as well, at the time when people were preparing for the revolution, of course traditional media was useless. They wouldn't carry this new at all. So the way forward was to use social media to rally interest, to post the event for the revolution, to ask people to comment and to joint and to invite their friends, to discuss why people need to go to the streets,

K: mm-mm

S: So of course social media helped greatly in getting the, catching the interest of the right generation. Egypt is mostly young, by the way, the majority of the population, the median age is 24 years.

K: Yes, I read that 60 per cent are…

S: Exactly, and those are the people on social media. At least before the revolution that was the people on social media. Before the revolution I was among the few older people. Mostly people on Facebook were younger in their teens to early twenties and early thirties.

K: mm-mm

S: After the revolution we had a boom in social media participation. Everybody are on social media, my parents are on social media (laughs). Everybody is there. Uhm, yeah my mum is catching me now when I'm running to the kitchen, she's like did you read the latest news, you know the minister of education just said this and that – and she found it on Facebook (laughs).

K: Yeah (laughs)

S: So now the whole, the whole nation at least knows there is such a thing as Facebook, even the undereducated people know that its exists. Even if they don't have profiles, they know that there is such a thing, and they know what it does and what people are doing on the side

and this kind of thing. And this is huge awareness, uhm, in a country where 40 per cent are illiterate.

K: Yeah

S: We have 40 per cent who don't read or write so, uhm. One of the ways to raise awareness, about the revolution, during the revolution, and after the revolution to encourage participation and politics and get people interested to vote, and get people interested to join political parties, was definitely through social media. Much more than traditional media.

K: Would you say that social media was also used to connect with the outside world, outside of Egypt?

S: yes, yes for sure. And interestingly, before the revolution, the young people on social media would connect with other people to chat or to ask them to invite them to visit their countries or whatever, or to make boyfriends and girlfriends, whatever (laughs). Find a wife or some people would.. its very silly, but after the revolution it was the world that wanted to connect with us. And that was really, really interesting. Uhm, it coincided with the time that Facebook had opened the option for subscribers. So you didn't have to accept friendships from people you didn't know, they could just follow you. And so all of our pages, people who were active on Facebook suddenly had a lot of followers from all over the world, cause they wanted to know what was going on in Egypt.

K: Yeah

S: So more than us reaching out to the world, it was actually the other way around as soon as the revolution started. And I'll tell you something funny, after the presidential elections there was a time when there was a few months of quiet and we thought that ok this is it, we are happy and quiet and we are starting to build our country, so.. you can imagine after so many months of being tense and politically active on Facebook and social media and so on. As soon as there is a lull, you know, you people would just start being funny on Facebook, like going back to real life.

K: Yeah

S: talking about their own lives like pets and babies, like you guys do (laughs). Pictures of their food like me Swedish friends always do.

K: Yes (laughs)

S: So we started doing that, and at that time I was going to Sweden very often to talk and so I was sometimes posting pictures from my outings with my Swedish friends or whatever, you know, I was just being funny and relaxed. And then some of my international followers were angry with me, they would send me private messages: you are becoming European like us,

what is this you're posting? This is trash! What is happening in your country, we want to follow what's going on. So come on, I'm a independent person, I'm not a news agency so (laughs).

K: Yeah (laughs). They wanted to you to keep posting, uhm, real information but it was ok for them to post pictures of their food and cats and..?

S: Exactly, it's very funny. So I told them well I'm on vacation right now, and I am abroad and I've been tense for three years – one year before the revolution because I was getting my divorce, and two years of completely, you know continuous (strife?), and now everything is quiet and I have a right to be a normal person (laughs).

K: Yes, defientely (laughs)

S: It's not as if you are paying me to tell you what is going on in Egypt?

K: No.. (laughs)

S: Some people stopped following me when I was posting normal posts (laughs).

K: Really? (laughs)

S: yeah a lot of, especially Americans. A lot of them they just unsubscribed from my page. I was like, ok, fine.

K: They were relying on you for all the information from Egypt then.

S: It's very funny. Yeah, it's so funny. So it tells you how important social media is. In explaining to the world what is really happening on the ground here. Because, for example, one of the things I came across when giving lectures in the states about the Egyptian revolution, is that the media there framed the information as they always do. I mean as the media does everywhere in the world.

K: mm-mm

S: So, uhm, when I showed my videos from Tahrir showing a lot of women and children and so on, people were shocked. They said "women? Were there women in Tahrir?" I said yes, of course I'm one of them – it's not as if I'm a man (laughs). So they said, we never saw that in the media here. They only showed angry men shouting in Arabic, we had no idea what they were saying so it only showed men. And it showed them angry, whereas in my videos you can see people singing and dancing and having fun. It was like a big carnival in Tahrir, by the way, it wasn't, the way it is now is very different from what it was the first 18 days. It was an amazing atmosphere the first 18 days, you can see come videos on my video channel.

K: mm-mm

S: uhm so people were so shocked that their media never showed them the actual mood of the place, that the media never showed women. And when they showed women, they always showed panicky, crying women, someone had died for example or got injured or whatever.

K: mm-mm

S: And then they would video they women who were screaming or crying or shocked, or whatever and showed that this is the women of Egypt. So when I showed the actual feeling of family feeling, of fun and singing and dancing and sketches and awareness campaigns and incredible creativity and artists doing on the spur arts to explain to people what's going on, and lectures and workshops for children and all sorts of really, really creative and amazing things, people were so surprised. They had never seen those things on traditional media and that's another important use of social media because you could put on YouTube and then use the link, put the link on Facebook, post it on Twitter and different other platforms and then people would see the reality.

K: Yeah. Why do you think they framed it that way? Uhm, do you think it was something inherently American or was it..?

S: I'm not sure, but it, I think that every news channel in the world has a policy, a voice, they have their own, they have an opinion or some kind of policy or orientation that they always like to portray.

K: mm-mm

S: So they see, either they see things from that frame, or they pick out certain aspects of each piece of news that would prove their point of view, unfortunately. Very, very few news channels are leaning towards being more objective than biased. But I…

Internet connection lost.

K: I'm so sorry, my Internet fell out again (calling from Skype on my cell phone). I can't put you on speakerphone, so I can't record it. Can I just re-start my computer and then call you write back? Before I lost you, were discussing the media frame - that traditional media tend to be more biased that objective.

S: yes, and that social media gives people the option of making up their own mind, if you are a person who wants to find out the truth, or at least the closets thing to the truth (laughs).

K: Yeah

S: What you do is you can go on YouTube for instance, and look for videos of the same news piece from different news channels and fins out their opinions and make up your own mind. And then you can also go on discussion groups or follow certain important personalities or

activists in the country where the news happen. And find out what they are saying, if they are sharing live videos for example, streaming from the action.

K: mm-mm. You talked about that the Mubarak regime shut down the Internet..?

Internet connection lost.

S: Hey.

K: I'm so sorry!

S: No problem, I understand it's not your fault.

K: Now I'm using a different computer so now it should be fine,

S: I hope so. So yeah, I was just saying that social media has helped empower people to find out the truth on their own. Without any indoctrination, without any interference from traditional media or from the state.

K: Mm. Before you briefly discussed that Mubarak shut down the Internet, during the..

S: Yes, yes he did. On the 28 of January for about a week we were totally off the grid. And then when it came back, not all of us got it because during those days some damage had been done to the phone lines in different areas, uhm, intentionally.

K: Yeah

S: So some of us, including myself, we didn't get our traditional Wi-Fi, but I had a wireless a USB Internet operator from before that, so I was using that during the revolution until I got my Internet back.

K: Did it have an impact on the mobilisation, or anything that was going on off-line?

S: One of the things that I think that is being studied now in many areas, in many places where people are curious about the revolutions and about the use of social media is how social media had affected the, what's going on in real life, on the ground. What happened in Egypt also was something unique, I don't know if it has happened elsewhere which was the other way around. Activists taking what's happening on social media and explaining it, you know the traditional way is that you take what's happening on the ground and then you put it on social media and encourage more people to join you.

K: mm-mm

S: What happened in Egypt was that activists took what's happening on social media and put that in presentations and went to poor areas, and explained to underprivileged people who don't have Internet what the activists are doing on the Internet.

K: mm-mm

S: And that helped raise an incredible amount of awareness about politics and participation and also about the importance of the Internet. So a lot of people are joining social media because of that effort, now.

K: mm-mm. Uhm, when I've been reading articles about what happened, uhm a lot of people are referring to the Egyptian revolution, more than the uprisings in Tunisia for instance, as Twitter revolutions or Facebook revolutions.

S: Yes.

K: And I've been reading a lot of critique, or people are sceptical about these terms.

S: Yes, I am one of them. It isn't a Facebook revolution. Facebook was only a tool, but the reasons for the revolution and the dynamics of the revolution were there before people were, you know, so interested in social media. Egyptians had already started protesting since 2005. Uhm, Facebook started being public, I think, in 2006 or 2007. At least in Egypt no one was on Facebook before 2007. So since the last time, the last national elections with Mubarak people had already started organising protests and going to the streets. That's in 2005. And so, then again in 2008 the April 6th movement had already started on the ground before using social media. And so social media was important in rallying support and gathering a larger number of people, but the actual start, the spark of the revolution had already started many years before.

K: Yeah, so it was more a tool than anything else.

S: It was a tool, at least in my opinion, yes. From what I had experienced it was a good tool of communication, but it wasn't the reason or the only facilitator. The reason why people are talking about Egypt, the Egyptian revolution more than Tunisia and Yemen and different places, uhm is that Egypt is the largest country in the Middle East by number of population. We are nearly 92 million including the Egyptians abroad. Uhm, it's the biggest Muslim country in the Middle East and it's the third biggest Muslim country in the world. And so when you're talking about so much change happening in Egypt you are talking about how much that change is going to impact the world. Because you are talking about how that change will change the Middle East, how it might change the politics and peace processes to Israel, how it might change the relationship with the United States and this part of the world. Many things.

K: mm.mm

S: That only relate to Egypt. Whether or not Tunisia would have had a revolution would not have that same impact on international relations as the change happening in Egypt.

K: mm-mm. Do you think that you were influenced by Tunisia before the 25th of January?

S: Influence is a big word. I think we were inspired. We were already, as I said, the 25th of January had already been selected and people were already working towards it, since the September before, since September 2010. Uhm, and so Tunisia was a very strong reminder that it can be done. So yes, it was a very good motivation, uhm, and it was an inspiration but it wasn't the reason why we went to the streets.

K: mm-mm. when you wrote things on Facebook and tried to connect with the outside world, were there anyone in particular you were targeting, was there media or were there NGOs that you wanted to reach?

S: Mainly I already had my contacts since I'm already a writer and a regularly wrote for a lot of newspapers and magazines and online sites and whatever. I already was in contact with a lot of different types of journalists who had contacted me as soon as the action started. So those people I was already writing for and as well as my friends all over the world who were curious and wanted to understand what was happening and they were taking the info from me and sending it forward to different places, to NGOs, to journalists, to their own friends whatever. So I wasn't targeting, beyond the journalists I wasn't anybody in particular. I was just trying to document what was going on and be a voice of, you know, reason and trying to objective and explain what was going on.

K: mm-mm. And then I have, I think this is my last question, we're a bit over time here.

S: Don't worry.

K: Uhm, do you think that media technologies and then maybe more new media technologies like social media is important for political participation in todays society?

S: I think so yes, because in Egypt, for example, if we didn't have a tool like Facebook I don't think that this many people would have known the amount of incredible amount of information that they have been able to learn in such a short time. As I said we have never participated politically for the last 60 years. Not only Mubarak's time, by the way, we've been since, since Nasser's time we didn't have a real democracy in any way. Maybe it was just cosmetic, but the actual participation of people in politics was minimal. And it was, the culture was like if you wanted to participate in politics it's dangerous for you. So people weren't even interested. But social media had helped break that barrier, and it had helped, uhm, educate people very quickly. If you put information in a short animated video, and that's what some of the activists have been doing, since the revolution to educate people about the different types of parliament for example. And which one is more suitable for the Egyptian state. Before, people can go to vote for, in the parliamentary elections. I don't think there was

any other way you could have educated so many people about such a critical, but also difficult topic.

K: mm-mm.

S: So, it was, I think, it was (..?) really, really fundamental in trying, in educating people about politics, and encouraging them to participate. And influencing more people to get interested in politics and to take seriously political parties, which we actually have, for the first time. And people as young as university students, uhm, were already not only joining political parties, some of them have actually formed their own new organisations. Political organisations. Something we would never have thought about two years ago. Uhm, so without social media I think this would never have happened at the same pace at all.

K: This is very interesting and I appreciate, I'm very happy that you took the time to talk to me.

K: Thank you, no problem, good luck with your thesis.

K: Thank you. This is basically what I'm trying to, I'm not submitting for another month so I hope that I have an epiphany before that time, but I'm hoping to prove some of the things that we have talked about. That it's a tool, but a very useful tool, and the young, uhm the fact that so many Egyptians are that young is, was one of the reasons why it was utilised to the extent that it was, and...

S: Yeah, one of the books that you might want to look at is 'Revolution2.0'. Have you seen that?

K: No, I haven't.

S: This is actually one of the most important books that have been written because (…?) has started the group that has caused for the going out on the streets on the 25th of January so you want to read what he said. Because he explains how he used Facebook undercover, without explaining who he is, fearing state security. And how he was able to convince people to start going to the streets on the 25th, so this is very basic, you really have to see that. It will give you a very good idea on how the revolution started and how it was manipulated, how the information was given on social media, and how the state was trying to manipulate the people also using social media, which is another very important dimension. And how the state used social media to capture the activists.

K: mm-mm, to find them?

S: Yeah, to catch them, to detain them, to put them in prison. When they went to prison during the revolution in state security, and so this is also an important dimension, which is that you get a tool for freedom ad for speaking your mind, but you also expose yourself to the

authorities. They can find you a lot easier (laughs). So in a totalitarian state, it becomes a dangerous tool as well.

K: Is it true that President Mursi is now using social media himself to communicate his views and politics to the people?

S: Yes, most of the politicians are now using social media. Right after the 18 days, the SCAF, the military were using text messages, SMS and social media, Twitter accounts and Facebook pages to communicate with the nation for the first time. That was really interesting, and at that same time, as soon as we had a prime minister, he too started a page and then from onwards all the formal government bodies and government personalities and politicians of all different, uhm, currents, all of them have official Facebook pages, all of them have Twitter accounts, all of them communicate personally with the people which is a trend that we have never witnessed before. And that's another important use of social media.

K: mm-.mm. Just last question, if you have time, more personal what do you think about Egypt now, are you happy with the situation as it is today?

S: No. Very unhappy. Uhm, its confusing and its not what we have been fighting for and many politicians have hijacked the revolution in my opinion. But I think that people are aware and that's what makes me happy. That the people are not tricked out of it. They haven't accepted the status quo. But no, I'm not happy at all and I do want to see a change. We don't have, uhm , representation of all the political currents in the government. The government is very weak. Mursi's way of taking decisions is not as strong, as assertive, as revolutionary as it should have been. Its allowing Mubarak's men to continue to be in their positions. So this, a lot of things needs to be corrected.

K: Thank you so much, Sahar.

S: You're welcome, no problem, I hope I was useful for you.

K: Yes, you were very useful and its very interesting to talk to you.

Attachment 4: Coding and main themes – Sahar El-Nadi

Code	Theme
Activist	It was experienced as dangerous to get into politics (especially oppositional politics), so there was limited political activity, limited political interest, limited political awareness and limited political literacy prior to the first protests (January 25th). There was never a real democracy in Egypt. People had not participated for 60 years. Wanted to be a part of the protests, a need to physically participate, important to participate and demonstrate resistance against the state.
Opposition politics	
On the side of the current government	
Political interest	
The state versus opposition	
Political participation	
Action	
Democracy	
Political interest	
Low political activity	
Fear	
Understand	
Physical participation	
Intellectual participation	
Mobilisation	1. New media enabled rapid communication and information exchange on the ground. 2. Social media was used to educate people about key political issues, which increased political literacy. 3. Digital divide (poor and underprivileged people lack access to computers) 4. Shaping public opinion and encouraging dialogue and debate 5. New media for news dissemination, allowed people to find the truth for themselves 6. Rally interest, encourage participation (mobilisation) 7. A tool for freedom and speaking your mind
Communication	
Reporting	
Participate	
Explaining	
Facebook	
Public opinion	
A voice of reason	
Facebook versus Twitter	
Interact	
Educate	
Dialogue	
Share information	
Social media	
Empower	
Connect	1. Social media was actively used to maintain contact with international actors outside of Egypt, external actors and international community requested information from activists about what was going on on the ground 2. Draw universal lessons from the Egyptian revolution to learn about: leadership, equality, respect, tolerance, participation, social responsibility. Using experiences from Tahrir to draw lessons and share experiences and information with international community.
Share information	
Connect with the world	
Explain to external actors	
Learn from the revolution	
Drawing on own experiences	
Exchange information	
International community	
Document	
"Not a news agency"	
Not paid to provide information	
Explain	
The "protest generation"	1. The majority of the Egyptian population are young (average age is 24), and "these are the people on Facebook".
The "right" generation	

	2. Young generation were the people using social media, and so to mobilise through these platforms, the "right" people were targeted
Traditional media	The local media were not honest about the events that were going on during the protests (at that time) and could not be trusted to report the reality of what was going on. Traditional media showed a birds-eye perspective of the events and not the individual people. Online media as a faster news platform. All traditional media was controlled by the state during Mubarak, even private media. Traditional media is very manipulative all over the world. Traditional media was useless as a tool for information during the protests as they didn't even carry the news of the protests. Hysterical women and angry men screaming in Arabic was how the protests were portrayed in traditional media. Why was it framed this way?
International media	
Online media	
Media frame	
International traditional media	
Documenting	Document what was happening through visual aids
Pictures and videos	
Resistance	The state (authorities) attempted to control the information flow by "turning off" the Internet. Protests met with physical resistance. Attempt by the state to control the information by sabotaging communication technologies. The state using the same tools as the activists to find them and imprison them. Using social media to manipulate the people. Through social media you expose yourself to the state.
Disconnect	
Power	
State security	
Dangerous tool	
Socioeconomic context	There are huge differences between social levels in Egypt. 40 per cent of the Egyptian people are illiterate. The underlying causes behind the protests were there long before, and independent of the social media boom
April 6th movement	
Media literacy	Because of the 'newness' of social media, not everyone are familiar with it. It became important to teach people how to use social media. Pictures and videos used as a way to educate. Now everyone knows there is such a thing as social media and what it can do
Visual education	
Social media and politics	Social media to encourage people to get involved and participate in politics (vote, information about political parties). Social media was used to educate people about key political issues.
Political literacy	
Educate	
Short animated films	
Political interest	
Trad. Media versus new media	Social media offers a range of different

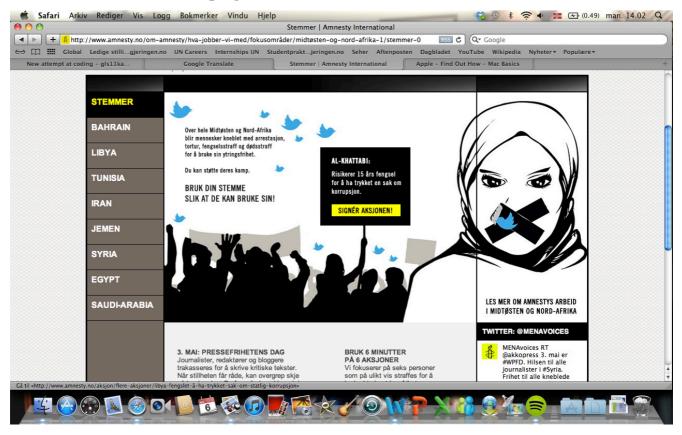| Different platforms	perspectives as well as many different channels. This enables people to find the truth for themselves. Social media offers numerous perspectives on the same event, activity or information. Without interference from the state or traditional media.
Independent media	
Online/offline	A growing interest in the relationship between social media (online) and revolution (offline). People taking what was happening online and explaining it offline. By demonstrating the potential of online activities, people were encouraged to participate
Political awareness	
Importance of the Internet	
"Facebook revolution"	The actual efforts were in the streets. Facebook was not the only tool nor the only facilitator.
Several tools	
Domino effect	Changes in Egypt are likely to have an impact on the whole region, and the world. Drew inspiration from the events in Tunisia. Showed that it was possible.
Tunisia	
"New politics"	Now all politicians have official social networking pages and are communicating personally with the public. New trend where the boundaries between traditional politics and new politics are blurred. People are aware
Changing politics	
Greater awareness	

Themes:
- Dangerous to get into politics, especially opposition politics in Egypt, therefore not a lot of people have been involved in political activities, even though they are interested in the well-being of their country. This has led to a low interest in politics as well as a low political literacy. "As you know it was dangerous to get into politics, especially opposition politics" (el-Nadi, 2013).
- Social media rallied support for the revolution. By spreading information and awareness about what was going on on the ground, people were encouraged to take action and participate.
- The "protest generation" was young – these are the people that use social media. The majority of the Egyptian population are young, the average age is 24. Prior to the revolution these were the people using social media sites.
- The protests were met with force by the authorities, resistance from the government, both physical confrontations and by attempting to cut of information at its source (Internet). This lead to a great personal risk by everyone involved. Furthermore, social media was used by the authorities to capture the protesters, thus making it a dangerous tool.
- Social media facilitated contact with international actors. The outside world wanted to know what was going on, international community desperate for information from the activists, people expected continuous updates and people relied on activists to take over the role of traditional media.
- Using social media to document and report on what was really going on (text and image).

- Traditional media did not cover the events, controlled by the state, manipulative, biased framing of information, bird's eye perspective – not individuals (angry men screaming in Arabic and hysterical women).
- Using visual aids to document what was going on (videos, photographs and animated films).
- Facilitates discussions and dialogue on social media
- Encourage political participation (political literacy) on social media (media literacy). A need to educate people on both the use and potential of the Internet and social media, as well as key political concepts. Social media broke down the barriers between traditional politics and alternative politics (maximalist participation).
- Huge social differences between social classes in Egypt, a large group of people are illiterate.
- Increase in participation on social media after the revolution (social media participation boom) Now "everyone" is on Facebook.
- Huge awareness of what social media can do. Activists educated people about what was going on, on the Internet and the importance of the Internet (media literacy). Particularly underprivileged people without access to the Internet.
- Not a Facebook revolution. It was merely a communication tool. The events and protests happened in the streets.
- The spark of the revolution was ignited many years before people became active on social media (April 6th movement, earlier protest, had not participated politically for 60 years).
- Great interest in the Egyptian revolution because it will have an impact on the entire world.
- Inspiration from Tunisia – showed that it could be done.
- The state used social media for own purposes. Social media now an important part of officials personal communication with the people. The politicians and political elites have hijacked the revolution and corrupted social media as a tool for freedom of expression (power).

Main themes:

1. Prior to the revolution it was dangerous to get into politics, especially oppositional politics. This caused low political interest and engagement. Alternative political activities enabled greater political engagement.
2. State resistance and security: The government is now using new media technologies for surveillance and to locate and capture activists. Further, they have recognised its political value and official media sites are now a part of politicians' official communication.
3. Social media was used for different purposes: Information, communication, education and mobilisation. Increased political awareness through social media (political literacy as well as media literacy)
4. Traditional media versus new media: Mainstream media seen as biased towards the regime and not objective. New media facilitated a range of voices, enabling people to find the truth for themselves.
5. Contact with external actors (NGOs) information, communication. Inspiration from Tunisia, great interest from the rest of the world.
6. Socioeconomic context – the spark for the revolution was present many years before. New media represents a tool but cannot be argued to have caused the revolution.

Attachment 5: MENA campaign online

Amnesty International Norway's website with focus on the MENA campaign.

Attachment 6: In solidarity

A picture from a solidarity MENA campaign with the slogan: "Use your voice so they can use theirs".