MAGHRABI, ROZAN OMAR, Ph.D. Online Social Systems, Social Actions, and Politics: A Narrative Analysis of the Role of Social Media in Revolutionary Political Change. (2017)
Directed by Dr. A. F. Salam. 265 pp.

One of the demonstrators during the 2011 Egyptian revolution tweeted "We use Facebook to schedule the protests, Twitter to coordinate, and YouTube to tell the world," thus acknowledging and establishing the fundamental role of social media in the political unrest and revolution against the regime in Egypt. Information Systems (IS) have been recognized as an important vehicle for national progress, social movement and political change (Majchrzak et al., 2013; Oh et. al., 2015; Oh et al., 2013). Contemporary social and political changes highlight new forms of social movement that are taking place using Information and Communications Technology or Information Systems, specifically social media. While social and political scientists as well as information systems researchers have studied social movements for a number of years, the majority of these studies has explored the role of ICT on activism and social movements in the Western world. Yet, the political implications of these technologies in the context of authoritarian and repressive political systems remain relatively under-researched and need further development (Breuer et al., 2012). In addition, studies in the IS discipline addressing the role of information systems in general, and social media in particular, in the context of revolutionary political change as has happened in the Case of 2011 Egyptian revolution are limited (Greengard, 2009; Maghrabi & Salam, 2013; Majchrzak et al., 2013; Oh et al., 2015; Oh et al., 2013; Wattal et al., 2010). Majchrzak et al. (2013) states that "the time

has come to assess the evidence about ICT's social consequences and to develop better theories about the precise nature of the role of ICT in complex social problems" (p.1).

Using narrative research approach, we explore the relationship among social media, social movement, and rapid revolutionary political change by focusing on the role played by social media, particularly Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, in the context of the 2011 Egyptian revolution that led to the fall of authoritarian Mubarak regime. More specifically, our narrative research aims to understand and generate a theoretical explanation of the process by which social media influences online activism and shapes social movement collective interpretation for revolutionary political change. Narrative analysis is used to examine how social media offers a platform that facilitates social movement process to develop and affect social actions in the context of rapid revolutionary political change. Through the perspective of our study, we highlight the unique characteristics of social media that are driven, not by technology in isolation, but by the bond between technological attributes and characteristics of the social systems. The process and narrative approach offer a sophisticated, multi-dimensional, and holistic analysis that avoid a narrow focus on individual dimensions of the phenomenon.

The findings of our study provide a narrative that offers a meaningful explanation of the process in which citizen social movements evolve through social media. Our narrative analysis of citizen social movement process revealed five distinct phases preceding the political change. These phases highlight the unique nature and activities of each stage of the social movement development, and the different roles played by social media throughout social movement process. Further, the emphasis on temporality, which

is a key characteristic of narrative methods, revealed different important aspects of social media role in rapid revolutionary political change.

Exploring the impact of social media in particular, and ICT in general, on social and rapid political change is an important area for research in information systems due to the emerging role of IS in politics across the globe, and the importance of political environment to business and economies. In this broader sense, this study of social media contributes to IS discipline by expounding on the role of social media in revolutionary social movement and its influence on, and being influenced by, the larger political context. One of the larger contribution of this research is to lay the foundation for IS scholars to further investigate the larger role of Information Systems and Technologies in our social and political systems both for the benefit of business organizations as well as for the larger society.

ONLINE SOCIAL SYSTEMS, SOCIAL ACTIONS, AND POLITICS:

A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

IN REVOLUTIONARY POLITICAL CHANGE

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of The Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Greensboro
2017

Approved by

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I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Samia, and my father, Omar, for their infinite love, encouragement, and prayers. I thank them for giving me determination and teaching me the value of education and hard work.
It is their shining example that I try to emulate in all that I do.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my life partner and husband, Bandar. His patience and support were integral part of completing this dissertation.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation written by Rozan Omar Maghrabi has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

me to keep reaching for excellence. To my sister-in-law, Rawiyah, and brother-in-law, Abdulmonem, for their invaluable support and prayers. To my nephews, Yazeed, Omar, Yazan, and Yousef, for bringing me so much happiness. I am grateful and blessed to be part of my family. All of you contributed to my educational and personal growth. My love for you all is immeasurable.

I must acknowledge as well the many friends, colleagues, and teachers – all the people who have helped me throughout the challenges of graduate school. All of you had an important role in making this dissertation process a success.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> The power of social media … transforming the political process in such a way that I can't see any chances for the traditional, formal institutions of our democratic systems to keep up with.
> President of Iceland, Mr. Grimsson, during his interview with CNN

Social media has become an important vehicle in politics. Social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, played a substantial role during the protest events that cascaded across North Africa and the Middle East, leading to changes in the political landscape in countries, such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, and to a lesser extent Morocco, Jordan, and Iran. This phenomena highlights the significant role of Information Systems (IS) in influencing social movement and political change as well as citizen's political behavior. The social and political movements that occurred in the context of North Africa and the Middle East, represent for the first time citizens emerging as new political actors, peacefully challenging the authoritarian regime and shaking the foundation of deeply entrenched repressive rule. The political end-game in these countries may not yet be determined, but the role played by social media in many of the social movements for revolutionary political change is undeniable. This chapter presents an overview of the chapters in this dissertation, motivations for the research, gaps in the extant research in the context of this dissertation, and the research question.

1.1. Overview of Dissertation

On February 11, 2011, the 30-year rule of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak abruptly ended after only 18 days of non-stop demonstration protests by a network of young Egyptians with little experience in open political discourse or social movement organization. Using social networking sites, these young Egyptians were able to instigate protests against the ruling regime and succeeded in mobilizing a movement to demand political and economic reforms. This revolution, which inspired a wave of political protests in the region, was known as the "The Arab Spring" (Bellin, 2012), but it has also been given other names: Revolution of Citizen Media, Social Media Revolution, Facebook Revolution, Twitter Revolution, and Revolution 2.0 (Cottle, 2011; Mansour 2012). The tendency to characterize the 2011 Egyptian Revolution in terms of social media underscores the central role of social media in the historic social movement and revolutionary political change in Egypt. The event of the political change and fall of Mubarak as a result of the 2011 Egyptian revolution has become the current example that signified the importance of social media in the context of rapid revolutionary political change acted as a mobilization and organizing vehicle, especially in the context of a brutal and oppressive regime, for those engaged in social and political movements. This revolution was one of the rare revolutionary political changes that occurred in a very short period of time. Social media has amplified and expedited the process of revolt and rapid revolutionary political change. Therefore, a central question that emerged as a result of this historical event is: *What role did social media play in the 2011 Egyptian revolution?*

Without social media, the historic event of the 2011 Egyptian revolution could not

have occurred in a country like Egypt, due to the government's direct forms of

censorship, control of mainstream media outlets, and repression of political participation

and assembly. As stated by Wael Ghonim, an activist who became one of leaders of the

2011 Egyptian revolution, "Without Facebook, without Twitter, without Google, without

YouTube, this [revolution] would have never happened." He added "If there was no

social networks this would never have been sparked" (AFP, 2011). However, the fact that

social media was a key part of revolutionary social movements does not necessarily mean

that people just used technology-enabled tools to coordinate demonstrations. That

perspective is too simplistic and misses the point in which social media generated the

conditions and shaped the environment within its context that inspired and drove the

process by which political change occurred. For instance, social media fostered social

interaction among people and supported the emergence of collective behavior. The

connection through social media sites allowed for widespread and immediate

communication among activists and participants. As an illustration, during the 2009

Iranian revolution – also known as the green revolution - social media sites were used to

gain more news coverage and increase the international attention to the Iranians' struggle

with their regime (Esfandiari, 2010). Social media also has allowed freedom of speech to

thrive and enabled political engagement, especially in countries suffering under

dictatorships. Social networking sites can serve as a platform for people to express

themselves to each other and the world. For example, activists in many Arab countries

have used social media to overcome their government's censorship by expressing their

opposing views and disseminating videos, pictures, articles, and news in order to show the truth of their side of the story (Giroux, 2009). Accordingly, social media's role should not be viewed in terms of its instrumental factors but rather in terms of its impact on its own social context (Castells, 2007). In this broader sense, this study of social media aims to contribute to the information systems (IS) discipline by expounding on the role of social media in revolutionary social movement and its influence on, and being influenced by, the larger political context. The manifested nature of the 2011 Egyptian revolution highlighted this special dynamic and complex interaction between technological and social factors. Therefore, the purpose of the dissertation is to explore this relationship between social media, social movement, and rapid political change using the case of the 2011 Egyptian revolution.

Social media, according to Howard and Parks (2012), is defined in three different parts, "consisting of (a) the information infrastructure and tools used to produce and distribute content; (b) the content that takes the digital form of personal messages, news, ideas, and cultural products; and (c) the people, organizations, and industries that produce and consume the digital content" (p. 362). This definition highlights several primary dimensions of social media: the platforms and tools used by the people to produce and distribute the digital content, the way the content is presented, and the people who make and use the digital content. Therefore, we believe that adopting this definition can help to determine how social media was involved in the 2011 Egyptian revolution. While the Egyptian revolution represents an example of political change in only one country and a particular type of political system, the historic outcome of the 2011 revolution makes it a

unique and interesting case for examining the role of social media in revolutionary political change.

The revolution was an initial event in the politicization of social media on a massive scale to mobilize and organize a major social movement and revolutionary change. The fundamental shift of power and the change in the political system that occurred in Egypt as a result of the 2011 revolution had taken place in a short period of time. After only 18 days, the 2011 revolution created a national political change and brought down the regime after more than 30 years on one-man rule. The outcome of the Egyptian revolution suggests that social media has an important effect on authoritarian political contexts. Social media may not be causing the revolution, but this rapid change, which did not occur in other contexts, was facilitated by social media through its impact on the social movement leading to the political change that occurred in 2011. This means the 2011 events in Egypt cannot be analytically understood apart from the role of social media. Hence, in this study, the 2011 Egyptian revolution is defined as "the conditions and activities that led to and defined the anti-government protests that occurred between January 25 and February 11, 2011, leading to the resignation of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak" (Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011, p. 1209). Defining the revolution this way allows us to draw on the contextual factors and the ways in which social media was utilized to influence social movements. Accordingly, the goal of this research is to understand the context of IS and generate a theoretical explanation of the process by which IS motivates and supports social movements for rapid political change.

A social movement, generally, can be described as a deliberate, voluntary effort to organize a population to act in concert to achieve enough group influence for the purpose of making positive changes in the larger socio-political context (Gamson, 1975; Tarrow, 1998). Theories, however, indicate that social movements are not simply a function of motivations to solve social problems, they are also collective actions that depend on actors' mutual interpretations of situations (McAdam, 1982; Tilly, 1978). This aspect of social movements highlights the cognitive dimension of collective actions. In other words, social movement participants share a stable cognitive structure that reflects a shared definition of their situation, motivates them to solve the same problems, and enables them to act collectively to achieve a mutual goal. This collective cognitive structure activates the members' relationships so as to give sense to their 'being together.' The cognitive aspect of the movement also calls attention to the active creation of meaning through the process of interpretation. Alternatively, a social movement's group, who are suffering common conditions of life and attempting to solve shared problems, construct their social reality by engaging in cognitive processes that form the basis for their collective action leading to political change. This dissertation focuses on the cognitive aspect – meaning construction - of the social movement (as reflected in social media messages and interactions), and examines social media's role in the social movement process and the collective interpretation leading to the collective action directed towards achieving political change. Accordingly, in this research, we view social movements as dynamic, multi-dimensional processes through which meanings and actions are constituted in which social and political changes emerge as a result of the

interactions between people and technology within a particular social context. Social media is an effective platform for generating collective cognitive structure and transforming shared motivations into collective action. We believe this definition of social movement helps to uncover the mechanisms through which social media influences the process, shapes social movement, and motivates political change. Our research examines how the development of social movement process is reflected in the information sharing practices and in the cognitive progression of social media users engaged in communication about the 2011 Egyptian revolution. Particularly, this dissertation focuses on the interaction of these users and the ways in which the experiences enabled by social media contributed to one of the most popular uprisings in the Middle East, leading to revolutionary political change in a short period of time.

This dissertation is organized into seven chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the topic of the dissertation and presents the importance of the research in the context of social movements for revolutionary political change within the field of IS. Chapter 1 also provides the motivation for the research, briefly describes the research gap, states the research question, and discusses the study that characterizes this dissertation.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature on topics discussed in the study, also establishing the conceptual underpinnings for the research. This includes an overview of the main social movement perspectives, including an explanation of resource mobilization, political process, frame analysis, and new social movement theory, and their relevance to the study. Chapter 2 also includes a discussion of different perceptions of the effect of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) on social

movements and ICT's different roles to support social movements. Finally, this chapter explores studies about social media and their use before and during the 2011 Egyptian revolution, until Mubarak's resignation.

Chapter 3 presents the research methodology. To address the complexity of the research question, narrative analysis is adopted as the research methodology in the study of this dissertation. This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology, approach, strategy and design that are employed in this dissertation. This includes a justification of the qualitative approach to examine the role of social media in political change, an explanation of the use of the narrative paradigm and narrative analysis approaches to analyze the data, and an outline of other methodological components of this dissertation.

Chapter 4 presents a background of the research case study. Specifically, it provides a discussion of the sociopolitical context of Egypt and the media context leading to the unrest events. Additionally, this chapter provides information about activism in Egypt and the use of ICT, including social media and an overview of the 2011 Egyptian revolution.

Chapter 5 highlights the study focus and the data collection and analysis process using dialogical/performance analysis design to investigate the role of social media in information provision and representation, civic engagement and political participation, social movement structure and campaign formation, community formation and political mobilization, collective action coordination and participation, and resulting impacts on national political change.

Chapter 6 discusses research findings through the presentation of our narrative. This narrative highlights the influence of social media on social movement cognitive progression for revolutionary political change. Additionally, the structural units of the story as well as sample social media textual messages are presented and explained as a part of the research findings presentation.

Chapter 7 summarizes the results of our analysis and presents the graphical depiction of the narrative analysis-based model of the influence of social media on citizens' social movement process for revolutionary political change. Additionally, this chapter provides a discussion of our results in the milieu of relevant literature and theory. Finally, this chapter presents the limitations and possibilities for future research.

1.2. Research Motivation

The literature of social movement, which is spread across a number of disciplines, has highlighted the capability of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) to facilitate and support social movement for political change (Lievrouw, 2006; McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Porta & Diani, 1999; Russell, 2011; Tarrow, 1998). Several studies that investigate the role of ICT on social movements apply traditional social movement theories, such as resource mobilization, political process, and frame analysis theories. These theories provide useful frameworks to study the influence of ICT in general, and social media in particular, on social movement for political change. While traditional social movement theories are informative, frameworks that address technology-influenced social movement are sometimes unclear in terms of their contribution to collective cognitive development, especially in the context of revolutionary political

change that occurs in a short period of time, as has happened in the case of the 2011 Egyptian revolution.

Although there have been many interesting studies examining ICT roles in social movements, research in this area is still in the early stages of development. While these studies have focused attention on ICT use in social movements, few studies have investigated the impact of these technologies, in particular social media, on social movements for revolutionary political change. Lynch (2011) highlights that the use of social media is a new aspect that the literature did not cover, and research needs to reconsider the use of new technology in activism and political change. Also, there are a limited number of studies in IS discipline addressing the role of information systems in general, and social media in particular, in the contexts of national progress, social transformation, and political change (Greengard, 2009; Maghrabi & Salam, 2013; Majchrzak et al., 2013; Oh et al., 2015; Oh et al., 2013; Wattal et al., 2010).

The Arab Spring has attracted attention on the impact of social media in social movements and revolutionary political change. In addition, the 2011 Egyptian revolution has inspired a scholarly discussion of the larger role of IS in social and political change (Attia et al., 2011; Maghrabi & Salam, 2013; Majchrzak et al., 2013; Oh et al., 2015). The influential role played by social media in magnifying the challengers' ability to mobilize and organize collective action and in expediting the revolution process forms an important discussion among those who study political protest. Many believe that without social media, the 2011 Egyptian revolution may not have happened, or at least not so quickly (Chorev, 2011; Howaed, 2011; Khoury, 2011; Morozov, 2011; Shirky, 2011;

Tapscott, 2011). This discussion of social media's role in social movement and political change has grown in the context of the dramatic events that have come to be known as the "Arab Spring" (Wolfsfeld et al., 2013). However, many of these studies focus on aspects of a larger system. On one side, researchers answer the question of social media's impact on the 2011 Egyptian revolution by listing the features associated with the technological aspects of social media (Chebib & Sohail, 2011). On the other side, researchers examine the use of social media in Egypt during the protests and emphasize the significant role of youth (Ghannam, 2011; Kavanaugh et al., 2012). According to this perspective, the impact of social media is viewed in terms of citizen engagement in the political process (Ghannam, 2011). In sum, research that studies the impact of social media on social movement and political change highlights either the technical or the social aspect of the movement.

Recently, there have been calls for research to examine the role of information systems in the context of social and political change, and their impact on promoting citizen participation and democratization by enabling new discourse and increasing discussion (Majchrzak et al., 2013). Majchrzak et al. (2013) states that "the time has come to assess the evidence about ICT's social consequences and to develop better theories about the precise nature of the role of ICT in complex social problems" (p.1). Scholars emphasize that IS research should not focus primarily on the features of ICT but rather on the uses of ICT that those features support (Majchrzak & Markus, 2013). Also, when studying the influence of IS, the social context of use should be considered

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(Majchrzak et al., 2013; Markus et al., 2002). Researchers in IS are encouraged to expand their focus beyond a simple two-party system to include aspects of the social system.

As the use of social media in various social movements will continue to grow, research needs to shed light on the processes that these movements undergo. In this sense, more empirical studies that explore the emerging use of social media to support movement process are needed. Traditional social movement theories were developed prior to the recent movements. Thus, there is a need for a better framework that conceptualizes the interactions between people and technology in context. Motivated by the popular and growing role of social media in politics and the perceived success of social movement and political change in Egypt, this dissertation explores the relationship among social media, social movement, and political change. More specifically, our study aims to generate a theory that helps to understand the events as they happen. With this focus in mind, the goal of this dissertation is to explain social media's role in the context of an authoritarian country through the case of Egypt, and social media's impact on the social movement process that influenced and shaped the revolutionary political change that occurred as a result of the 2011 Cairo revolts.

1.3.   Research Gap

Information Systems has been recognized as an important vehicle for national progress and political change (Majchrzak et al., 2013; Oh et al., 2015; Oh et al., 2013). Recently, social media has been recognized for its impact on a number of social movements for revolutionary political change across the globe (Attia et al., 2011; Maghrabi & Salam, 2013; Majchrzak et al., 2013; Oh et al., 2015). The Egyptian

revolution, one of the most prominent social and revolutionary political movements of this decade, is remarkable to the extent that social media played a central role in the development of the events and the organization of the participants' activities leading to the political change that occurred in 2011. Unfortunately, much of the research on the impact of IS in the Middle East has been somewhat anecdotal (Faris, 2010).

Social and political scientists have widely studied social movements for a number of years, yet the majority of these studies has explored the role of ICT on activism and social movements in the Western world. Few studies have investigated the impact of ICT on social movement in the Middle East, a region that is often regarded as somehow exceptional in terms of the social and political contexts. Consequently, the political implications of ICTs in the context of authoritarian political systems remain relatively under-researched (Breuer et al., 2012). Lynch (2011) highlighted that much "political science literature focused on the durability of the authoritarian Middle Eastern state" (p. 301). Yet, the new social and political changes in the Middle East, such as the one that occurred in Egypt, contradict what research indicates about the Arab countries. Social media revealed a new shift in technology that was not anticipated or addressed in the literature (Lynch, 2011). Therefore, research needs to reexamine the usage and impact of this new form of technology on politics (Lynch, 2011).

The role of social media in supporting the activities of social movements has only recently started to be investigated. Historically, technology has constructively influenced social movements. For instance, with the printing press, activists during the European social movements were able to widely distribute their political ideas and coordinate their

efforts (Tarrow, 1998). More recently, telephones and e-emails have been used to disseminate information and mobilize the public (McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Porta & Diani, 1999). Similarly, social media has had a major impact on numerous contemporary social movements. The influential possibilities offered and the substantial opportunities made available through social media have enabled and influenced new forms of social movement. For instance, while participation in social movements was previously limited to so-called activists, now ordinary individuals who may not consider themselves political actors are engaging in civic debates and participating in social and political reforms through social media. Social media has altered the political process by facilitating the conditions that promote the generation of political (inter)action among citizens and by providing a wider potential for participation and social action. This study focuses on the role played by social media, particularly Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, in these new forms of social movement leading to revolutionary political change.

Political issues have started to migrate toward the Internet (Howard, 2010; Morozov, 2011; Wattal et al., 2010). The "Arab Spring" and later events in other parts of the world have demonstrated a change in politics similar to the change that happened in traditional business models with the transformation toward e-business due to the increased application of advanced information and communication technologies. The role of social media in the 2011 Egyptian social movement has highlighted IS impact in the context of revolutionary political change. Like the story of the fall of Suharto in Indonesia that reflected the impact of creative use of cell phones by activists, and the story of the Zapatistas' social movement that reflected the use of ICT to raise awareness,

build advocates in other nations, and create public pressure to change policy (Bradley, 2005; Gelsomino, 2010), the story of the fall of Mubarak in Egypt is the example that highlights the impact of social media on social and political mobilization for revolutionary political change. For instance, the demonstrators during the 2011 Cairo revolts have acknowledged the fundamental role of social media in the political unrest. One of the protesters during the days of revolution tweeted "we use Facebook to schedule the protests, Twitter to coordinate, and YouTube to tell the world." Accordingly, this area is important for research in IS and related fields due to the emerging role of ICT in the context of revolutionary political change.

Contemporary social and political changes highlight new forms of social movement that take place on or use ICT, specifically social media, to facilitate and enable their processes. This new phenomenon has started to attract considerable research interest and gain practical importance, and at the same time has been highlighting the significance of IS as a medium for political change (Danin, 2011; Howard, 2011). However, studies in the IS discipline addressing the role of information systems in general, and social media in particular, in these political contexts are limited (Greengard, 2009; Maghrabi & Salam, 2013; Majchrzak et al., 2013; Oh et al., 2015; Oh et al., 2013; Wattal et al., 2010). For instance, Wattal et al. (2010) have examined the impact of the Internet on political campaigns. Similarly, Greengard (2009) discussed the role of social media in the 2008 U.S. presidential election, in which social media sites were used to encourage social participation and create an active community of many who contributed to Barack Obama's campaigns in several ways. However, the impact of the Internet on larger social

and political systems that lead to revolutionary political change has not been addressed. Consequently, there is a need for research to understand the social consequences of e-politics (Wattal et al., 2010). In a recent special issue of MIS Quarterly, ICT has been recognized as an important catalyst for social and political transformation (Majchrzak et al., 2013). However, little is known about how political changes occur over time. There is some research about factors influencing political change, such as political opportunity, resource availability, organization capacity, and framing ability, but little about social media's role in social movement as a process that is driven by the collective cognitive development of the users and facilitates collective interpretation and action toward political change, which is viewed as a dependent outcome of this process.

Traditionally, researchers have viewed social movements as entailing specific organizational activities or actions (Tarrow, 1998). Within the literature of social and political change, there has been some research that viewed these activities as stages that facilitate the process of change. Although many social movement studies have elaborated upon the observable behaviors and actions of activists connected with these movements, few have tried to identify and understand the cognitive mechanisms and interpretations associated with them. The stages of social movement for revolutionary political change entitle more than the sequent activities of the movement. Moreover, while researchers have pointed out the cognition shift, no one revealed a pattern associated with the social movement process. Our study suggests a number of cognitive mechanisms and a substantial amount of social interpretation accompanied the process of social movement for revolutionary political change. Our analysis indicates that a social movement's

participants undergo a process that alters their cognitive structure and permits the generation of a collective interpretation. This collective interpretation facilitates the group's collective action, which is based on their shared interest of achieving a political reform. We believe that understanding the cognitive basis of social movement can enhance the understanding of the role of social media in political change. Our study points out a research gap that highlights the need for an analysis of the cognitive side of the social movement, and emphasizes the interpretive processes associated with political change phenomena.

Our case suggests that the implementation of social movement strategy for political change is unfolded in four phases that are linked to the process of political change: public attention and recognition of social issues and the country's status, collective awareness, collective memory, and collective interpretation. The capabilities offered by social media influence the generation of the interpretive task at each phase, the constructed reality at each phase, and the progression of the process from one phase to the next. Applying this view to our study, social media's role in political change can be understood through its power on the cognitive function of social movements, by influencing activists' interpretation of events in the country and their subsequent use of those interpretations to frame meaning for other participants.

Exploring the impact of social media in particular, and ICT in general, on social and political change is an important area for research in IS, due to the emerging role of information systems in politics (Wattal et al., 2010). We observe developments in social media in the context of recent and ongoing social movements occurring in many

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countries across the globe. Few can deny that social media has enabled the most

significant advance in freedom of expression and association in contemporary Arab

history (Ghannam, 2011), and has played and continues to play a significant role in most,

if not all, of the social movements for democratic political change attempting to replace

authoritarian regimes in Arab countries.

This impact of social media on politics can have several business implications and

can be viewed from two perspectives: the effect on the political environment, and the

effect on collective action. The political environment is a very important area affecting

business (Ives et al., 1980; Melville et al., 2004; Wade & Hulland, 2004), and it is among

the least predictable elements in the business environment. Companies should be ready to

deal with the local and international outcomes of politics. The political stability in a

country affects business operations (Wade & Hulland, 2004); this is especially important

for companies that operate internationally. Social media's impact on citizens' social

movements and political change affects the political environment, which could affect the

country's economic setting and consequently affect business performance (Ives et al.,

1980; Melville et al., 2004).

Also, the leverage and impact social media gives citizens are rapidly spreading

into the business world. "Disciplined and coordinated groups, whether businesses or

government, have always had an advantage over undisciplined ones [such as customers

and citizens]" (Shirky, 2011, p. 6). This advantage reflects an attribute of the power

structure of these groups, and can be viewed as an important political aspect. Social

media affects this political aspect through its impact on collective action. For instance,

social media can "compensate for the disadvantage of [customer or citizen groups] by reducing the costs of coordination" (Shirky, 2011, p. 6). Through social media, concerned customers are able to organize themselves around shared views, propagate awareness and messages to others, and form coordinated actions to start effective movements against organizations, influencing business attitudes or creating pressures on companies to change their practices or even strategies. An example of this impact is the case of Nike (Carty, 2002). Using social media, activist groups organized a campaign against the company targeting sweatshop conditions. Consequently, Nike overhauled labor practices in its suppliers' overseas factories. Therefore, it is critical for IS research to explore the role of social media in activism, social movement, and the consequent political change, as these changes have significant implications for business organizations' and their strategies and for larger social and political relations cutting across cultures in a globally connected world including the Middle East and North Africa.

1.4. Research Question

Given the aforementioned discussion based on extent literature and the importance of the role of information systems in the context of social movement and political change, the following question is to be addressed in this dissertation:

What is the process by which social media influences online activism and shapes social movement collective interpretation for revolutionary political change?

Answering the aforementioned research question provides an in-depth perspective about a very complex multifaceted phenomenon: understanding the impact of information systems on political change through narrative analysis. This study addresses the impact of

social media on political change through social media's role in social movement cognitive development. Utilizing a dialogical/performance mode of narrative analysis, this study examines the role of social media in citizen's social movement process leading to political change.

Information systems researchers are uniquely situated to address the larger social issues related to IS. Thus, it is critical to address this role, given the rapid and unending impact of social media in all aspects of human lives. This dissertation aims to contribute to this larger research context. Thus, the use of narrative analysis is proposed to examine how social media offers a platform on which social movement process develops. According to the author's best knowledge, this is the first study to use a narrative analysis approach to investigate the role of social media in social movements for revolutionary political change. The next chapter provides an overview of the literature in the context of IS and social movements.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The discursive power of the new media are fascinating, but their political
importance has yet to be demonstrated.

Augustus Richard Norton

This literature review examines social movement theories, discusses the influence

of ICT on social movements, and presents an overview of the studies relevant to

understanding the role played by social media during the 2011 Egyptian revolution. The

literature of social movements, which is spread across a number of disciplines, has

discussed the use of ICT to facilitate and support social movements for social and

political change. Historically, technology has influenced social movements by playing an

important role in disseminating information, mobilizing a mass of people, and organizing

social movement activities (Lievrouw, 2006; McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Porta & Diani,

1999; Russell, 2011; Tarrow, 1998). For example, activists during the European social

movements used a printing press to distribute their political ideas and coordinate their

efforts (Tarrow, 1998). More recently, social media has assisted a number of

contemporary social movements (Chorev, 2011; Hara & Huang, 2013; Khoury, 2011;

Morozov, 2011; Shirky, 2011). This dissertation focuses on the kind of social movements

that use ICT, specifically social media, to facilitate and enable the movements. This

chapter offers insights into social movements' literature with this focus in mind. To

develop our literature review of IS and its influence on activism and social movement for

political change, we integrate activism and social movement research in the areas of social and political studies, communication studies, and information systems research in the political domain (Benford, 1997; Benford & Snow, 2000; Bradley, 2005; Calenda & Mosca, 2007; Castells, 1996-1998; Howard, 2010; Danin, 2001; Garrett, 2006; Gelsomino, 2010; Giroux, 2009; McAdam, 1982, 1986, 1996; McCathy & Zald, 1977; Morozov, 2011; Morris, 1999; Sustein, 2004; Tarrow, 1994, 1998; Tilly, 1978; Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010; Weill & Vitale, 2001).

Several studies that investigate the role of IS in social movements apply traditional social movement theories. Hence, it is useful to present an overview of these theories here. Therefore, our review begins with the definition of social movements and then discusses prominent theories that were used to study social movements. This section is followed by an overview of the research that addresses the influence of ICT on social movements. The chapter follows with a focused discussion to understand how social media played a major role in social movements and political changes around the world and in the Arab region. Finally, the chapter explores studies about the use of social media before and during the Egyptian revolution of 2011, up until Mubarak's resignation. It is evident from this literature review that more research is needed in order to help demonstrate the relationship between political change and the use of social media during the 2011 Egyptian revolt events.

2.1. Social Movements

The literature on social movements is vast; consequently, there are several definitions of social movements that vary in what they emphasize. As highlighted by

Downing (2008), "social movements are variously defined, often hard to categorize, and —as a result of their 'unconstitutional' qualities—resistant to rigid theorizing" (p. 43). In our study, we highlight some of these definitions that are relevant to our topic. Several definitions of social movements have emphasized the transformation of society. For instance, McCarthy and Zald (1977) defined a social movement as "a set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preference for changing some elements of social structure and/or reward distribution of a society" (p. 1217-1218). Similarly, Castells (1997) viewed social movements as "purposive collusive actions whose outcome, in victory as in defeat, transforms the values and institutions of society" (p. 3). Another definition views social movements in terms of collective identity, networks, and mobilization. According to this view, social movements can be characterized as "(1) informal networks, based on (2) shared beliefs and solidarity, which mobilize about (3) conflictual issues, through (4) the frequent use of various forms of protests" (Porta & Diani, 1999, p. 16). Based on this definition, social movements are then redefined as "networks of informal relationships between a multiplicity of individuals and organizations, who share a distinctive collective identity, and mobilize resources on conflictual issues" (Diani, 2000, p. 387). This definition highlights several of the primary dimensions of social movements, such as the social actors, networks, collective identity, social movement activities, and resources. Therefore, it offers a useful lens to explore the potential offered by social media to influence social movements and political change. In sum, and as highlighted by these definitions, a social movement embodies a sharing of a concern for social change and involves a process that seeks to alter the relations of power

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(Hara & Huang, 2013). This process includes the formation of some kind of collective identity composed of activists' shared meaning. This collective identity defines the associations between individuals who come together to effect social change.

The topic of social movement has been explored for decades from a range of perspectives, and different areas have been emphasized by different schools (Diani, 1992; Downing, 2008; Hara & Huang, 2013). For instance, some perspectives took an organizational view that focuses on factors of organization and resources (McCarthy & Zald, 1977); others highlighted factors such as collective identity and networks as being fundamental elements of contemporary movements (Castells, 1997b; Diani, 2000). Additionally, a variety of theories and empirical work on social movement have been developed. However, several studies have suggested categorizing contemporary social movement theories into four frameworks (Diani, 1992; Hess et al., 2008; Sawyer & Tapia, 2007; Hara & Huang, 2013). These frameworks are: resource mobilization theory, political process theory, frame analysis, and new social movement theory. The following section provides an overview of each category.

2.1.1. Resource Mobilization (RM) Theory

Resource mobilization is a major sociological theory that emerged in the 1970s. The theory views social movements as rational social institutions that are created by social actors who share a purpose and take a political action to achieve that purpose. The main focus of this theory is on the ability of a social movement's actors to acquire resources and mobilize people toward achieving the movement's goals. The theory as presented by the work of McCarthy and Zald (1977), views social movements as

organized activities that focus on maximizing both tangible and intangible resources within social movement organizations. It argues that grievances are not sufficient to explain the development of a social movement, and that the access to resources is the crucial factor. Examples of resources include money, facilities, land, labor, and extended to technical expertise, means of communication, common awareness, interpersonal ties, organizing and special skills, solidarity, and supporter loyalty (Freeman, 1979; Gamson, 1990; Jenkins, 1981; McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Porta & Diani, 1999; Tilly, 1978). Studies that examine the role of social media in contemporary social movements based on this theory can view social media tools as important resources as well as means to utilize and maximize other resources (Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011). In our study, resources are viewed as important to social movements, but resources are not the main factor of the movements.

2.1.2. Political Process (PP) Theory

Developed in the 1980s, political process theory, also known as political opportunity theory or political opportunity structure, is heavily influenced by political sociology. The theory argues that that the success or failure of social movements is primarily affected by political opportunity structures - the broad social, economic, and political dynamics that shape opportunities and constraints for mobilization (Hara & Huang, 2013; Tarrow, 1998). Whereas resource mobilization theory considers resources internal to social movement organizations, political process theory highlights opportunities and challenges put forth by authorities and political structure that are external to movements (Hara & Huang, 2013; Tarrow, 1998). However, as highlighted by

Myers (2001), "structural conditions constrain actions, but do not determine it" (p. 8). In this sense, external conditions and events may influence the course of a social movement, however, the technical-social interactions can play a crucial role in the progression of the social movement process in a way that results in unpredicted or unintended outcomes. When considering the potential of social media in social movements, especially in autocratic countries like Egypt, governments have limited capacity of control over social media compared to traditional media. This impact of social media and its role in changing the media environment will be highlighted in our discussion of Egypt's context (Chapter 4). The limited state control of social media platforms created new opportunities for activists to take action, such as the forms that occurred during the Arab Spring.

2.1.3. Frame Analysis (FA)

According to this view, a social movement includes the social construction of a social phenomenon by the social movement's actors, a process known as framing. In social science, framing is a process of selective influence on individuals' or groups' perception of reality. Frame analysis examines how social movement organizations facilitate the development of social movement frames, or collective cognitive understandings (i.e., collective awareness), to justify their activities and also encourage wider participation (Benford & Snow, 2000; Hara & Huang, 2013). These collective action frames, according to Goffman (1974), enable individuals "to locate, perceive, identify, and label" events within their local context or the world at large (p. 21). Benford and Snow (2000) conceptualize collective action frames as "action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimize the activities and campaigns of a social

movement organization" (p. 614). This theoretical perspective is a widely used

framework in the studies of social movements (Benford & Snow, 2000). In our study, we

argue that social media can help to construct shared reference points (collective memory)

for social movements. These reference points can assist in the development of a social

movement's collective identity. These reference points can be viewed as the social

movement's frames. Social media can also help disseminate social movements' frames

easily and rapidly, so they can reach a larger audience.

2.1.4. New Social Movement (NSM) Theory

This theory was developed in an attempt to explain the wave of new movements

that occurred in various western societies during the mid-1980s. The theory includes two

central claims. First, the new waves of social movement came as a result of the rise of the

post-industrial economy. Second, these new movements departed significantly from

previous social movements of the industrial economy. This difference was reflected in

their goals, as instead of focusing on issues of materialistic qualities (i.e., economic

wellbeing), they focused on issues related to human rights. Thus, the theory advocates the

value of factors such as identity, equality, direct participation, and democracy. NSM was

developed in the 1960s as a critique of the limits of resource mobilization theory. Rather

than focusing on the traditional social movement of classes, the cultural version of NSM

theory examines collective action based on identities (Hara & Huang, 2013; Melucci,

1996). It views a movement as a way for individuals to act collectively (Melucci, 1989).

According to this view, contemporary movements arise from the construction of

collective identity, an interactive process that addresses "the question of how collective

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becomes collective" (Melussi, 1989, p. 84). In this sense, the influence of social media on social movements can be viewed in terms of opportunities offered by its tools to foster collective identity formation and social movement participation. In our dissertation, the development of a collective identity is viewed as part of a social movement process; a prerequisite for the implantation of social movement activities.

The four theories discussed provide useful theoretical frameworks to study the influence of ICT and particularly social media on social movements for political change. In a literature review of research about online social movements, Hara and Huang (2013) provide an overview of the studies that applied these four social movement frameworks to a digital environment. Table 1 (adapted from: Hara & Huang, 2013) provides a summary of these studies.

Table 1. Summary of the Studies That Explored the Role of ICT in Social Movements Using Traditional Social Movement Frameworks

Authors	ICT	Social Movement	Social Movement Framework(s)
Clark & Themudo (2006)	The Internet	Anti-Globalization Movement	RM, PP, FA
Cheta (2004)	The Internet	Disability Movement	Social Constructionist
Cronauer (2004)	Electronic mailing lists	Social Activism	RM, PP, NSM, FA
Hara & Estrada (2005)	The Internet	Social Activism	RM
Hara & Schchaf (2008)	The Internet	Peace Movement	FA
Hsu (2003)	The Internet	Broadcasting Reform Movement	RM, NSM
Huang (2009)	The Internet	Religious Movement	RM, NSM
Ma (2007)	The Internet	Pro-democracy Movement	NSM
Myers (1994, 2001)	Computer-assisted Communication & Computer Networks		RM, NSM
Nip (2004)	The Internet	Lesbian Movement	NSM
Park (2002)	The Internet	Anti-Communication Decency Act of 1999	FA
Pickerill (2001)	Computer-mediated Communication	Environmental Movement	RM, PP, FA
Pudrovska & Ferree (2004)	Internet Websites	Woman Movement	PP, NSM, FA
Riemer (2003)	The Internet	Social Activism	RM, FA
Wall (2007)	Email Lists	Social Activism	NSM

Many recent studies of ICT's impact on social movements have applied resource mobilization (Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011; Clark & Themudo, 2006; Cronauer, 2004; Hara & Estrada, 2005; Hsu, 2003; Huang, 2009; Pudrovska & Ferree, 2004) as well as new social movement (NSM) theories (Hsu, 2003; Huang, 2009; Ma, 2007; Nip, 2004; Pudrovska & Ferree, 2004; Wall, 2007). In contrast, few have used political process theory (Clark & Themudo, 2006; Cronauer, 2004; Pickerill, 2001; Pudrovska & Ferree, 2004) or frames analysis (Clark & Themudo, 2006; Hara & Schaf, 2008; Park, 2002; Pudrovska & Ferree, 2004). Moreover, a number of studies have used a mixture of social movement theories – resource mobilization and new social movement theories- as frameworks to investigate ICT's impact on social movements (Myers, 1994, 2002). The following section provides some insights from these studies that explore emerging roles of ICT in social movements.

2.2. Social Movements and the Role of ICT

There have been several distinct perceptions related to the impact of ICT on social movements (Hara & Huang, 2013). Several researchers have questioned the idea that ICT makes a difference in social movements, while others supported this view, providing arguments that explain the ways in which ICT assists social movements. In addition, there have been studies that take a middle position; they do not deny ICT's effect, but choose to attribute this effect to other factors, such as the social forces that promote a particular application of ICT. According to Hara and Huang's (2013) discussion of these perceptions, these positions can be classified into three theses: the equalization thesis, the normalization thesis, and undecided. The following section provides a further discussion

of these perceptions, followed by a review of some of the main articles that examine the different uses of ICT to support social movements.

2.2.1. The Different Perceptions of the ICT's Effect on Activism and Social Movements

Early studies that explored the role played by ICT in activism and social movements supported the view that ICT is a significant factor in influencing social and political change (Castells et. al., 2007; Danitz & Strobel, 1999; Hara & Huang, 2013; Kahn & Kellner, 2004; Ronfeldt & Arquilla, 1998). Many of these articles' arguments support what Hara and Huang (2013) called an equalization thesis. This thesis views the influence of ICT in terms of access to information and dissemination of news. In this sense, ICT plays an important role in providing a relatively equal opportunity to gain the power of accessing information. Accessing political information and news has been found to encourage political discussion and consequently enhance political participation (Hara & Huang, 2013; Nah et. al., 2006). The other perspective of ICT's role under this thesis highlights the interactive nature of the Internet and its impact on improving democracy (Kling, 1994). In this view, several applications of the Internet, such as online forums and email, can potentially upgrade the citizens' role from message receivers to message creators.

The other perception believes in the limitations of ICT to support social movements. According to this position, online social movements are seen as reflections of offline social movements (Hara & Huang, 2013; Stromer-Gally, 2000). Other scholars who adopt this position view the limitations of ICT to support social movements in terms of information inequality (Hara & Huang, 2013; Kling, 1999; Norris, 2001; Van Dijk &

Hacker, 2003). According to this view, the Internet's influence depends on its accessibility and people's willingness to actively find information compared to traditional media, which provides information accessibility to ordinary people equally (Hara & Huang, 2013; Norris, 2001; Van Dijk & Hacker, 2003). Information inequality is also viewed in terms of affordability, including the availability of computers and access to networks (Kling, 1999). In addition, other factors such as gender, age, race, income, knowledge difference, computer skills, training, government controls, or limited use of the Internet are added reasons that may result in information inequality (Fox, 2004; Hara & Huang, 2013; Rainie et. al., 2004; Spooner, 2003).

Finally, the undecided thesis neither denies nor supports the idea that ICT makes a difference in social movements. For example, Zelwietro (1998), who examined the use of the Internet by environmental organizations to support their activities, concluded that the Internet penetration rate does not support the claim of an ICT effect. In sum, despite the discrepancy in the perceptions of ICT role, most studies view this role as an important factor that supports social movements in one way or another. The following section discusses this idea further. In our study, we argue that social media tools provide social movements new capacities and promote new opportunities that can create and affect political change.

2.2.2. The Use of ICT to Support Social Movements

The use of ICT in social movements can be categorized using the four frameworks of social movements discussed in the previous section. According to these

frameworks, ICT can be viewed as resources, mobilization tools, framing devices, or identity construction mechanisms (Hara and Huang, 2013).

Resources include any tangible or intangible assets that can be accessed and mobilized by social movement organizations. Accordingly, ICT can be viewed as one of many potential resources for social movements (Hess, 2008). In addition, ICT can be viewed as a means to exploit other resources (Hara & Huang, 2013). One of the benefits of viewing ICT as resources is news and information dissemination. The ability offered by the Internet for activists to create websites for their movements helped them to publicize their cause and gain support. According to Almeida and Lichbach (2003), the Internet offers an alternative to mass media as a means for activists to disseminate information (Webster, 2006). For example, when about fifty thousand people took to the streets to protest at the 1999 World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting in Seattle, many activists who were looking forward to creating the "next Seattle" followed what happened through the Internet (Juris, 2005, p. 194). Almeida and Lichbach (2003), who studied the reporting of the WTO protests, found that activists' websites had more news about the protest events compared to news organizations (Oliver & Maney, 2000). In addition, studies showed that the Internet allowed activists to have control over disseminated content (Garrett, 2006; Hara & Huang, 2013).

Besides, ICT can enable the capitalization of social movement resources. For instance, Cronauer (2004) highlighted the potential of Internet technology to reduce the resources needed for activists' mobilization efforts. The low cost of access and use can make the Internet a cost-effective medium for political action of activist groups with

limited budgets (Carty, 2002; Cronauer, 2004; Leizerov, 2000; Porter 2003). For instance, the low cost of Internet access and use was a critical factor that facilitated the dissemination of the Falung Gong religious movement campaign (Porter, 2003). Also, this factor helped the anti-Nike campaign to coordinate activities across the world (Carty, 2002). Moreover, it allowed anti-mine campaigns (Riemer, 2003), and the Free Tibet movement (Chase & Mulvenon, 2002) to raise funds and gain financial support. Consequently, ICT as resources, or as a means to capitalize tangible and intangible forms of resources, makes social movements' activities possible.

Also, ICT can be viewed as mobilization tools. "Mobilization is the process by which a group goes from being a passive collection of individuals to an active participant in public life" (Tilly, 1978, p. 69). This process reflects two different activities: consensus mobilization and action mobilization (Klandermans, 1984). Consensus mobilization reflects activist activities to obtain support for social movement viewpoints; action mobilization reflects activists' attempt to motivate participation in the social movement (Klandermans, 1984). While consensus mobilization does not necessarily lead to action mobilization, action mobilization cannot occur without consensus mobilization (Klandermans, 2004). ICT enables activists to communicate effectively and to implement strategic political processes. Garret (2006) discussed the opportunity provided by ICTs to reduce and publish political movement information, which helps reduce the conventional costs of group formation, recruitment, and retention. Also, a key feature of ICT is its capability to reach a large number of group easily and quickly. For instance, because of its geographical reach, activists use e-mail lists to organize global demonstrations. This

capability allows activists to efficiently publicize and share information about the

movement locally and globally, in order to bring together individuals around the social

movement's goal. As an illustration, the Zapatista Army National Liberation (EZLN) in

Mexico used new technology to demand their political goals with global supporters

(Russell, 2011). Another example is the People's Global Action (PGA), which got more

than forty countries involved to protest against the G8 Summit in Cologne (Juris, 2005).

Furthermore, ICT can be used as devices that help activists in their framing

activities, and in turn promote participation in the movement (Benford & Snow, 2000).

Frames are critical elements of collective actions, and can be understood and analyzed in

terms of the cognitive framework representations (Hara & Shachaf, 2008; Oliver &

Johnston, 2000), or in terms of the processes of developing frames (Worden & Benford,

1986). For instance, Hare and Schaf's (2008) analysis of a peace movement found that

the movement's websites represented snapshots of the collective action cognitive

framework. Snow et al. (1986) explained integration processes – known as "frame

alignment processes"- in which individuals' interpretations of a movement are linked to

social movement frames (p. 464). These views provide useful conceptualizations when it

comes to analyzing the role in social movements of ICT as frame devices. In this sense,

the role of ICT in social movements can be analyzed in terms of its use to shape the

collective action frame, or it can be analyzed in terms of its use to support the movements

in framing their activities to promote participation (Benford & Snow, 2000). For instance,

in order to understand how ICTs are utilized, Oliver and Johnston's (2000) frame analysis

suggested a way to focus on the representations of frames. Frames here provide

perceptions of the phenomenon and are viewed as cognitive structures that can be observed by examining the representations of frames. These frames become pivotal elements in collective action.

ICT serves as an effective means compared to news media, which can sometimes be inconsistent with the social movement framing (Gamson, 1992; Hara & Huang, 2013); ICT can better frame activist groups' messages, promote their ideologies and activities, and reach the general public. For instance, Hara and Estrada (2005) provided examples of social movements that demonstrated how email, websites, and blogs have helped mobilize not only activists but also ordinary people. Also, Owens and Palmer (2003) highlighted the role of web communications in the success of the anarchists' 1999 protest against the WTO by connecting the organization network's presence to the mainstream networks. The website helped the movement organization to cover stories about the WTO, explaining and justifying their activities, but also to post their intentions before protest events. The online existence of the anarchists' perspective influenced the coverage of the news media to be more favorable after it was initially negative. This role of ICT in turn can facilitate social movements' identity construction processes that serve as a backbone to recruit new participants and reinforce soldiery among members of movements.

Alternatively, ICT can be viewed as useful tools to support collective identity formation (Carty, 2002; Jones, 1998; Nakamura, 2002). Collective identity is defined by theorists of social movements as the "agreed upon definition of membership, boundaries, and activities for the group" (Hank et al., 1994, p. 15). Many scholars of social

movements have discussed the topic of collective identity and argued for the importance

of understanding collective identity in the study of social movements, because of their

strong interconnection. Collective identity "goes to the core of social movement

formation" (Stryker et al., 2000, p. 18). Accordingly, any social movement has an

identity dimension; a movement reflects a collective identity and any collective identity is

generated as an outcome of social movement processes (Melucci, 1989). A collective

identity construction forms a base for people's collective action. As stated by Melucci

(1995), "People take action for the possibility of recognizing themselves and being

recognized as subjects of their action" (p. 48). At the same time, collective identity can be

viewed as an important outcome of a social movement mobilization effort. For instance,

Peteet (2000) highlighted that "The very form of identity used as a mobilizing frame can

be transformed during the course of social movement participation" (p. 184). Similarly,

Melucci (1995) highlighted that individuals acting collectively in a way that activates

their relationships so as to give sense of their 'being together' and to the goals they

pursue.

ICT can aid the process of identity construction through connecting individuals

who share similar interests. For example, ICT was used during the anti-Nike campaign to

link geographically dispersed individuals to form a collective identity under the label

"working group on Nike" (Carty, 2002, p. 134). By analyzing the discourse of the online

message, Micheletti et al. (2004) were able to highlight how the Internet enabled users to

build a sense of "we." Many have argued that without the capabilities provided by ICT, it

would have been impossible to construct the collective identity of the anti-Nike

campaign. Also, ICT helps to mobilize participation in a social movement through the dissemination of the collective identity. Many studies have examined how activists used ICT to communicate with other activists or inspire participation (Kennedy, 2000; Onosaka, 2003; Pickerills, 2001). Through supporting these two processes, social media can increase the possibility for social movement and potentially political change.

Oliver and Myers (2014) stated that resource mobilization, political process, frame analysis, and new social movement are not competing theories, but rather different aspects of a larger system. The studies that used the four previously discussed frameworks to explore the use of ICT conceptualize digital activism as a form of online social movement. Online social movement is an emerging field of social movement research that discusses social movement as an Internet-mediated activism. In other words, digital activism in this view is considered an extension of a social movement into a new media space. However, while traditional social movement theories provide useful frameworks, they do not address how ICTs affect social movements. Investigating the role of ICTs in social movements requires a change in the way we perceive this role, where this impact is discussed in terms of the social-technological interaction effect. Additionally, it requires an analysis of both the property of the actors and characteristics of the technology within the context in which it has been used. Bimber et al. (2005) highlight the need to reexamine the traditional theory of collective action in context in order to understand the major role of ICT in social movements. Similarly, Garrett and Edwards (2007) highlight the importance of examining ICTs within their context in order to understand their influence on social movements, rather that treating social movements

as ICT-driven phenomenon. Moreover, Bennett and Toft (2009) argue that when studying

social movements, we need to examine narrative processes separately from framing, and

that by investigating how narratives develop, we can focus on how networks form.

Therefore, our research views social movements as dynamic, multi-dimensional

processes through which meanings and actions are constituted, and in which social and

political changes emerge as a result of the interactions between people and technology

within a particular social context. Further, in our research, in order to understand social

media's role in social movements' activities, we argue that narrative analysis can offer a

useful mechanism to understand the context of IS and how individuals construct their

collective identity and social ties.

2.3.   Social Media, Social Movements, and Political Change

Many events around the world and the Arab region have brought attention to the

influential role of social media in social movements and social and political changes. For

instance, the first important movement that drew attention to the role of social media in

politics was the 2009 Green Revolution, or what is called the Twitter Revolution, in Iran.

This revolution was a notable case that highlighted social media's role in the global

dissemination of the revolution's news. Social media platforms were used by Iranians to

convey to the world the demonstrations in the country against Ahmadinejad. Twitter was

used by the activists during the Iranian revolution to send over 8000 tweets per hour

(over 100,000 tweets per day), and YouTube was used to broadcast photos and videos of

the protests and to show the abuses by the police (Iran's Twitter Revolution, 2009).

Yet the role of social media in social movements and political change has sparked a controversy among scholars. While challengers argue that social media can neither produce effective social movements nor lead to political reforms (Esfandiari, 2010; Faris, 2010; Gladwell, 2011; Morozov, 2011), others highlight social media's influential role in political regime changes (Chorev, 2011; Khoury, 2011; Morozov, 2011; Shirky, 2011). The following section provides a summary of this debate, followed by a discussion that addresses how social media was used in activism and social movements for political change.

2.3.1. The Political Power of Social Media

The topics in social media were explored from a range of perspectives. The literature review in this section describes how social media was used as a means of political communication and as a platform to call for political reform.

The use of social media in politics is not new. Many studies show that social media has the power to change pool results (Chebib & Sohail, 2011; Rollyson, 2008; Suarez, 2011; Wattal et al., 2010). Democratic authorities have used social media to engage people to vote, especially among the youngest age group (age 18-24) that is the least likely to vote. For instance, during the presidential election in 2008, the Obama campaign employed social media to reach and attract voters, particularly young voters (Rollyson, 2008). Also, social media sites, such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, were used to communicate with supporters, answer their questions, and form a bond with voters. Barack Obama's campaign was an example that highlighted how social media can be used to encourage political participation in democratic countries. The success achieved

through Obama's approach in using social media in the political election process was repeated in his 2012 presidential campaign and has inspired many others to do the same.

Social media, has also facilitated social interaction and supported collective behavior. The connection through social media sites can allow for amplified and immediate communication. For instance, during the Haitian and Chilean earthquakes, social media sites were used to gain more news coverage as well as donations around the world (Herrero, 2010; Keller, 2010). Immediately after the 8.8 quake in Chile, social media was the key tool to spread important information such as finding food and water, locating families and friends, and getting transportation. Additionally, social media played an important role in distributing updated pictures of the crises that facilitated global attention and support. These examples proved the power of communication through social media sites and their role in gaining public attention and global solidarity.

Additionally, social media has allowed opportunities for freedom of speech, especially difficult to find in countries suffering under a dictatorship. For instance, activists of the Iranian revolution used social media to document and spread the video of the hideous incident of the killing of a 16-year-old girl, Neda Soltani, by a sniper on a street in Tehran. The image of Soltani soon became a symbol of the continuous abuses by the Iranian police and the lack of democracy in Iran. Similarly, activists in many Arab countries have used social media to overcome their government's censorship, express their opposing views and ideas, and disseminate videos, pictures, articles, and news to show the truth of their side of the story (Giroux, 2009).

Social media has also enabled social movement organization and collective action implementation for political change. Shirky (2008) highlights how online social tools allow groups to form without the previous burdensome restrictions of time and cost. Additionally, these tools allow for quick dissemination of information, quick responses, and cooperative decision making (Sullivan, 2009). In this sense, social media networks can be viewed as a valuable mobilization structure. Mobilizing structures increase the probability of each step in a cascade of events: people become aware of new opportunities, gain information about them, decrease the cost of collective action, and marshal the resources necessary to exploit the opportunities (McCathy, 1996).

2.3.2. Views of Social Media's Role in Political Revolutions

Similar to the perceptions on the ICT role in activism and social movements, the role of social media in protests against autocratic regimes is introduced from different perspectives. On one hand, several scholars have doubted the idea that social media supports activism and facilitates social movements. For instance, Gladwell (2011) argues that the role of social media in revolutions has been exaggerated. According to his view, social media is a tool to engage socially with friends and gain new information. Using the 2009 Iranian revolution as an example, he indicates that activism that is supported by social media cannot produce effective social movement. Similarly, Keller (2010), believes that the role of social media in the case of the Iranian revolution was not influential. Referring to the same event, Esfandiari (2010) called the use of social media in helping the Iranian social movement a "hoax." Yet, despite his opinion, he admits that social media has a positive effect on social movements through increasing the

international attention to the Iranians' struggle with their regime. Similarly, a study that analyzes the use of social media by Egyptian digital activists argues that despite social media's positive effect on the information environment and organization development, social media cannot lead to determinative political change (Faris, 2010).

Alternatively, many believe that "without Twitter the people of Iran would not have felt empowered and confidant to stand up for freedom and democracy" (Mark Pfeifle, former U.S. national security adviser, as cited by Esfandiari, 2010). Several scholars refute the claim that social media does not have political power. For example, Al-Sebaei (2013) argues that "the primary reason that social media was less influential in the Iranian example is because social media was not actively engaged in organizing effective on-the-street resistance against the National Guard" (p. 22). Khoury (2011) argues that activism linked with social media has important influence on political change, especially in the Arab World, through "changing people's perspectives of their governments, [and] fostering forbidden debate" (p. 82). He critiques Gladwell's (2011) argument and highlights that the definition of activism, according to Gladwell's view, is limited. Likewise, Shirky (2011) argues that social media fosters activism and empowers social movements against authoritarian regimes. Shirky (2011) used as an example what happened in the Philippines: after some authorities decided to ignore important evidence against president Joseph Estrada during his trial, social media supported organizing protests and facilitated the overthrow of their president. Social media is ubiquitously accessible, providing an alternative platform for people to discuss the country's issues,

and allowing them to prevent the authorities from monopolizing information (Chorev, 2011).

Another perspective on social media's role argues for a balanced view of social media's political power. As an illustration, Morozov (2011) states that social networking sites can weaken political authorities but also strengthen them: social media's impact on political movements can be very positive; however, social media can also be used by authorities in ways that inhibit democratization. For instance, social media can be used by authoritarian governments to disseminate propaganda, track down activism, and monitor protest activities. In this paper, we argue that social media has the power to challenge political authorities and support activism against autocratic regimes through social media's role in social movement processes that can lead to political change. The following section explores social media's impact on political issues from a range of perspectives.

2.3.3. The Use of Social Media in the 2011 Egyptian Revolution

The Egyptian revolution triggered many questions and motivated much research concerning the power of social media platforms in political change. Some researchers argued that social media either has not been helpful in toppling authoritarian regimes or has played a limited role in revolutions (Altertman, 2011). In his article, *The Revolution will not be Tweeted*, Alterman (2011) argues that the role of the traditional media such as television was superior compared to social media for instigating protesters and expanding their numbers into the millions. He adds that the political changes in the Arab world, such as the one in Egypt, cannot be considered as revolutions, because revolutions are

characterized not by the removed government, such as Mubarak's, but by the replacement. In the antecedent's part of our study, however, we discuss the context of the country, including the media environment, to highlight the role of social media in providing a new and independent source of information compared to the regulated sources of the traditional media in Egypt. In addition, we define the revolution in terms of the conditions and activities preceding the anti-government protests that led to the resignation of Mubarak, and view this outcome as an important consequence leading to the on-going political changes in Egypt. For instance, after the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces took power in Egypt following the fall of Mubarak, the first round of free Egyptian presidential elections was held in the country in May 2012 (Lutz, 2012), and social media was used during the elections.

Other researchers, however, emphasized the positive impact of social media on social movements and political changes from different angles. These angles can be categorized into two perspectives. One of the perspectives discusses the role of social media in terms of access to information (Gerbaudo, 2012; Khondker, 2011; Zhuo et al., 2011). Studies that use this perspective view the impact of social media on the information environment as a critical factor that influences and supports activism and social movements, especially in a context like Egypt, where mass media was controlled by a regime that restricted freedom of speech. For instance, during the demonstration events in Egypt, local media such as national newspapers were not reporting the real events, because of government constraints. According to Khondker (2011), social media tools were vital compared to local media to report police abuses, atrocities, and violence.

These tools were used to spread 'true' new information about the protests inside and outside the Arab world (Zhuo et al., 2011). This role, however, was viewed as complementary to face-to-face communication, and together they can serve as an integrated means of communication (Gerbaudo, 2012). In our study, we highlight the critical role of social media in the production and distribution of information, particularly during the first phase of the social movement; in that first phase, citizens were empowered to tell their side of the reality and publicize what was actually happening by producing and uploading photos and videos, sharing accounts of their experiences. This role of social media was then employed by the activists during a later phase of the social movement to report up-to-date news about the protests and to provide important organizational information about their social movement, such as where to go and how to perform.

The second research perspective discusses the influence of social media in terms of its role as a communication tool (Alexander, 2011; Zhuo et al., 2011). Studies using this perspective highlight the impact of social media on communication from two areas. On one hand, social media is viewed as a platform that provides the space to debate political alternatives and organize protests (Alexander, 2011). On the other hand, social media is viewed as a technology that provides access to various networks. Alexander (2011) stated that "every mass movement needs spaces" for the activists to meet; such spaces play an important role in social movements. During the old political movements in Egypt, activists used secret meeting places, such as bookshops. However, these meetings could be broken up easily by the police (Alexander, 2011). Through social media,

activists can meet to discuss and make decisions without the need for physical place

(Alexander, 2011). Zhuo et al. (2011) argued that online social networks help to

overcome the limitations of physical and social borders, providing access to a wider

population that consequently provides access to more resources. In our study, we

highlight the communicative role of social media through highlighting its changing

nature, reflected in the social media interactions throughout the social movement process,

the different mechanisms and purposes of the communicative activities, and their impact

on the social movement's cognitive development that was necessary to implement and

organize the social movement the led to the 2011 revolutionary political change in Egypt.

Other studies discuss the impact of social media by highlighting either the

technical aspect or the social aspect of the movement. On one side, researchers answer

the question of social media's impact on the 2011 Egyptian revolution by listing the

features associated with the technological aspects of social media (Chebib & Sohail,

2011). For instance, social media is accessible, easy to use, and has low communication

barriers, and thus has been used by many individuals to get access to information. Also,

social media offers multidimensional features to access information, such as pages,

groups, and events. In addition, it can overcome physical distance as well as social

differences, which can improve the flow of information. On the other side, researchers

examine the use of social media in Egypt during the protests and emphasize the

significance role of youth (Ghannam, 2011; Kavanaugh et al., 2012). From this

perspective, the impact of social media is viewed in terms of citizens' engagement in the

political process (Ghannam, 2011). Here, the emphasis is on the impact of the volume of

public discussions in reshaping people's understanding and influencing free expression in the Arab countries. For instance, Kavanaugh et al. (2012), who conducted a survey of 241 students at Alexandria University to analyze their usage of social media as a source of information during the uprising, concluded that young Egyptians have access to social media, discuss information with friends, and compare the information with other sources from the Internet. In another example, a study by Ghannam (2011) emphasizes the role of social media in breaking down the monopoly of information and changing the freedom of expression in the Arab countries.

Finally, another set of studies highlights the progressive nature of the revolution and the role of social media at the different stages of the social movement. For instance, Howard and Hussain (2011) identified six phases related to the role of social media in the Arab Spring, especially in Egypt and Tunisia. These phases are: preparation, ignition, street protests, international-buy-in, climax, and follow-on information warfare. In the preparation phase, digital media was used by protesters to reach each other, and to unify their objections. In the second phase, where local media was muzzled, digital media ignited the public to take to the streets. Next was the street protests phase using online networking sites, followed by the international buy-in phase, when digital media accelerated the dissemination of news to foreign communities. These phases were followed by a climax where regimes executed a mixture of strategies to repress the movement. Finally, the follow-on information warfare phase occurred, after regimes failed to stop the protesters. In this phase, different parties in the country competed with each other "by gaining control over the revolutionary narrative" (Howard & Hussain,

2011). Another example is a study conducted by Khamis and Vaughn (2011), where they explain the significance of new media as a tool for demonstrators before, during, and after the Egyptian revolution. In that study, the importance of social media tools was highlighted in three ways: by enabling cyberactivism, which triggered the people to take to the streets; by promoting citizens to coordinate and engage in demonstrations; and by encouraging ordinary citizens to tell their views of a story as a new form of citizen journalism.

In conclusion, while traditional social movement theories are informative, frameworks that address technology-influenced social movements are scarce. Also, although there have been many interesting studies that examined ICTs' roles in social movements, the research in this area is still in its early stages. To date, these studies have focused attention on the use of ICT in social movements. However, few studies have investigated the impact of these technologies, in particular social media, on social movements for revolutionary political change. As the use of social media in various social movements continues to grow, research needs to shed light on the processes that these movements undergo. In this sense, there is a need for more empirical studies that explore the emerging use of social media to support movements' activities. In addition, there is a need for a new integrated view that bridges the online and offline worlds. Traditional theories of social movements were developed prior to the recent movements. Thus, there is a need for an original framework that conceptualizes the interaction between people, technology, and their context. As Garrett (2006) suggests, it would be helpful to employ new methods to understand ICT-driven phenomena. In the following

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chapter we provide a discussion of our research methodology, approach, and research

strategy.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, APPROACH, STRATEGY, AND DESIGN

> If social world really is constituted from narrative, then shouldn't our methods take advantage of this fact?
>
> Brian Pentland

A variety of methodological approaches may be used when conducting IS research. Each type of data and each type of data reduction is valuable for answering a particular type of research question (Bernard, 2000; Bhattacherjee, 2012). The specific methodological approach that is selected by a researcher should be driven by the topic selected and the research questions (Bhattacherjee, 2012). The research question for the present study explores how citizens use social media to make sense of political events in a process that generates collective interpretation and collective action for political change. Therefore, the research question is more concerned with interpretation than with quantification, justifying a qualitative approach for collecting and evaluating data. Specifically, this study employs a process approach and uses an analysis design grounded in a narrative paradigm to understand the context of IS and to generate a theoretical explanation of the process by which IS motivates social and political changes where we highlight the temporal, emergent, and contingent nature of social movement, and view political change as an outcome of a dynamic socio-technical interaction. There is a vast body of research that has discussed and employed narrative analysis methods in other disciplines (Mayers, 1997; Tan & Hunter, 2002), including behavioral science

(Rappaport, 1993), strategic management (Barry & Elmes, 1997), and organizational studies (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1995; Hirschheim & Newman, 1991). In addition, many information systems studies agreed on the value of and used narrative as an approach that can help improve the understanding and interpretation of social actions of both users and developers of IS (Boland & Day, 1989; Boland & Schultz, 1995; Davidson, 1997; Hirschheim & Newman, 1991; Myers, 1997; Orlikowski, 1996; Pentland, 1999b; Tan & Hunter, 2002). This chapter introduces the philosophical fundamentals and the study's use of the research methodology, explains the rationale for the chosen research approach, and discusses the research design and strategy.

3.1.   Philosophical Fundamentals and the Choice of Narrative Research

Generally speaking, the aim of this study is to produce an understanding of the dialectical relationship between IS and context, in order to explain the process whereby information systems, in particular social media, influence and are influenced by their context (Goldkuhal, 2012; Walsham, 1993). The focus here is on the full complexity of human sense-making – thought and action- in social contexts as the situation emerges. Any research operates under fundamental assumptions about what constitutes 'valid' research and which research methods are appropriate (Myers, 1997). Therefore, it is important to understand these assumptions, in order to conduct the research and to evaluate it (Myers, 1997).

As the purpose of our research is to examine a social phenomenon, the two fundamental sets of philosophical assumptions are those related to the underlying ontology and epistemology (Bhattacherjee, 2012; Mayers, 1997). Ontology refers to the

assumptions about how we see the world (Bhattacherjee, 2012; Gregor, 2006; Guba, 1990). On the other hand, epistemology refers to assumptions about the nature of knowledge and the how it can be acquired (Bhattacherjee, 2012; Gregor, 2006; Guba, 1990; Mayers, 1997). There are three underlying research paradigms for qualitative research, based on underling research epistemology: positivist, interpretive, and critical (Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991). Understanding the philosophical assumptions that underlie our research allows the identification of the appropriate research paradigm. As our research is concerned with the understanding of human experience(s), which entails a "subjective interpretation of participants involved" (Bhattacherjee, 2012, p. 19), our research method falls under the interpretive paradigm. Interpretive methods of IS can help researchers to produce an understanding of "human thought and action in social and organizational contexts" (Klein & Myers, 1999, p. 67).

Interpretivism is dependent on constructive ontology (Goldkuhal, 2012); its methods entail interpreting data with the aim of developing a deeper understanding of the participants' subjective meaning of experiences. In this sense, "access to reality (given or socially constructed) is only through social constructions such as language, consciousness and shared meaning" (Mayer, 1997). According to Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991), "ontologically, interpretive information systems research assumes that the social world (that is, social relations, organizations, division of labors) are not 'given'. Rather the social world is produced and reinforced by humans through action and interaction" (p. 14). In other words, the world is dependent on the many subjective experiences of that

world, and does not exist independently of experience. Accordingly, there is no possibility of 'objective' knowledge of the world; all we have are different experiences.

Within the interpretive paradigm, research activities can be conceptualized as consisting of a research methodology and a research method. Crotty (1998) suggests the interrelationship nature between the adopted theoretical stance and the used methodology and method. Methodology and method are closely related; the former refers to philosophy, and the latter refers to technical procedures applied to conduct research. On one hand, the research methodology reflects "a way of thinking about and studying social reality" (Strauss & Crobin, 1998, p. 3). Thus, it highlights the strategic approach, or plan of action, of how a researcher goes about finding knowledge and carrying out research; the strategic approach lies behind the choice and use of particular methods (Crotty, 1998). Methods, on the other hand, reflect the specific techniques used for data collection and analysis (Strauss & Crobin, 1998). Accordingly, to select a data gathering and analysis method, the choice of methods will be influenced by the chosen research methodology, which in turn will be influenced by the adopted theoretical perspective and epistemological stance.

In order to understand the role of social media in political change, an understanding of its context is necessary; events need to be dissected to reveal the complex processes from which they are constituted. Narrative inquiry offers a way through which one gives meaning to the experience of temporality and personal action (Polkinghorn, 1988). Therefore, it is most appropriate for the purpose of our research. Furthermore, we follow a narrative approach to process analysis, as summarized by

Pentland (1999b), to drive a social movement process theory with narrative from data collected from real social context, by empirically examining the role of social media in that process. Our narrative approach to process analysis extends prior social movement research by focusing on micro-level activities, examining social movement as a continuous process, and theorizing political change as the outcome of a dynamic socio-technical interaction.

3.2.   Research Methodology

Narrative is "an account of events occurring over time" (Burner, 1991, p.6). It represents a storied way of knowing and communicating (Hinchman & Hinchman, 1997; Riessman, 2003), and comprises "an ensemble of ways of constructing and representing the sequential, diachronic order of human events" (Burner, 1991, p.6). Davis (1992) indicated that "narrative should be conceived as the verbal designation or graphical, sculptural, choreographed, or other depiction – broadly, the discursive 'relating' – of a transition from one state of affairs to another" (p. 235). A narrative strategy to construct a detailed story includes identified event sequences, causes, and consequences. As stated by Riessman (2003), "what makes diverse texts 'narrative' is sequence and consequence: events are selected, organized, connected, and evaluated as meaningful for a particular audience" (p. 1). Thus, narrative is naturally suited to process analysis and explanation, because it embodies sequence and incorporates time as an organizing device (Pentland, 1999a; Langley, 1999). As stated by Pentland (1999a, p. 71), "stories help to explain the relationships between events in a process, or a narrative, and thus generate a meaningful explanation of what is causing a particular outcome." An emphasis on telling 'the whole

story' lends itself to providing a thick description that is "saturated with contextual overtones" (Putnam, 1983, p. 44). At the same time, it avoids excessive data reduction and thus preserves the variety and richness of the qualitative data. This strategy corresponds with the concept of case write-ups proposed by Eisenhardt (1989): to cope with the volume of the data, to become familiar with each case as a stand-alone entity, and to allow each case's unique patterns to emerge.

Narrative analysis involves using storytelling methodology, where the story becomes an object of study (the unit of analysis), focusing on how individuals or groups make sense of events and actions in their lives. The term refers to a family of methods for interpreting texts that have in common a storied form (Riessman, 2008, p. 11). It implies a general approach that views individuals within their social environments as actively conferring meaning onto objects in the world, including others and selves (Pentland, 1999b; Riessman, 2008). Narrative is often used to convey rich contextual information in relation to a series of events (Pentland & Feldman, 2007). Stories are the underlining narrative structure. "These stories are viewed as abstract conceptual models used in explanations of observed data" (Pentland, 1999a, p.711). "They reflect the deep structure of a narrative, and they are used to explain and interpret the surface structure of a narrative, which is the text of the discourse" (Pentland, 1999b, p. 711). When narrators tell a story, they give a 'narrative form to experience'; they develop a story from the data (which is text within context), based on the research question and perspective. They position characters in space and time; in a very broad sense, they give order to make sense of what happened – or what is imagined to have happened. Thus, it can be argued

that a narrative attempts to explain, or normalize, what has happened. The act of constructing a narrative, moreover, is considerably more than selecting events and then placing them in an appropriate order. The events themselves need to be constituted in the light of the overall narrative … to be made 'functions' of the story" (Bruner, 1991, p.711).

It is worth mentioning that studies have defined the term 'narrative' in different ways. Therefore, it is important to highlight the distinctions for three nested uses of the term. According to Riessman (2008), the term 'narrative' can refer to the practice of storytelling, narrative data, or narrative analysis. Narrative as a practice of storytelling implies a universal way of knowing and communicating. Narrative data refers to the empirical materials or objects for study. Finally, narrative analysis, or narrative method, refers to the systematic study of narrative data. In other words, narrative data is a tool that actors use to interpret things, and narrative analysis is a systematic interpretation of their interpretations (Burner, 1990; Riessman, 1993). Similarly, Czarniawska-Joerges (1995) categorized the use of narratives in organizational studies into three forms: "tales from the fields," organizational research written in a story-like form; "tales of the field," organizational research conceptualizing organizational life as story making; and "interpretive approach," organizational theory as story reading. The term 'narrative' as used in this study refers to this last meaning.

3.3.   Research Approach

Our narrative approach to process analysis is grounded in a body of research that views stories as fundamental theoretical constructs that help explain the events in a

process or a narrative (Pentland, 1999b). The focus here is on understanding the process

by which particular effects or outcomes develop over time (Markus & Robey, 1988).

While variance theories are mainly concerned with predicting an outcome by using

certain predictors and providing an explanation in terms of relationships among

dependent and independent variables, process theories focus more on the development of

the outcome by providing explanations in terms of events leading to that outcome

(Langley, 1999). Also, understanding the temporal ordering and probabilistic interaction

between entities is important to understanding the patterns in events and developing a

process theory (Langley, 1999; Mohr, 1982). Conceptualizing events and detecting

patterns among them can take different forms, but, as suggested by many studies, the

most common form is the "linear sequence of phases that occur over time to produce a

given result" (Pentland, 1999a). However, 'events' in this sense are different from

'variables'. Here, the precursor is assumed insufficient to "cause" the outcome, but is

only held to be necessary for it to occur (Newman & Robey, 1992). In this procedure, it is

important to avoid treating an event description sequence as an end in itself (Langley,

1999). In other words, the identification of the generative structures that shape the

process requires a theoretical interpretation that enables knowledge and understanding of

that process (McLeod & Doolin, 2012; Pentland, 1999b). This means some theoretical

apparatus is needed with which to articulate how and why a particular outcome emerges

(McLeod & Doolin, 2012; Pentland 1999b). Variables provide a connection to theory; on

the other hand, stories provide a connection to action and context. Thus, describing the

qualitative data as a series of sequent interconnected events that essentially tells the story

yields valuable insights that would be difficult, if not impossible, to capture in a variance model.

To generate our theoretical explanation, we adopt Dimaggio's (1995) view of 'theory as narrative'. In this sense, "an explanation is a story that describes the process, or sequence of events that connects cause and effect. In this view, good stories are central to building better theories" (Dimaggio, 1995, as cited by Pentland 1999b, p. 711). Our research strategy involves the construction of a process narrative – a story - from the raw data. The following section details the central concepts and the main building blocks that form the bases for the research analytical task.

3.4. Research Strategy and Design

"A good narrative analysis prompts the reader to think beyond the surface of a text" (Riessman, 2008, p. 13); as we move from observations toward the underlying structure, we move from description to explanation (Simon, 1992). However, "the data we collect are always limited to the surface. We have no direct access to the underlying structure of the phenomena we want to explain" (Pentland, 1999b, p. 712). Therefore, a critical challenge in theorizing is how to move from surface to deep structure. For process constructs (i.e., explanatory stories), we have no established procedures or tests, but narrative theory provides some important insights into the basic problem in narrative theory: determining the underlying processes that give rise to the events of a story. According to Pentland (1999b), "when the construct in question is a story, then the tools of narrative theory provide some guidance" (p. 719). He integrated three levels commonly used in narrative theory with an additional level that was implied by the work

of Van de Ven and Poole (1995) and Pentland (1999b). At the deepest level, there are the 'generative mechanisms', which highlight the processes that enable or constrain the events. These generative mechanisms, or what DiMaggio (1995) called 'generator models', "specify principles of individual or group action" (p. 392). The other levels are the fabula, which is defined as "a generic description of a particular set of events and their relationships"; the story, which represents a "version of the fabula from a specific point of view"; and the text, the most basic form at the surface level, "the particular telling of a story" (p. 719). Narrative theory is more concerned with the fabula, which reflects the ways specific sets of events are related, according to Pentland (1999b); these relationships are inherent in the story that is preserved under the text. The fabula forms the logic of the story. It is a series of causal events in a narrative that is produced by the reader of the data through interpretation. Table 2 summarizes these levels, and provides examples based on our study.

According to Riessman (2008), the classic structure of a narrative consists of a beginning, middle, and end. It also has a plot, "the ordering of the incidents, which constitutes the life blood of a narrative" (p. 4), defined by Ramiller and Pentland (2009) as "an underlying temporal sequence that unites the action in the story" (p. 479).

Table 2. Levels of Structure in a Narrative

	Level	Definition	Example
Participants' Story	Narrative Text	Particular telling of a story	Social media posts such as tweets, comments, pictures, and videos
	Story	Version of a fabula from a specific point of view	Collective cognitive development
	Fabula	Generic description of a particular set of events and their relationships	The structural units – the phases - of the process, such as collective awareness, collective memory… etc.
Researchers' Stories	Generating Mechanisms	Underlying structures that enable or constrain the fabula	Online social movement process for emergent political change

The result of an emplotted narrative analysis is a story, for example, a case study. This emplotment means "introducing structure that allows making sense of the events reported" (Czarniawska, 2004, p. 122). "To rise to the demand of 'making sense', a plot [needs to go] beyond mere chronology to identify the causal connections among actors, actions, events, and outcomes" (Ramiller & Pentland, 2009, p. 479). Young (1987) argued that one event causes another, and it is that causality that is more essential than the mere chronological telling of the story.

Similarly, the three elements of explanations discussed by Pentland (1999a) are antecedents, consequences, and sequential patterns. Antecedents' connection to consequences is explained by describing the events that connect them. However, describing events does not, by itself, explain the underling process that generates them. An explanation must draw on the generative mechanisms that drive the process. This process is viewed as the underlying construct. Therefore, in order to explain the

underlying structure of the phenomena, we need to explain the underlying process that gives rise to those events. In this sense, "narrative shaping entails imposing a meaningful pattern on what would otherwise be random and disconnected" (Riessman, 2008, p. 5). Consequently, the analytical task requires the researcher to "develop or discover a plot that displays the linkage among the data elements as parts of an unfolding temporal development culminating in the denouement" (Polkinghorn, 1995, p.15).

According to Riessman (2008, p. 84), a "fully formed" narrative contains six elements: "an abstract (summary and/or 'point' of the story); orientation (to time, place, characters, situation); complicating action (the event sequence, or plot, usually with a crisis or turning point); evaluation (where the narrator steps back from the action to comment on meaning and communicate emotions – the 'soul' of the narrative); resolution (the outcome of the plot); and a coda (ending the story and bringing action back to the present). Not all stories contain all elements, and they occur in varying sequence" (p. 84). Alternatively, Clandinin and Connelly (2000), in their discussion of narrative analysis coding procedures, highlight that researchers code data by looking for narrative features such as details of the settings, plotlines, characters, and actions within a participant's account.

Moreover, Riessman (2008) has discussed different modes of narrative analysis - a typology of analytical approaches, including thematic analysis, structural analysis, dialogical/performance analysis, and visual analysis - that could be used in isolation or in combination to study narratives (Riessman, 2008). While thematic analysis emphasizes the content of a text, or "what is said" – the told -, structural analysis focus on how

contents are organized, or "how it's said" – the telling-. On the other hand,

dialogical/performance analysis interrogates how talk among speakers is interactively, or

dialogically, produced or performed as narrative. This approach draws on components of

thematic and structural analysis but folds them into broader research inquiries. The

attention here expands from the speech – what is said and how it is said – to the

dialogical process and environment in all its complexity (Riessman, 2008). Finally, visual

analysis can be viewed as an "illustration as images become 'text' to be read

interpretively" (p. 6). Attention here is shifted toward how and why images were

produced, and how they are read by different audiences (Riessman, 2008, p. 6). These

modes of narrative analysis as discussed by Riessman (2008) are employed here in our

research to drive the data analysis procedures and produce our research narrative – story-

from the raw data. Further details on the specifics about data collection and data analysis

procedures will be provided in the following chapters. However, before discussing the

application of research methodology and the details of the data analysis process, an

account of the context of Egypt within which the 2011 Egyptian revolutionary political

change took place is necessary as it is an important element in analyzing the data and

understanding the research phenomena. Accordingly, the following chapter provides an

overview of Egypt's context, highlighting the factors and activities that contributed to the

2011 political change.

CHAPTER IV

THE CASE OF THE 2011 EGYPTIAN REVOLUTION
BORN THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA: THE ANTECEDENTS

Like all true revolutions, it belongs to the people.

Joanna Macy

The "Arab Spring" events that were initiated in early 2011 have drawn scholars' attention to the potential and role of social media in political change in authoritarian regimes. Despite the perspective's variation of this role, an understanding of how social media influenced the social movement for revolutionary political change as events unfolded is missing. This study addresses this gap. Particularly, the purpose of our study is to understand the context of social media and generate a knowledge of how and why revolutionary political change developed over time using the case of the 2011 Egyptian revolution. Analyzing any aspect of the Egyptian revolution and assessing the role of social media without a consideration of the contextual factors and the contingencies of place and time could limit our understanding and lead to technological determinism (Morozov, 2011; Paulussen, 2008). As Anderson (2011) argues, the important story about the 2011 revolts in Egypt is not about the actual use of technology but the hows and whys that led to the use of technology. As stated by Iskander (2011), "we have to respect the complexity and multifaceted nature of the revolutions, rather than resorting to categorizing them and labeling them in a manner that oversimplifies or undermines their true nature and special dynamic" (as cited by Khamis and Vaughn, 2011). In this sense, it

is important to understand the nuances of the relationship between social media and political activism in the context in which the Egyptian revolution took place. Therefore, the goal of this chapter of the dissertation is to place the role of social media and its social context during the 2011 uprising within the larger context of Egypt, to emphasize the factors and activities that contributed to the eventual outcome of the social movement process. Our research views the 2011 Egyptian revolution as "the conditions and activities that led to and defined the anti-government protests that occurred between January 25 and February 11, 2011, leading to the resignation of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak" (Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011, p. 1209).

4.1.   Background to the Egyptian Revolution

The deposition of President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, who kept the country under tight dictatorial rule for 30 years, was a result of mass protests fueled by and coordinated through social media in an 18-day revolution. While social media played a significant role in the 2011 Egyptian revolution, there are a number of other factors and activities that generated the conditions that contributed to the development of the events that formed the social movement process leading to political change. Accordingly, in order to adequately address our research question, this section examines the context of Egypt, with an emphasis on our case-defining features. Keeping this focus in mind, we establish general areas organized around our research question to guide our case analysis of the 2011 Egyptian revolution. Here we seek information about the country's sociopolitical context, the Egyptian media context, the Internet and activism in Egypt (including the use of social media), and the nature of the case of the 2011 revolution, particularly its

development and activities. The following sections present the major findings in these areas, emphasizing the context in Egypt and the use of social media in the anti-governmental protests in Egypt. Analytically, when studying the role of social media in any political process, politics comes first (Wolfsfeld et al., 2013). This means in order to understand the role of social media in social movements, it is important to think about the surrounding political environment (Wolfsfeld et al., 2013). The following section summarizes our findings related to Egypt's sociopolitical context.

4.1.1. The Historical Context of Egypt

Egypt has been a republic since 1953, beginning in 1952 when the Egyptian Revolution overturned the monarchy of King Farouk, which led to the temporary installation of a government under Naguib (Ahmed, 1992). Since the declaration of the Republic, four Egyptians have served as presidents (Ahmed, 1992), and Mohamed Hosni Mubarak was the fourth president, since 1981. Hosni Mubarak was criticized for many years by the media. Despite criticism of his government due to economic decline and the increasing influence of Islamist fundamentalism, Mubarak was re-elected in 1987 and then elected for a third time in 1993. The three decades of rule made Mubarak the longest-serving president in the history of Egypt (Sedra, 2013).

Before the 2011 events, the Egyptian political system was quite stable (Cook, 2007). This long-term domestic stability was established based on a divide-and-rule strategy that kept the opposition off balance and at loggerheads. Similar to other semi-authoritarian regimes, Egypt allowed a number of legal parties to operate and organize in the political system. Yet, by allowing certain parties access to power and privilege, the

regime drove a wedge between the opposition camps (Lust-Okar, 2007). Also, the underlying patterns and processes of Egyptian polices prevented further liberalization (Cook, 2007). Presidential and parliamentary elections lacked transparency. The Egyptian regime was described as being personal (Kassem, 2004; Heydemann, 2007). As an authoritarian regime, it survived by what Heydemann (2007) calls "upgrading authoritarianism" – selectively creating openings in the electoral arena and the economic sphere, while pursuing closer relationships with foreign powers that shared their lack of interest in human rights and democracy (p. 7). According to Hanna (2009), the architecture of electoral control erected by the Mubarak regime made any challenge or change difficult at best. Regardless of the basis of Egyptian authoritarian stability, there were no clear and present dangers to its authority on the horizon. In sum, studies showed a wide agreement that the mobilization capacity of the various opposition groups in the country to be very low, and thus any change or democratization was highly unlikely. Throughout those 30 years of authoritarian rule, Egyptians were continually subject to economic, political, and cultural marginality and socioeconomic immobility.

Under Mubarak, the social and political climates were stifling. "Corruption permeated all government bodies" (Eltantwy and Wiest, 2011, p. 1210), and "was considered to be at one of the highest rates in the country's history" (Sedra, 2013, p. 2). Police brutality and human rights violations against Egyptian citizens were widespread and continuous, as reported by many Egyptian and international human rights organizations (Sedra, 2013). Also, the political conditions for Egyptian citizens were oppressive, inhibiting free expression, non-governmental political activity or

participation, and protest opportunities. Since 1967, the country was under a nearly constant state of emergency, allowing the government as a result to detain citizens at any time for long periods, censor the media, squash political opposition and protests without formal charges, and deploy corruption around the country (Egypt extending state of emergency violates rights, 2008; Egypt Profile, 2012; Eltantwy & Wiest, 2011). As a result of this law, "the powers of the police and security forces were extended, constitutional rights suspended, and censorship was legalized" (Sedra, 2013, p. 2). "In a further show of power, Mubarak drafted 34 constitutional amendments, in 2007, that increased his control and further stifled the masses" (Eltantwy and Wiest, 2011, p. 1211). For a long time, the government was successful in keeping "a strong grip over the opposition, academic environment, political and governmental bodies, as well as trade and student unions," impeding civic engagement in the country (Sedra, 2013, p. 2). Moreover, "the country failed to develop an environment of political pluralism that would support democratization as well as rights and freedoms of different political movements" (Sedra, 2013, p. 2).

Also, the economic conditions were frustrating. The global financial crisis in 2008 raised food prices and increased the number of people living under poverty (Sedra, 2013). According to the UNDP annual report, about 20% of the Egyptian population then lived below the poverty line (UNDP, 2010); many Egyptian poor were unable to satisfy basic needs (Eltantwy and Wiest, 2011; Hassan, 2011). Sedra (2013) stated that "In late 2010, around 40 percent of Egypt's population of 80 million lived on two US dollars per day with a large part of the population relying on subsidized goods." (p. 2). Although the

government carried economic reforms, the most visible economic reforms of the regime

had been to the benefit of Mubarak and his close circle. Many news sources reported an

estimated wealth of about $70 billion for Mubarak. The regime failed to reduce the

poverty rate, which increased to 50% in 2011 (Sedra, 2013). These conditions gradually

intensified public impatience and ignited their anger with the regime, which appeared to

be enduring, as Mubarak was preparing his son Gamal to succeed him. Mubarak's

decision furthered the Egyptian people's frustration, which had already been simmering

due to the sociopolitical and economic problems, and provided them a cause to go out

and protest against the regime.

Many studies also argued that the "youth bulge" formed an important reason and

role in the political events in the Middle East and North Africa (LaGraffe, 2012).

Demographic experts warned of the dangers of the "demographic time-bomb" in the Arab

World, including Egypt. Studies showed that about 60% of the Arab population were

under the age of 25, and were more educated. At the same time, they had more access to

information technology than any previous generation. In a study conducted by Booz and

Company (2010), results indicated that there had been a radical transformation from

traditional media into new digital media in the Middle East and North Africa (Charline et

al., 2010). Also, studies show that Internet use was rapidly growing in the Arab countries

(Howard, 2011), mainly among young people, especially the 20- to 30-year-old age

group, which used the Internet more avidly compared to the rest of the population

(Abdulla, 2007). Statistics showed that Egypt had the largest number of Internet service

providers in the Arab countries (Aladwani, 2003). Internet users in Egypt were

approximately 29.8 million, comprising 35.6 present of the population by the end of June

2012 (Internet World Stats, 2012). Also, Egypt had the highest number of social media

users of any Middle Eastern or North African country. On one hand, users of the

Facebook social media site alone were estimated to be almost 12 million (out of 22

million Arabian users) in September 2012, with a 14.1 percent penetration rate (Internet

World Stats, 2012). On the other hand, most of them were unemployed, according to the

United Nations Development Program (UNDP). For a long time, the country was unable

to provide jobs and benefits for its disproportionally large number of young

demographics. Studies indicated that in Egypt, unemployment was the highest amongst

university graduates, a demographic group that was quickly increasing and at the same

time the most dependent upon government for employment (Assad and Roudi-Fahimi,

2007; Sedra, 2013). The high rates of unemployment made it hard for millions of young

Egyptians to find jobs. The crucial aspect of these trends was that the surplus of educated,

unemployed youth was the explosive mix that ignited and played the most prominent role

in the recent social and political movements in the Arab World (Perspectives, 2011) This

was especially true in Egypt, since Egyptians tended to be more educated and

technologically advanced compared to other countries in the region. Combined with the

factors of having a repressive regime, which was increasingly out of touch with Egyptian

citizens' needs, and having a leader who was aging and oppressive, these young,

disenfranchised, active Internet users began to engage in the political process in the

country; they were the driving force behind the Egyptian Revolution, as we will discuss

later.

4.1.2. Media Context in Egypt

For a long time, media in the Arab countries, including Egypt, lacked transparency and independence. Most media in the Arab world prior to 1990 was owned by governments and functioned under strict governmental supervision, regulation, and control (Khamis and Vaughn, 2011). Government's censorship of the media led to the delivery of inaccurate information to the public. Many authors argued that the reason behind this practice was to keep people uninformed and thus incapable of effective participation in political debates (Mellor, 2007). In this sense, an autocratic government's attempts to control media underpinned their efforts to control news and information and thus political discussions.

In Egypt, media played an important role not only in Egypt but also in the Middle East (Abdulla, 2014). Egypt was a leader in the Middle East region in media content production, "which is the main reason why the Egyptian dialect of Arabic is widely understood all over the Arab world" (Abdulla, 2014, p. 3). Since the early 1950s when the country gained its independence from the British, Egyptian rulers have realized this "importance of the media to the country's position as a political and cultural leader, as well as their regimes' ability to control the masses" (Abdulla, 2014, p. 3). The important role of media in Egypt had important implications for how the regime in Egypt managed the media sector. Typically, the government "used the media in Egypt to serve its political agenda and spread its messages" (Abdulla, 2014, p. 3). Print media followed the same pattern, and Egyptians were subject to a moribund local print press. Newspapers were basically "mouthpieces for the government" (Abdulla, 2014, p. 4). Although the

state legally licensed opposition parties to run their own newspapers, they were not considered trusted sources of news, because their affiliation with the state in the form of acquiescence to its rules made them suspect in the eyes of many. Several media scholars explained this gap between the opposition and active change by using a "safety valves" idea (Seib, 2007). According to this idea, oppositional media formed a platform that was exploited by autocratic ruling regimes for people to vent their anger and feelings of resentment toward their government, instead of taking active steps toward influencing transformation or facilitating radical reform, thus replacing actions with words (Seib, 2007).

The introduction of satellite television channels after 1990 helped to expand the public space (Abdulla, 2014; Lynch, 2011). Satellite television channels represented a critical change from state-controlled and government-owned media to a more divers pattern, with competing voices that represented different political positions. Nevertheless, satellite television's impact on the political sphere only lasted for a short period and proved to be limited (Lynch, 2011). A possible reason for this limited effect of television can be, as highlighted by Postman (1985) years ago, is its passive nature as a communication medium. In other words, satellite television and the "new Arab public" generated by it, were not interactive. Thus, regardless of the undeniable impact of satellite television, there was an obvious missing link in the press environment, since there was no one on the ground honestly covering local Egyptian political issues in a way that earned widespread public trust. The lack of credible information formed an important condition that aroused a need for an alternative source of information among citizens.

The growth of communication on the Internet also promoted new opportunities for free expression to opposition movements. As a result of government efforts to expand the country's information technology capabilities to boost economic development, this period reflected a substantial access to the Internet among Egyptians (Abdulla, 2006; Hamdy, 2009). Beginning in 1999, the government took steps to encourage Internet proliferation and accessibility. Government's initiatives included low cost computers, free Internet access, and the expansion of Internet access centers (Abdulla, 2006; Hamdy, 2009). This turn highlighted the ambivalent and complex relationship between media and the government in Egypt. "By 2000, there were 68 private companies providing Internet services using Telecom Egypt's infrastructure" (Sedra, 2013). According to Sedra (2013), "Egypt's Internet penetration rate grew from less than one percent in 2000, to five percent in 2004, to 25 percent in 2009 and, most recently it reached 40 percent" (p. 2). Internet and data services providers grew to more than 200, making Egypt one of the cheapest countries in Africa in terms of Internet access (Sedra, 2013). Ironically, Egyptians used many Internet websites and blogs to defy and resist the repressive government and the autocratic regime of Mubarak.

In the early 2000s, a number of bloggers became prominent for talking about several thorny issues in the country. The initial blogs were only published in English, but the development of Arabic software encouraged the creation of more blogs in Arabic, thus attracting a wider audience (Hamdy, 2009). However, the regime's desire and capacity to carry out state censorship and official control were extended over these relatively new (to Egypt) forms of communication. Many studies showed that, contrary to

expectations, dictators managed to design sophisticated systems of controls that served to prevent the free flow of information (Lynch, 2006). For instance, during the Egyptian election in October 2010, the government blocked some opposition online newspapers, such as the Muslim Brotherhood's online newspaper (Dunn, 2000). In addition, the regime managed to effectively harass and repress bloggers and other participants in online media. For instance, more than 100 bloggers were arrested in 2008 alone (Ghannam, 2011). Nevertheless, the Internet fostered political commentary and organization, adding to the richness of political debates; with the sheer number of blogs and web pages, state censors were constantly challenged to keep up. So even in states that claimed to have successfully filtered internet content, it would be impossible for governments to fully censor all political blogging and content. In fact, no country in the region saw a bigger impact from blogging and other forms of Internet activism than Egypt (Faris, 2010). Thus, overall the Internet was beneficial to creating "a more level playing field for opposition" (Teitelbaum, 2003, p. 237).

4.1.3. Political Protest and the Growth of Digitally Augmented Activism in Egypt

The 2011 revolution was not the first time a protest appeared in Egypt. Opposition in Egypt against Mubarak had been brewing for a long time, but only disjointedly. Egyptians had been suffering for years; as they were already fed up with the degree of corruption, dictatorship, economic distress, and humiliation, many protest movements and activist groups were already active in the Egyptian political arena. Yet, many demonstrations came and went, and plans for a large-scale protest often failed. For instance, one of the biggest challenges to Egyptian authoritarianism was the formation of

Kefaya (The Egyptian Movement for Change) in 2004 (Mustafa, 2011). The launch of

this movement served as a starting point for activists' mobilization against Mubarak and

his regime. *Kefaya* is a word with a unique meaning in Egyptian context (a colloquial for

"Enough!"). The movement, which included intellectuals and figures from across the

political spectrum demanding political reform, has been difficult to categorize. However,

the group focal point of agreement was that "Mubarak must go" (Baheyya, 2005). This

movement galvanized people in a way that had not happened in a long time; their street

protests were bold and undertaken without the regime's permission, which in any case

remained quite hard to obtain (Shorbagy, 2007). Other groups included the Muslim

Brotherhood, which was active despite its officially bad status, and Ayman Nour's

political party (Hizb el Ghad). Those groups and movements had many previous protest

attempts to effect change in the country. However, those protests became rote and easy

enough for the regime to disrupt by banning them, interfering with them, and arresting

activists after the fact. According to Mustafa (2011), the reason for these movements'

limited success and ineffectiveness in bringing about real change was their failure to

achieve public mobilization on a massive scale. Most of their marches and protests

attracted only few hundred, which made it easy for the police to crack down on them.

Egyptian tech-savvy activists also fought back against state control of the Internet

prior to the 2011 protests. Many in the movements had reached out to the international

community to educate themselves on new technologies in order to bypass state controls.

For instance, the April 6 Movement received technical advice from an Italian anarchist

party on how to use "ghost servers" that "bounce Internet searches to nonexistent servers

to confuse any online monitoring, allowing users, consequently, to share information and continue coordinating their activities in heavily monitored digital environments" (Ishani, 2011). Others worked with the Kenyan NGO Ushahidi to develop their "capabilities for securely and credibly capturing raw videos and reporting on the ground … and building online content around it;" and more received training from a U.S. NGO on how to use mapping tools, such as Google Maps and UMapper, to document protests and choose demonstration sites (Ishani, 2011). Also, the growth of the Egyptian blogosphere encouraged activists to utilize other communication technologies, such as Facebook and Flicker social media sites. For instance, April 6, 2008, marked the first Egyptian-instigated online activism attempt, in which a young factory worker, Esraa Abdul-Fatah, and other activists created a Facebook page "The April 6 Youth Movement" calling textile workers in Mahalla to join a general strike. The strike protested against the rise in the prices of basic commodities and declining salaries. Although the page attracted 70,000 supporters, the strike was defeated by state security forces (Hamdy, 2009). In addition, on the day after the strike, Abdul-Fatah was arrested for planning and organizing the Facebook group, and was forced by the regime's authorities to apologize for her role in the movement. It was not until two years later, in June 2010, that Facebook made another appearance on the scene of political activism, this time to commemorate the death of Khaled Said. His death was believed to be a significant incident in the 2011 revolution, and the knowledge and experience gained in the previous social media trials proved useful in the 2011 protests and the subsequent revolution.

These factors made the case of Egypt very different, compared to Tunisia, as discussed by Lynch (2011). Before the revolution in the country, Tunisia's context was characterized by a high degree of control and restriction of the information environment. This in turn made most people unaware of the level of dissatisfaction with the ruling regime that may be shared by their fellow citizens. Egypt, on the other hand, had a much more lively and vibrant communications environment, especially over the previous decade, where many oppositional voices against the ruling regime already existed and were generally heard by many (Lynch, 2011). Therefore, the Egyptian revolution was not about how citizens felt about the regime, but rather about knowing how many people were willing to participate in protests, the risks it involved, and the chances of success (Lynch, 2011). Accordingly, until the occurrence of the 2011 revolution event, there was a limited way to estimate the depth of opposition in Egypt or assess the citizens' willingness to participate and protest against Mubarak's regime. In this sense, social media helped to link online to offline activism and turn protests into a wide act of public revolt, as we discuss in the following section.

4.1.4. The Emergence of a New System of Political Communication

The rise of overall Internet usage in politics in the Arab world was followed by the rise in social media usage in the region for social and political expression, participation, organization, and change. One of social media's largest impacts was on the mobilization of protesters. Many significant changes had taken place in the Arab world in general, and Egypt in particular following the introduction of social media; social media platforms and tools were used strategically by the revolutionary forces to advance their

cause and overthrow Hosni Mubarak after thirty years in power. Prior to the 2011 revolts event, Egypt had a very active blogger activist community who were largely free to discuss regime corruption and complain about the lack of political and economic freedom. However, despite the availability of political information and news of public events, as well as the increasing level of political dissatisfaction that was largely shared among Egyptian citizens, the link was missing between public anger and resentment of Mubarak's regime and the actual public mobilization to bring about change. Social media succeeded in establishing this connection between political activism in the virtual world and the real world. Through providing a multiplicity of tools and unique networking opportunities, social media empowered Egyptian people to act, organize, and mobilize on the streets.

Decades of oppression spurred citizens to use social media to advance their attempts at democracy. Young citizens who were dissatisfied with the status in the country and with traditional media's coverage of events began to use social media to engage in political discourse through sharing their stories and expressing their opinions. Egyptians learned about each other and recognized the depth of the opposition in Egypt against Mubarak and his regime. Social networking sites made it impossible for the authoritarian regime to control media environments in the way that it had typically done in the past. Therefore, social media provided Egyptians an alternative voice to traditional state-controlled media outlets that reflected the government's views, challenging as a result governmental media censorship. At the same time, it offered people a place to meet, discuss, and organize around shared views and goals. The unique networked nature

of social media was a key factor threatening the authoritarian regime in Egypt. Social networking sites enabled peer-to-peer communication between users; at the same time, these sites were linked to each other, permitting users' ideas and images to be transmitted to a large number of people in the country. Accordingly, social media facilitated the constitution of political communities in a society that had been effectively and consistently depoliticized for decades.

These communities began to create an alternate social reality that was grounded in a language and symbols that reflected the actual social and political issues and events more accurately than the state media did; state media constantly made distortions and expanded the perceived gap between the current ethics and aspirations of people and the present reality of Egyptians' everyday life. This language of 'lie' or 'falsehood' from the regime was in stark contrast to the language and symbols created by the activists. The new discourse of the activists was a refreshing outlet in cyberspace and was a true reflection of the reality on the ground for ordinary Egyptians. Also, these online social communities reflected widely shared views in Egyptian society, making the protesting idea worthwhile and safe for those who were oppressed by the regime. Consequently, social media helped to turn small protests into a huge challenge to the regime that led to its ultimate end. The following section provides details about the 18-day Egyptian revolution of the 2011, and discusses the specifics reasons for the revolution and the influence of several factors, including the usage of social media sites.

4.1.5. The Initiating Conditions of the Egyptian Revolt

The intense political climate and several politically motivated events contributed to the development of the social movement and success of the 2011 Egyptian revolution. One of the most significant events that motivated the protest movement was the brutal death of Khaled Said under disputed circumstances in June 2010. "There were many catalysts of the uprising," said Ahmed Zidan, an online political activist, "the first was the brutal murder of Khalid Said." Although many blogs and videos existed about police torture and violence prior to Khaled Said's death, there was not a strong community around them. The case of Khaled Said changed that by generating the connection between activism and the everyday life of citizens in Egypt.

Said, a young man from Alexandria, was like many of the young men in Egypt who suffered from the harsh realities of high unemployment and social immobility. According to Eltantwy and Wiest (2011), "Said was patronizing an Internet café when he was approached by two undercover police officers. Media reports and bloggers claim that the officers demanded money from Said and, when he told them he does not have it, they began beating him inside the café" (p. 1211). Witnesses described what exactly happened; Said was taken out and his head was smashed into marble stairs. The brutal beating continued outside until Said died and was left on the street. A police vehicle later collected Said's body, and his family was reportedly told that Said was involved in drug trade, and had died after chocking on a packet of marijuana while in police custody (El Amrani, 2010). However, Said supporters believed that he was killed because the police officers were irritated by him as he had shot a video about their corruption. The video,

which was eventually posted on YouTube, showed the two officers exchanging money after a drug deal. In spite of the conflicting stories, what was clear was that the police behavior created conditions that contributed to Said's death. Hassan Naffa of the independent satellite channel Al-Masr Al Youm (Egypt Today, 2010) emphasized that "[Said] was still a citizen with full rights. Even if he was carrying marijuana, he should have been arrested in a way that respects his humanity and safeguards his rights. If he broke the law, he should have been given a fair trial and punished accordingly if proven guilty" (para. 3).

Immediately after Said's death, images of his corpse were disseminated by witnesses on all social networking sites (Crovitz, 2011). What made this case different from many other events is that Said was just an ordinary citizen. He was not an activist or involved in politics or a religious radical; he was just a young man who documented an evidence of corruption and published it. His death made a point that everyone in Egypt could be Said. Thus, the Said tragedy was seen as Egypt's tragedy; this incident provoked outrage among people and sparked public outcry. Said's death became a powerful symbol of police brutality against civilians, a way to focus Egyptians' perceptions on the oppression in Egypt, and a rallying point for those who desired change in Egypt.

Following the Said incident, many activists waged campaigns against the regime, mostly outside the mainstream. Although many Facebook pages started with posts about Said's death, they quickly grew into campaigns against rights abuses in Egypt. Egyptians used social networking sites to track corrupt officers and other police abuses, post photos and videos, and publish names of allegedly abusive police officers. Consequently, this

activity focused even more attention on the illegal arrests of citizens, abuse of prisoners, and corrupt government (Crovitz, 2011).

Then came the revolution's initiating event: the self-immolation of a young and jobless Tunisian, Mohamed Bouazizi, who set himself ablaze in the middle of a street in the provincial town of Sidi Bouzid after being deprived of his vegetable stand and humiliated by the authorities. This triggered popular movements and historic events in the Arab World completely unexpected in their magnitude. The Tunisian revolution began on December 17, 2010 and ended with the fall of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali on January 15, 2011. The outcome of the Tunisian revolution created a condition that motivated and inspired Egyptians to organize their own revolution. The Tunisian revolution provided Egyptians with direct guidance and support; Egyptians were able to connect with fellow Tunisian activists to get tips and teachings on protest coordination and organization. The geographic features, such as proximity to Tunisia, and the similarity in the social conditions gave Egyptians hope to influence change in their country. As stated by Eltantwy and Wiest (2011), "Egypt and Tunisia are North African neighbors, separated by Libya and overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. Both are majority Muslim countries and share the Arabic language, and both have been ruled by dictators for decades. These commonalities help to explain the Egyptian interest in Tunisia." (p. 1211).

Initial euphoria was transformed into broad political awareness among the political actors in Egypt through the remarkable process of people's self-empowerment. The Tunisian revolution shifted the conversations in social media sites to an aggressive

political tone. That is not say that Tunisia caused the Egyptian revolution, but it certainly was an added motivating factor for the significant opposition that already existed. Many Egyptians were already planning to protest in Cairo's Tahrir Square on January 25, 2011, the official holiday known as Egypt's Army Day, when Mubarak was going to give a speech to celebrate and honor the police revolt suppressed by the British (Hopkins, 2011). The success of the Tunisian revolution played an important role in encouraging Egyptian citizenry and strengthening their collective identity, mainly as a result of the commonality of the repressive circumstances under which both groups lived, as well as in their reasons for protests.

4.1.6. The 2011 Egyptian Revolution

There were many reasons for Egyptians' grievances, motivating them to mobilize and protest against the regime in Egypt. Persistent corruption, brutality, and human rights violations were the most prominent reasons to strike against Mubarak. People wanted to get rid of emergency law as well as the army that has been in place since the 1952 revolution, with the aim of disposing of the corrupted security force. The limitations on the freedoms of thought, speech, and the right to assemble were other causes that were raised by the protest movement. Moreover, Egyptians wanted the authoritarian regime to be overthrown and replaced by a democratic system. Additional motives for protest were the many economic issues in Egypt, including low wages and a high unemployment rate that was worsening. For instance, workers' wages were at $7 per month and had not changed for twenty years (Franklin, 2011). Moreover, in 2011, statistics indicated that 11.9 percent of Egyptians were unemployed (Feteha, 2011). Even when working, the low

wages provided an incentive to take bribes to facilitate people's work, thus increasing the extent of corruption.

Utilizing social media sites, Egyptians were able to plan and organize a series of collective actions against torture and injustice. On one of the Facebook pages, for instance, more than 80,000 people clicked on 'attend' for the demonstration on January 25, 2011. On Egypt National Day, January 25, thousands of people on the street at Tahrir Square in Cairo protested against police abuses under Mubarak's government and demanded social change. That day is known as the Day of Anger (Berger, 2011). Howard and Hussain (2011) explained that Egyptians united through digital media and then called their social networks to protest in the streets. On Friday, January 28, 2011, known as the Friday of Rage, the demands of the movement shifted. Many protesters streamed from mosques around Cairo and joined thousands of others asking Mubarak and his regime to step down. On Tuesday, February 1, 2011, the movement reached its peak, and activists planned the March of the Million to demand the resignation of Mubarak (Cottle, 2011). After 18 days of non-stop demonstrations, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak resigned his three-decade-long rule on February 11, 2011, a day known as Farewell Friday, and the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) led Egypt. The significant outcome of the 2011 Egyptian revolution is perhaps the most unexpected development in the history of the Arab world; a popular and peaceful revolution that reflected a collective opposition of a diverse society against dictatorship was successful in toppling Mubarak, the president of Egypt for 30 years. The fall of Mubarak as a result of the 2011 Egyptian

revolution is the most recent example that highlights the impact of social media on social and political mobilization for revolutionary political change.

While it is impossible to isolate the influence of social media from the swirl of events that set off the popular revolution across Egypt, there is no doubt that these social tools provided new means for ordinary people to connect, mobilize, and organize. The political importance of social media in Egypt was building for years, and social media's role evolved enormously as more people started to uploaded pictures and videos showing government abuses and violations. Social media networks increasingly became a credible source of information, turning the social issues and political events in Egypt into popular debates. Sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube allowed like-minded young citizens to find each other and to seize the opportunity for political change. With the conversation on social networks translating into street protests, the relationship between online and offline forms of protest was highlighted. Social media was also a crucial tool in both coordinating among protesters and in spreading the word, locally and globally, particularly because the Egyptian public sphere was tightly controlled. The impact of social media on the activities of protests reflected the dynamic and powerful role that social media's tools played in Egypt to incite anti-police and anti-government demonstrations. Therefore, by examining the 2011 Egyptian revolution as a case study, this research delves into the potential offered by social media to generate and facilitate social movement processes for revolutionary political change. The following chapter presents the overall strategy and design that we used to address the research question, and then the chapter outlines the specifics for the collection and analysis of data.

CHAPTER V

RESEARCH STRATEGY AND DESIGN

> Life is not primarily a choice; it is interpretation. Outcomes are generally less significant (both behaviorally and ethically) than processes. It is the process that gives meaning to life, and meaning is the core of life.
>
> Giuseppe Mantovani

The case inquiry of this study uses a process-oriented approach, since the research problem being investigated is concerned with the process as well as the outcome of the social-technical interactions within the context of Egypt. Particularly, following Pentland (1999b), a narrative approach to process analysis has been used in this study, as it allows focusing on the context and process as well as the interpretations of the actors and the role of social media reflected in their (inter)actions. These are elements that are often omitted in IS studies that rely on variance approaches and quantitative data (Markus & Robey, 1988; Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991). This approach is believed to be the most suitable research strategy to provide a rich understanding of the social interactions that underlined the events, to describe the context in which events occurred, and produce an explanation of the deep structure of the citizens' social movement process through which political change occurred. In this chapter, we provide an overview that summarizes the focus of the study followed by a discussion of the study data collection and analysis.

5.1.   Research Overview

In order to address our research question, we examine social media's role during the 2011 Egyptian revolution, using rich data collected during the period of the events from social media sites, including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. In our study, an emergent process perspective, as discussed by Markus and Roby (1988), was used to conceptualize our phenomena of interest. Citizens' social movement here was viewed as a dynamic and multi-dimensional process in which social and political changes emerge unpredictably, as a result of the complex interactions between people and technology within a particular social context. As discussed by Orlikowasky (1992), understanding how technology is used is a function of the material and social elements, as well as the context in which a technology is used. In this sense, understanding the role of IS (in our case, social media) is interrelated with and inseparable from its contextual setting (Orlikowaski 1992, Suchman 2007). The interaction between people and technology produces an effect that provides the material and social circumstances in which subsequent interaction occurs (Suchman, 2007), and thus shapes the future phases in an emergent process. Therefore, rather than focusing on one side of the revolutionary political change phenomena, our analysis attempts to address both the technological and social aspects as well as the reciprocal relationship between them.

Further, we employ an analysis strategy and design that are grounded in narrative methods to develop a process-oriented view of the Egyptian revolution and fall of Mubarak, and we present the story that occurred in 2011 as an emergent and less than predictable event. Our research question views a social movement as a process, and

conceptualizes political change as a dependent outcome of this process. This process of

social movement facilitates the development of the cognitive structure necessary for the

organization and coordination of the collective action preceding the political change.

Also, the process highlights the contextual conditions, the properties of social media and

its influence on the participants' experience of the events in general, and the role played

by social media's tools in each phase of the events leading to the outcome. The findings

of our study provide a contextual narrative that offers a meaningful explanation of the

process outcome. The following sections summarize the study's data collection and

analysis strategy.

5.2.   Narrative Analysis Strategy Guidelines

As we discussed previously, the goal of our study is to produce an emplotted

narrative analysis. Here, the construct in question is a story – a process narrative – that

describes the sequence of events that connect cause and effect. Using narrative methods

is valuable to IS research because narrative "brings technology into the analysis as

something that enables or constrains meaningful action" (Pentland, 1999b, p.7). For

example, similar to Burke's (1969) view of an email, Facebook can be viewed as more

than an online site; it can be conceptualized as an agency that was used by actors to

perform some act for some purpose, during the different phases of the social movement.

Similarly, as stated by Morozov (2011) in his discussion of the challenge in analyzing the

impact of the Internet on political activism, in order to analyze social media's impact on

political change, it is important first "to determine the kind of qualities and activities that

are essential to the success of the democratic struggle in a particular country or context

and second, to understand how a particular medium of campaigning or facilitating collective action affects those qualities and activities" (p. 198). In other words, "retaining the dramatic implications of the technology creates the possibility of understanding it from the point of view of the role it play in the social world" (Pentland, 1999b, p. 7).

While there is no established theoretical framework for narrative analysis, narrative theory provides some guidance (Bruner, 1991; Burke, 1969; Creswell, 2009; Pentland, 1999a; Polkinghorne, 1995; Riessman, 2008). Thus, our research considered the combined characteristics of narrative analysis to develop our analysis strategy guidelines: (1) Selecting the dataset (the surface structure of the narrative) and collecting data; (2) Identifying the boundaries of the phenomenon; (3) Organizing the data to develop the sequential patterns, which include events selection, sequencing, connecting, and evaluating; and (4) Producing data interpretation. This chapter will provides the details on steps 1 - 3; step 4 will be presented in the following chapter, which presents the findings of the study through our in-depth story-telling case analysis. The rest of this section will present the details on steps (1) and (2). Then, we will discuss our research design that guided our process analysis to uncover the links among our data elements, before we discuss step (3) in detail.

Our analysis strategy employs the dialogical/performance mode of narrative analysis as discussed by Riessman (2008). Dialogical analysis "draws and extends theoretical traditions that emphasize the importance of interaction" (Riessman, 2008, p. 105) as the mean of reality construction. According to this view, meaning is produced actively in our exchange. Consequently, the authority over meaning is dispread and

embedded in our interaction. The attention to the content and structure are not abandoned, but here interest shifts to storytelling as a process of co-construction, where teller and listener create meaning collaboratively. Thus, to produce our analysis, our focus was on the content as well as the shift of social exchange. Further details on the analysis strategy will be discussed later in this chapter.

5.2.1. Selecting the Dataset and Collecting Data

The study incorporates secondary sources of fine-grained and rich qualitative social media data, including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, collected during the period of the events from December 2010 to March 2011, all related to the 2011 Egyptian revolution. The choice of the dataset was driven by the goal of the study, the research question, and the methodology. Social networking sites by nature offer discursive environments, where individuals can engage in conversations through the consumption and production of text, and by sharing communicative artifacts such as pictures, videos, and website links. Consequently, social media enables the development of dialogical interactions and the evolution of social practices.

This dataset is a good fit to address our research question, for several reasons. First, it represents the actual participants' narrative, which by nature acquires a distinctive narrative voice that lets the actors of the narrative tell their own story as well as provides an access to their discourse – the actors' practice of storytelling, including the told and the telling. This in turn provides an access to social movement participants' interpretation as the political change unfolded. In this study, we tried to highlight this voice through the use of textual quotations and images in order to provide a sense of the actors' perspective

and interpretation (Orlikowski, 1996; Pentland, 1999b). Second, the dataset provides narrative data – text in relation. This means that our dataset by design deals with a temporal embeddedness and an inherent process structure that is built into it. Narrative text is generally organized in a story form. It includes depictions - whether verbal, visual, or other forms of representations - that underscore the transitions from one state of affairs to the next (Davis, 1992). Thus, it includes indicators that can be used to identify the primary events in the story (Pentland, 1999a). According to Pentland (1999b), "narrative data in general should be the basic data for social analysis" (p. 3). In our analysis, we used several indicators from the narrative text to identify the different structural units of the process that provides the underlying structure of the research story. Third, the dataset provides text within the context. This means it contains rich contextual information about the time, place, actor, activities, and attributes of the context. The contextual features of social media data provide complementary cues for understanding. Collectively, these contextual features will prove to be helpful for developing our analysis of the social media conversations as well as identifying events – the structural units - and their meanings, as we will discuss in the following section. In conclusion, the data in our chosen dataset "consist largely of stories about what happened and who did what when – that is events, activities, and choices ordered over time" (Langley, 1999, p. 692). The characteristics of our dataset provide information that can be essential to the interpretation of our research phenomena, making our dataset well suited to address the research question. The data collection process for the 2011 Egyptian Revolution is detailed below.

The research project's goal was primarily envisioned based on observations made shortly after the Tunisian revolution (which had an important influence on the Egyptian Revolution), when we first became aware that a large-scale protest was being organized in Egypt. As soon as the 2011 Egyptian unrest events started, we manually collected data from social media sites, including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Subsequently, to increase the sample size, we read through the messages and collected additional items embedded in the messages. Our dataset included posts coming from popular Egyptian Facebook groups that were later credited with an important role during the revolution (i.e., "We are all Khaled Said" and "Jan#25"), tweets posted on hashtags in reference to the revolution (i.e., #jan25, #Egypt #Tahrir, #Thawra – in reference to the Arabic word for revolution), and popular YouTube video links referring to the 2011 Egyptian protests, published or posted in the time period throughout the protests. Many of the collected posts included details and links to events that occurred prior to the 2011 protest events on the street, adding to the richness as well as the complexity of our dataset.

Given the enormous volume of data available, we could not access every social media message produced. The qualitative researcher often must use her or his judgment, based on a set of criteria, to decide how much and how long a case should be studied to aid in understanding (Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Stake, 2005). Therefore, based on our research, we collected a convenient sample from as large a variety of sources as possible, until we had reached a point of saturation and had a good sense of the case. The full dataset for this study is comprised of over 6000 items of conversations (messages) related to the 2011 Egyptian Revolution. This dataset offers an access to

longitudinal information about the events as political change unfolded, as well as a rich

contextual narrative of the people's constructed reality.

5.2.2. Identification of the Boundaries of the Phenomenon

The qualitative method is a useful tool for developing a deep understanding about

a particular case, its features, and its impact. Also, any narrative has a beginning, middle,

and an end (Pentland, 1999a; Polkinghorn, 1988; Riessman, 2008). Therefore, the goal of

this step is to highlight the boundaries of our case by identifying the beginning and the

end of the story.

According to Polkinghorn (1988), narrative analysis requires the researchers to

select a bounded system for the study that is a "totality of system with some kind of

outlines or boundaries, then data which related to the particular system under study is

sought". This means the case under study must represent a bounded integrated system

(Glesne, 2006; Stake, 2005). Thus, in keeping with this requirement, we specified the

case of the "Egyptian Revolution" in this study as the conditions and activities that

shaped the process leading to the series of anti-government collective actions that

occurred between January 25 and February 11, 2011, leading to the resignation of the

Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak (Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011).

The beginning of our story focuses on the context and circumstances that

preceded the revolt in Egypt. We called this phase the antecedents of the narrative. This

part is covered in detail in Chapter 4 and summarized at the beginning of our narrative of

the 2011 Egyptian revolution in Chapter 6, where we highlighted the local elements and

contextual factors that gave rise to the 2011 revolution. Developing an account of the

country's context helped us to situate our story within the participants' personal experiences, their culture, and their historical and political context. The end of the story focuses on the consequences of the 2011 social movement and the occurrence of a national political change in Egypt. The end of our story is explained in the outcome section in Chapter 6, where we discussed the revolutionary political change that occurred in Egypt as an outcome of the 2011 revolution. Anything that occurred after this consequence is beyond the scope of our study.

5.3.   Research Design: Dialogical\Performance Analysis

We started the analytical task by observing qualitatively the posts of social media sites, focusing on both textual and non-textual elements. Then the dataset was filtered manually; one of the researchers (who is familiar with the Arabic Language) read through the messages, and materials were selected and collected out of the obtained data to produce a relevant purposive sample. The sample of the dataset consisted of Facebook posts, tweets, and videos. This sample was used to provide illustrations of our analysis.

The goal of the next analytical task was to discover the process – the sequent phases - that displays a linkage among the data elements as parts of unfolding temporal development. This process represents the middle of our narrative. To produce our analysis, we coded the social media data in a way that enables the identification of the focal point of the story and the structural units – events - of the story series within them. Each event, as specified by Davis (1992), "can itself be narrative or at least 'narratable'; it can be related as a transition from one state of affairs to another" (p. 235). "As soon as there is an action or event, even a single one, there is a story because there is a

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transformation, a transition from an earlier state to a later and resultant state. [For

instance,] 'I walk' implies (and is contrasted to) a state of departure and a state of arrival"

(Genette, 1988. p. 19). The identified events were then brought together around the

identified focal point as a story.

When analyzing social media data, we are faced with many challenges. There are

interactions among several factors that can influence meaning interpretation. For

instance, the language structures used within social networking sites can add a level of

difficulty to this stage of analysis. As a real-time synchronous medium, this platform of

interaction tends to be more unpredictable. This interaction in many times illustrates

features of oral language. Characteristics of the used text include features of written as

well as oral communication, non-standard language (i.e., slang), and the use of emotions

and textual, in addition to non-textual, combinations to communicate (Crystal, 2011).

Also, in addition to content itself, other factors such as the way the content is presented,

the time a message was posted, and the social media site to which it was posted can

influence its connotation and affect the access to this meaning. For instance, the use of a

different language rather than the Arabic language may reflect a different goal for the

communication, target different attention from a different audience (or community), and

also highlight the distinctive nature of the content itself. Similarly, the period of the post

can change the interpretation of the meaning, and serve as an indication of the purpose of

the exchange. For instance, some of the contents were posted multiple times to multiple

social media sites for different purposes. An example is the image of Khaled Said, the

Egyptian young man whose death incited the 2011 Egyptian revolution. The image of

Said was submitted multiple times and to multiple social media sites throughout the

social movement process, with different messages and different forms of representation

(see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Selected Snapshots from Social Media Dataset

This implies that there are different factors besides the content itself that influence

the access to the meaning. It is this interplay between the content and context that

determines the access to meaning. As observers of the data, we should exploit the rich

context associated with social media content. Therefore, in analyzing and interpreting our

social media data, we considered the effect of different aspects of the posts that can

influence the access to meanings.

The analytical method of the study that was used to display the linkage among our

data elements consisted of the following steps: (a) Configuring the messages into

elements that give meaning to the data as contributors to the narrative goal; (b) Using the

produced elements to develop our story (a version of a fabula from a specific point of

view); (c) Combining the produced elements into structural units (events) that form the

basis of our fabula; (d) Developing a plot that displays the linkage among the story

structural units by linearly sequencing events based on our story to produce our fabula;

and (e) Developing an interpretation of the underlying pattern of the events, which

essentially provides the meaning of the story. These steps can be viewed as sub-steps that

correspond to the third step of our narrative analysis strategy guidelines discussed in the

preceding section: *organizing the data to develop the sequential patterns, which include*

events selection, sequencing, connecting, and evaluating. Following these sub-steps of

analysis allowed us to discover five structural units – events - that form the basis of our

research story. The five structural units are these events of our story: (1) public attention

and recognition of social issues and the country's status; (2) collective awareness; (3)

collective memory; (4) collective interpretation; and (5) social movement political

strategy implementation. These structural units are believed to be critical events of a

collective cognitive structure development that underlined the collective action leading to

social movement, because they unbalanced an established cognitive structure and evoked

cognitive progress. Each structural unit reveals an effect - a consequence - that causes a

transformation on the interaction that took place within social media sites and modifies

the story with a new consequence, until finally a goal is reached and the story has ended.

As a result, these structural units were conceptualized as breaking points that reflect the

phases of the process. The following section provides further details on this analytical

step.

5.4. A Framework for Narrative Analysis

In order to understand the role of social media in political change, we focused on

the context of IS, where we highlighted the conditions of the context, attributes of the

involvement of actors using the technology, the ways and reasons social media was used,

and the characteristics of the technology that supported the practice of the actors and

purpose of usage, which produced an effect that provided both the material and social

circumstances that influenced the following interactions. This effect is viewed as a

breaking point that defines a state of affairs of a phase – an event in the story- that shapes

a future phase, or a state of affairs, in an emergent process. These breaking points are

linked as causes and effects or as preconditions and consequences, linked by a process

detailed in our narrative model summarized in Chapter 7. Figure 2 below presents the

framework that we used to inform our narrative approach to process analysis.
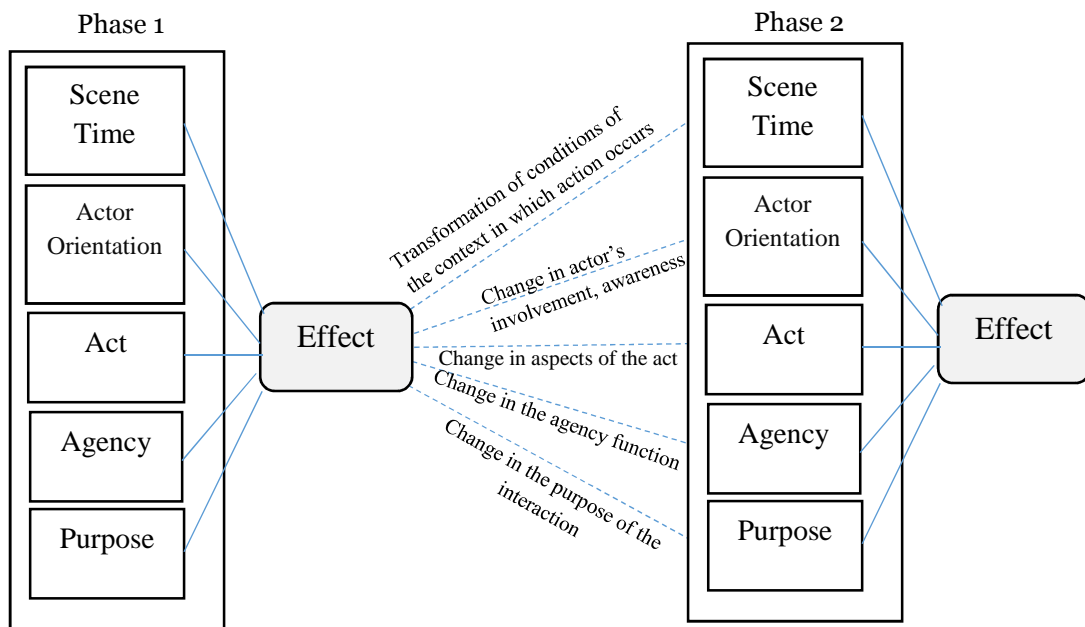
Figure 2. The Framework of Social Movement Process Analysis

As discussed earlier, process analysis need to go beyond description to produce a

meaningful explanation of the process leading to the outcome. We suggest that our

framework shown in Figure 2 does this by capturing the generative mechanisms that

underlay the social movement process. The different concepts in our framework were

derived based on Burke (1969) identified elements to analyze a narrative. A narrative according to Burke's (1969) perspective can be analyzed in terms of five categories: (1) Scene, (2) Actor, (3) Act, (4) Agency, and (5) Purpose. As indicated in the classic work of narrative analysis by Ramiller and Pentland (2009), "a story involves <u>actors</u> undertaking <u>actions</u> intended to accomplish certain <u>goals</u> by certain <u>means</u>, within specific <u>settings</u>, leading to particular <u>outcomes</u>" (p. 478). These categories form the key elements of any story.

The scene reflects the properties and conditions of the context in which action occurred. It highlights questions such as, what is the background situation, and where and when events took place. In order to address this element in our analysis, the context of Egypt was analyzed and the essential factors and activities in the surrounding political environment were highlighted in our narrative. In addition, the time period of the post was considered when we coded the data. The actor coding reflects the orientation of the role played by the actor who performed the act. We addressed this element in our analysis through describing the attributes of the act or the actors involved in the action that were underscored through the characteristics of social media that support that role. The act - action; activity, or function - reflects answers to questions such as what was done, what is the action, or in what way was the purpose accomplished? This answer can have several level of detail. For instance, social media was used by social movement actors to report news in the country, to post pictures, and to share videos about the different public events in the country. The agency coding represents the tools or methods used by the actor(s) (e.g., technologies, social media channels, representations) to accomplish the act.

Ramiller and Pentland (2009) highlighted that, in IT-related research, although artifacts are important, they are only one of the important parts of the "means" used by the actors to accomplish their action (Orlikowski and Iacono, 2001; Benbasat and Zmud, 2003). In our analysis, we show this by highlighting the material properties and the combination of the features of social media that support the performance of the activity. Finally, the purpose is defined as the goal of the act. To determine the purpose, we considered the objective intended from the act underlined by the social exchange. Table 3 below provides a descriptive summary of each of these concepts and the questions we try to answer with each one. These five elements were integral to understanding and interpreting our study narrative.

While it is important to understand each element on its own, it is more important to understand how the elements work together. In other words, the elements' interactions are important. For instance, similar acts may be undertaken for different purposes. Thus, Burke (1969) highlighted the need to inquire into the five elements' relationships and consider their possibilities of transformation. He stated that "the nature of acts and agents should be consistent with the nature of the scene" (p. 3). In this sense, the scene serves as a container. In other words, the context of IS influences the ways in which it used by the actors. He added "both act and agent requires scenes that contain them" (p. 15).

Table 3. A Description of the Framework Concepts

Concept	Description	Question
Scene	The properties and conditions of the context in which action occurs. In order to address this element, the context of Egypt was analyzed and the essential factors and activities in the surrounding political environment were highlighted.	What is the background situation? Where and when it was done?
Actor	The orientation, or role played by the actors performing the act. This element was addressed through highlighting the attributes of the act and/or the characteristics of social media that support that role.	What is the role played out by actors in terms of actions? What orientation of a person is performed by the act?
Act	The action, activity, or function; can have several levels of details. For instance, social media was used by social movement actors to report news; social media was also used to initiate discussions and engage in conversation around political or social issues.	What was done? What is the action? Or in what way was the purpose accomplished?
Agency	The means used by actors to accomplish the act. Can be technological tools, representations, channel … etc. In our analysis, we show this by highlighting the material properties and the combination of the features of social media that support the performance of the activity.	How did the actor accomplish the act? By what means do actors act? Or in what way did social media support the act?
Purpose	The goal of the act.	What is the intended objective of the action? Why do actors act?

Burke (1969) argues that the agent does not contain the act, although actions can pre-exist within the agent. For instance, social media, which grants many affordances, was used strategically during the social movement process to perform different activities for different purposes. Further, the act (and the different ways of acting) can affect the

agent or how it is utilized. Additionally, the nature of interaction between the act and the

agent can change the nature of the scene; or the scene may call for a certain kind of act,

which makes for a corresponding kind of agent, thereby linking agent to scene; or the act

may change the actor and the scene, producing a mutual conformity. This discussion

highlights the importance of considering the interactions among the five elements.

Similarly, Davis (1992) highlighted that the transitions in the state of affairs underscored

by a narrative "entails and requires in some, but necessarily all, of the properties of

events, actors, times, places in the story that are initially represented as having" (p. 235).

However, he added "the narrative text might or might not present all the elements that

readers or viewers require and assume in interpreting the story as presented. For example,

an event that transforms one state of affairs into another—like the introduction of

information impelling a character to change a plan—might not be directly related in the

text, although it is logically required for the story to go forward" (p. 235). This means the

transformation of the properties of the elements of the story "not necessarily carried over

fully into the narrative text itself, which implies but need not relate everything that

logically changes in the 'world' represented as so changing" (p. 235). Consequently, in

interpreting the story, readers or viewers of narrative text need to interpret the narrative's

presentation on several levels, and inquire into the elements and their relationships as

well as consider the transformation of their properties. "They proceed at the level of logic

– that is, 'what must be so in' 'what is true' the world of the story if it can logically have

the states, properties, and transitions it is related as having" (Davis, 1992, p. 235).

Understanding and determining the effects of the phases were based on the emphasis that was given to each of the five elements, and their interactions. Effects, which may be intended or unintended, encompass social and technological aspects. These effects, which highlight states of affairs generated at the end of the phases, have the potential to shape future phases and are linked as preconditions and consequences. In our narrative, effects were inferred in accord with the impact reflected in the shift of exchange that took place in social media sites, which in turn was underscored through the transformation or change in the five categories of our research framework.

The strategy that was used to develop the process conceptual model started with several rounds of reading and analyzing the dataset, taking the dataset as a whole. Qualitative research is iterative in nature; the analysis process moves back and forth between design and implementation to ensure congruence among research question formation, data collection strategies, and analysis (Creswell, 1998). Thus, we often traveled back and forth in data, in order to check the fit of data, the emergent elements, and the conceptual framework, and ensure that interpretation is monitored and confirmed (Kvale, 1989).

5.4.1. Organizing the Data

As we stated previously, the goal of this step of the analysis is organizing the data to develop the sequential patterns, the sequential relationship in thematic terms (Riessman, 2008), that represents the internal logic of the story (Polkinghorn, 1988). This step includes events selection, sequencing, connecting, and evaluating. Our analysis during this step highlighted answers to several questions discussed by our framework

(Burke, 1969; Riessman, 2008). However, a critical challenge in theorizing is how to move from surface data to the deep underlying structure. It is important to note that for narrative analysis, we have no established procedures or tests (Pentland, 1999a). Generally speaking, qualitative research, such as narrative research, is an approach rather than a particular set of techniques, and its appropriateness – like that of quantitative research - derives from the nature of the social phenomena to be explored (Morgan & Simircich, 1980). Accordingly, narrative analysis presents a shared perspective that allows a range of approaches. In the following section, we present the steps we used to develop the linkages among our data, identify the structural units of the story, and develop their sequential pattern.

5.4.1.1. Identification of the meaningful elements from the posts

Our current approach begins with the observed data, which represent the narrative surface. The first analytical step involved the systematic analysis of narrative posts, to identify the key fragments that contribute to the narrative goal. Here, we coded the data to investigate the content of the messages. Within this sub-step, we focused on identification of the told and the telling, where the former represents what is said - the content of the exchange - and the latter represents how contents are presented. While looking at the data during the early stage of the analysis, attention was given to different elements such as word choices, emotions, repetitive words, and symbols. Table 4 below provide some examples of these elements.

Table 4. Examples of Elements in Social Media Posts that Highlight Important Information

A **Brave Egyptian** (Horytna Radio) Protestors in Alexandria escalate to 50,000 in Raml Station and activists attempt to form barricade to protect outnumbered security forces from **angry civilians**	Emotive Word usage
Thousands Gathering at el TAHRIR SQUARE singeing the Egyptian National Anthem and Shouting (LEAVE-LEAVE) CONFIRMED: 13 activists were arrested at ELMATAREYA SQUARE and the army have taken them to CAIRO ISMALIY HIGHWAY	Text characteristics to highlight important information
EGYPT's people said their word .. Our freedom, our life, our right Overall u see how their police lie	Word choice

We also focused on the communication structure and the form of exchange. Here we considered questions such as: "Is the conversation directed?" and "To whom is the conversation directed?" (Riessman, 2008). For instance, communicators may use social media to post/report news, post pictures, or submit videos (see the posts below).

Egyptian Authorities block twitter's social networking service

A protest of thousands of people demanding an end to police brutality and torture passed through the streets of the Egyptian city of Alexandria on Friday

Figure 3. An Image of a Protest in the Egyptian City of Alexandria

In these posts, the producers preforms the act of reporting by providing a written or visual account of public events. Such practices represents a form of one-way communication. Communicators also can use social media to reach out to other individuals or to exchange information with multiple recipients. For instance, during the 2011 Egyptian revolution, some of the participants posted the following messages:

> Overlooking the footage of the video, what do you think? What points do you agree or disagree with? It will be interesting to know your views and open up a discussion about it.

> Let's analyze the situation together. I need our input plz. I'm sure that many minds thinking together are very effective.

These communication examples show texts built to encourage engagement in the conversations. Thus, these communication can be viewed as a dialogical communication that encourages the audiences to get involved in the social interaction and be part of the discussion by expressing their opinions and ideas. Also, social media messages can target the Egyptian citizens, where the social media conversation is directed toward creating a connection between local individuals and groups, as in the following message:

They could imprison thousands if they want, there are more than 80 mln Egyptians. "UNITED WE STAND, DEVIDED WE FALL"...

«إيه مستنيين» (In English and using an Arabic dialect: What are you waiting for?) (This is what one of the activists wrote on the Facebook page, asking 300 thousand to move and join protests in "Anger Day" revolts).

In these messages, the producers are clearly directing the conversation toward Egyptians, asking them to unite against their enemy and join the protest movement in Egypt. Social media messages can also target the people around the world, where the conversation is directed toward creating a connection between global individuals and groups. The following messages provide examples of this practice:

Please!! People Circulate this so my friends in Egypt can Get back on the #internet to show the world what they are going through. Please !! The Need Our Help They Are Counting on the WORLD. #internet & cellphone blackouts #STAY #ONLINE #FREESpeech #FreeWEB #FreeDom
Howto Stay Online: Egypt Protests #Egypt #Bloggers #Jan25 [will be continously updated!] « Occupie

if you care about liberty then I urge you to tweet the following: **@BarackObama: Mubarak Out *Now*, and stop financial aid to tyrants #egypt #jan25 (please RT)**. If you don't have a twitter account then please email it to the White House using this form: http://bit.ly/eoj1MW. If you are so inclined, you can also signup for the virtual "March of Millions" on Facebook: http://on.fb.me/i5ye8e. Other ways to help at: http://seda.me

These messages are directed not only to Egyptians, the producers in the messages are "*counting on the WORLD*" to get help and support from the international community.

According to dialogical analysis, when we speak, or engage in conversations, we are performers – actors - putting on a show. Thus, narrative data can be analyzed as

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scenes (Riessman, 2008). After coding the messages to identify the told and telling, a chronological timeline of the acts underlined by the social media post was developed. This allowed us to identify when and in what way the exchange was modified. We analyzed how the nature of the shared information changed to identify effects preceding the changed subject of conversation that facilitated the goal of exchange within each scene (phase). Here we considered questions such as "When and why did the conversation occur?" (Riessman, 2008) to identify the act and define the purpose. For instance, taking some of the communication discussed above, the conversations can represent an output of information without any form of engaging, such as in the following example:

A protest of thousands of people demanding an end to police brutality and torture passed through the streets of the Egyptian city of Alexandria on Friday

Figure 3. An Image of a Protest in the Egyptian City of Alexandria

In this message, we viewed the act of the producer as a form of information provision, where the actor is performing a reporting activity for the purpose of publicizing a public event. The conversation can also represent an engaging dialogical communication, such as in the following example:

Overlooking the footage of the video, what do you think? What points do you agree or disagree with? It will be interesting to know your views and open up a discussion about it.

In this message, we conceptualized that act as a form of engaging for the purpose of promoting sentiments exchange. It is important to highlight that the communication can occur between individuals and/or social media sites, and by using different means such as text, graphics, film, music… etc.

Other identified acts included uniting for the purpose of activating opposition against Mubarak, mobilizing for the purpose of community building, and supporting protest activities on the ground for the purpose of sustaining collective action. Table 5 below summarizes the identified acts and purposes as well as the descriptions of the conversations that occur during the different scenes (phases) of the social movement process. Further discussion on these practices will be provided in the following chapter.

Table 5. The Conversations during the 2011 Egyptian Revolution

Act\ Purpose of Sharing	Conversation Description
Report\ Publicize	The conversation denotes a passive protest against the government practices, by providing a written or audio/visual account of public events or the country's issues.
Engage\ Exchange Sentiment	The conversation, which can be between individuals or/and social media sites, represents a dialogical communication to express/share feelings, thoughts, ideas, opinions, by using different means such as text, graphics, films, music … etc.
Unite\ Activate Opposition	The conversation represents a multi-way exchange among the involved parties with the intent to construct social movement meanings and form a protest structure to advance a shared cause.
Mobilize\Build Community	The conversation represents an exchange between individuals who intend to disseminate social movement constructed meanings in an effort to influence others to unite and work together to achieve a shared goal.
Support Protest\ Sustain Collective Action and Maintain Social Movement	The conversation represents a distributed process of coordination to mobilize resources and maximize protest participation to support the activities on the ground.

We then examined the influence of technology across the different activities and how the material properties of social media shaped the different ways in which actors used it (the agency). In addition, we focused on the various communication artifacts and representations (which are forms of the agency) produced during the social movement that offered a common reference point in the negotiation of meaning, interaction, and action and facilitated sharing, communication, and exchange. Here we focused on the sharing activity (act) at each phase (scene) to explore the characteristics of social media (the features that support the performance of the function) that were highlighted by the act. Having a timeline of the acts underpinned by the posts helped us to identify the changing functions of social media.

Finally, by considering the elements identified above, we identified the

orientation of the actors – carriers of the actions – that was revealed through the attributes

of participation in the social media conversation throughout the different phases of social

movement. Note that although sometimes the actor orientation was mentioned in social

media messages, it was not necessarily indicated during the cycle of social movement or

planned by the act. As highlighted by Davis (1992), the change in the narrative underlies

the change in the properties of the actors that results in changes in actions and meanings.

Thus, we studied the change in actors' orientation as it manifested itself in the different

pattern of actions during the different phases of the social movement, based on their

involvement and attributes of participation. Also, as we highlighted previously, social

movement is more about the process than the individual actors (Becket, 2011). In other

words, the actions are characterized by collective and effective processes rather than

individual acts of one person. Therefore, defining the actors through their attributes of

participation rather than through their individual characteristics supports our analysis of

the social movement process. This conceptualization helped us to highlight the

interaction between the social and technological spheres, where the act appears as an

ensemble of both, and the role of social media in social movement can be viewed in

terms of the functions that supported social movement processes.

When we look at the social media layers, and how different tools and different

sites have been used in different scenes to perform different acts for different purposes,

narrative analysis gives us an additional advantage. Polkinghorn (1988) stated that the

purpose of narrative analysis is not simply to produce a reproduction of observations;

rather, it is to provide a dynamic framework in which a range of disconnected data elements are made coherent in an interesting and explanatory way. Table 6 summarizes the categories identified using our framework and based on our analysis of social media data.

Table 6. The Elements of the Social Movement Cognitive Development Story

Scene *(Social Movement Process Timeline)*	Act *(Sharing Activity)*	Purpose *(Goal of Exchange)*	Agency *(The Ways Social Media supported the performance of the act)*	Actor Orientation *(Involvement Attributes)*
Phase 1	Report	Publicize	• Provided a channel that bypasses the governmental control over discourse • Offered effective conveying and documentation mechanisms • Improved reporting practice	Reporter
Phase 2	Engage	Exchange Sentiment	• Provided a public space • Induced freedom of expression • Permitted association	Participant
Phase 3	Unite	Activate Opposition	• Consolidated society's political agenda • Helped the establishment of frames of reference • Supported the group effort to concert a public representation (group identity)	Member of an Online Community
Phase 4	Mobilize	Build Community	• Helped to access, recruit, and build a network and establish unity • Enabled to extend collective identity • Promoted citizens' engagement	Activist
Phase 5	Support Protest	Sustain Collective Action	• Offered a virtual structure for organization • Supported real-time coverage • Extended support base and outreach	Protest Member

Chapter 6 provides examples from the dataset that highlight our examination of these concepts discussed by our research framework.

5.4.1.2. Identification of the narrative – the story

The elements produced at the previous sub-step of the analysis were then used to develop our research story, a version of a fabula, from a specific point of view based on our research question perspective (Pentland 1999). The identified elements highlighted a collective cognitive development that occurred and was promoted by individuals' collaboration through social media sites. The idea of collaboration here, which was adapted from Rogoff's (1998) concept, is viewed broadly; it ranged from involvement in conversation to engagements and participation in shared endeavors. The analysis reveals that social movement came about as a result of social interactions between the actors, who shared a reality like status and collective meanings. Alternatively, the meanings and structure of social movement, which were found by the members of the social movement, are built around these actors' shared views. This social movement became a power structure and a reference point that made these shared views available and easy to spread to other citizens. Using social media and the constructed meanings as political resources, activists were able to mobilize participation and support protest toward achieving a shared goal. Accordingly, the narrative - or story - we developed is about social movement collective cognitive development, to highlight this process of construction of meanings through social interaction.

This process of meanings construction shapes actors' shared social reality and also influences their actions and reactions to such reality. Understanding this process can

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improve our understanding of the key role of social media in political change. In this sense, the story of the collective cognitive development of social movement is a story about the changes in meanings as well as in actions and actors' orientation throughout the different phases of the movement. This story can be viewed as an "abstract conceptual model used in explanation of observed data" (Pentland, 1999a, p. 711). It is important to note that "a single process can generate many different performances (fabula), each of which can be seen from many different points of view and can be narrated with nearly infinite variety" (Pentland, 1999a, p. 720). For example, in Cooper and Kaplan's (1988) article about activity-based systems, they showed a convincing story about the relationship between the accuracy of cost measurement and effective decision making. Then they showed by using the same structural elements how they were able to rewrite an alternative story with a different outcome that reflected a different perspective (Bruner, 1986; Pentland, 1999b).

5.4.1.3. Developing the Structural Units and the Plot of the Story

The next sub-step in our analysis was to uncover the internal logic of the story, which includes its themes and plot (Polkinghorn, 1988). "A story can be analyzed in terms of their structure, such an analysis means stepping away from many of the surface features of the story to arrive at a representation of the underlying structure (fabula). (Pentland, 1999b, p. 5). It is important to note that "the structure can give rise to many possible stories through permutations of characters, sequence, and so on" (Pentland, 1999b, p. 5). After multiple iterations of reading and observing the posts, we synthesized the produced elements into their constituent parts or units across data, and organized

them to develop the plot that displays the linkage among them. The structural units represent the generic description of the events that form the bases of our fabula, while the plot represents the order of the events based on the story's point of view.

According to Davis (1992), "two state of affairs linked as cause and effect by a process detailed in the narrative text may not themselves be presented. Readers or viewers must infer them as causes and effects." He added, "any explication of the narrative must address the logic and interpretation of the narrative in the reader's head and outside the text as well as what the text literally relates" (p. 236). In order to select and separate the events, which represent the phases of our process, our narrative data was analyzed as scenes (Riessman, 2008). Each scene reflects a phase of the social movement process. The selection and definition of the events is based on their theoretical significance (Pentland, 1999b). Our attention here expands from "the speech – what is said and how it said – to the dialogical process environment in all its complexity" (Pentland, 1999a, p.). According to Pentland (1999a), narrative text usually includes a range of indicators that can be used to identify the primary events in the story. Similarly, Davis (1992) highlighted that narrative text "seems to be built so as to encourage one response or a limited range of possible readings or viewings that make sense of the writing" (p. 237). Therefore, in addition to focusing on the told (the content of the exchange) and the telling (how contents are organized), we were attentive to other essential indicators, including the change of the conversation form, based on the categories defined by our framework. These kinds of indicators form raw materials for a number of different qualitative techniques for textual analysis. For instance, Eisenhardt's

(1989) discussion of case analysis "can be viewed as a prescription for how to use such indicators to create a theoretically relevant construct" (Pentland, 1999a, p. 716). Using the combination of the five categories described in our framework allowed us to discover the shift of exchange, and helped us to identify the effect – consequence- produced at the end of each phase of the social movement process. Each effect is viewed as an event – precondition- that causes a change in the development of the story or the narrative process. Each effect signifies the outcome of one phase and the pre-condition of the following phase. Therefore, effects were identified in our study as the structural units of the story. We identified five events that represent the structural units of the social movement collective cognitive development story. Table 7 below provides the labels of these structural units and their definitions.

After selecting the story's set of events – the structural units- we moved to the second step in developing our fabula. Here we introduce the events' relationship or order; "the outline of the story that describe the phenomenon" (Ramiller & Pentland; 2009; p. 478). Pentland (1999a) highlighted that conceptualizing events and detecting patterns among them can take different forms; the most common form is the linear sequence of "phases" that occur over time to produce a given result (Langely, 1999).

Thus, in our study, the order of the events moves in a linear way through time. As we discussed previously, an event here is treated as a breaking point that defines the outcome of a phase. This outcome affects the form and nature of exchange in the subsequent phase, and causes the progression of the social movement process.

Table 7. The Units of the Social Movement Collective Cognitive Development Story

Generic Description of the Event	Definition
Public Attention and Recognition of Social Issues and the Country's Status	The condition of a general noticing of a public event and accepting the truth of it, or admitting the occurrence of the public event as something important.
Collective Awareness	The condition of sharing a collective perception or understanding of the context that is created socially, and indicates the extent of the people who share the same emotions, which consequently reveals the trend of the community.
Collective Memory	The condition of recollecting and sharing a collection of symbols or memories, such as a word, phrase, or image, among a group of people. These shared symbols hold them as a community; they have associated meanings and inherited value that are inseparable from that what they symbolize to the community that shares them.
Collective Interpretation	The condition of disseminating and sharing social movement internal meanings – ideas and views- for others that influences people to feel, think, and act as one, and produces their social cohesion and solidarity.
Social Movement Political Strategy Implementation	The collective process related to protest activities as a part of social movement plan execution toward achieving a national political change.

5.4.1.4. Identification of the Generative Mechanisms - the Underlying Pattern of the Events

The last sub-step in this step of analysis was developing an interpretation of the

underlying pattern of the events, or what Polkinghorn (1988) called the product, by

identifying the generative mechanisms that provide the causal links among the structural

units while focusing on the sequence (Pentland, 1999b). Pentland (1999b) conceptualized

these mechanisms as the structure that enable or constrain the fabula. Identification of the

generative mechanism means configuring the structural units – the phases of the process-

as contributors to the advancement of a plot, which essentially provides meaning to the

story. According to Czarniawska (2004), "emplotment … means introducing structure

that allow making sense of the event" (p. 122). Ramiller and Pentland (2009) indicated

"to rise the demand of 'making sense,' a [story] plot goes beyond the chronology to

identify the causal connection… for example 'the king died and then the queen died' is

mere chronology; 'the king died and then the queen died from the grief' is a plot" (p.

479). As stated by Riessman (2008) "narrative shaping entities imposing a meaningful

pattern on what otherwise be random and disconnected" (p. 5). This sub-step included

analyzing and restorying the data into our framework in a way that makes sense. The

result of this sub-step was developing our research conceptual model that forms the basis

of our process theory (See Figure 17 – Chapter 7). Table 8 provides a summary of the

developed generative mechanisms. It is important to note that 'events' in our process are

different from 'variables'. Here, the precursor is assumed insufficient to "cause" the

outcome, but is held to be merely necessary for it to occur (Newman and Robey, 1992).

Alternatively, developing the product means producing the interpretation of the

story as a unit by drawing the happenings together as a systematic whole (Polkinghorn,

1988). As stated by Burner (1991) "The act of constructing a narrative, moreover, is

considerable more than "selecting events … then placing them in appropriate order. The

events themselves need to be constituted in the light of the overall narrative … to be

made 'functions' of the story" (p. 711). Our focus here was to understand the

probabilistic interaction between the different events in order to generate a meaningful

explanation of what is causing the outcome -political change- and develop our social

movement process theory for political change (Langley, 1999; Mohr, 1982; Pentland,

1999b).

**Table 8. The Generative Mechanism of Social Movement Process for Political
Change**

	The Mechanisms Underlying Political Change
Proposition 1	The contextual conditions in the country and the capabilities offered by social media that enhanced information provision and representation lead to the development of public attention and recognition of social issues and the country's status.
Proposition 2	Public attention and recognition of social issues and the country's status and capabilities offered by social media that fostered civic engagement and political participation lead to the development of collective awareness.
Proposition 3	Collective awareness and the capabilities offered by social media that boosted social movement structure and campaign formation lead to the development of collective memory.
Proposition 4	The collective memory and the capabilities offered by social media that fostered community formation and political mobilization lead to the development of collective interpretation.
Proposition 5	The collective interpretation and the capabilities offered by social media that facilitated collective action coordination and participation lead to the effective social movement political strategy implementation.
Proposition 6	The effective social movement political strategy implementation leads to the national political change.

After we developed our research conceptual model, we produced our write-up of the

theoretical interpretation of the generative structure that shapes the process in a story

form, where we articulate how and why the political change following the 2011

revolution emerges in Egypt. The outcome of this procedure was our case study narrative,

which will be presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER VI

RESEARCH FINDINGS: A NARRATIVE OF THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE 2011 CITIZENS' SOCIAL MOVEMENT PROCESS AND POLITICAL CHANGE IN EGYPT

> We see the development of consciousness as an ongoing process in which groups re-evaluate themselves, their subjective experiences, their opportunities, and their shared interests.
>
> Taylor and Whittier

Our research question asked about the process by which social media influences online activism and shapes social movement collective interpretation for revolutionary political change. In this chapter, we present our findings about the 2011 Egyptian revolution through our narrative. This narrative presents the interpretation of the process raised by our research question in a story form. This story focuses on the different roles played by social media in social movement development, as reflected in the content and revealed by the changing nature of the exchange of social media posts.

In order to construct our narrative, we used individuals' discourses (social media posts) – narrative surface- to configure several interrelated key elements, or fragments, that give meaning to the data as contributors to the narrative goal. These identified fragments in individuals' discourses were then transformed into constituent units of patterned meanings –structural units- that emerged over time. These units define the story's events, which form the bases of our narrative's fabula. To construct the plot, we

devised a timeline to identify the sequential structure that links the events in the story as phases in a process. This story, or process narrative, provides the answer to our research question. Although some narratives are fully elaborated by a single individual or one instance of discourse, most narratives unfold in bits and pieces as individuals come together in a variety of cases (Boje, 2001). Using our narrative framework, we identified these individual pieces of discourse to capture the fragments of our story and united them into a composite narrative. As stated by Polkinghorn (1988), narrative is a "fundamental scheme … linking individual human actions and events into interrelated aspects of an understandable composite" (p. 13).

To create the product, we started by emphasizing the factors that contributed to the development of the social movement process to place our narrative in the larger context of Egypt and construct the beginning of the story. Then, we produced our interpretation of the narrative process in a story form, where the identified events became functions of the story of the 2011 Egyptian revolution. Here, we highlighted several social media posts, described how the nature of messages changed over time, and explained how the messages supported the advancement of social movement process led to the revolutionary political change in 2011 as an emergent and less-than-predictable event. After that, we provided the end of the story, where we discussed the consequent political change that occurred in Egypt in 2011. The outcome of these steps was our case study narrative, which commences in the following section.

6.1.   The 2011 Egyptian Revolution Case Narrative

In early February of 2011, the Tahrir (Liberation) Square – a major public town square in downtown Cairo – became the heart of a political transformation that was witnessed by Egypt and the world. During that time period, hundreds of thousands of Egyptians gathered in the square to show their solidarity with fellow protesters and call for the fall of the Mubarak regime. Texts, pictures, and videos of the revolution spread out in social media sites to document a divers, unprecedented depiction of Egyptian society assembled in a single public space in Egypt, demanding in unison their freedom (Al Jazeera, 2011, Cottle, 2011; Della Porta, 2014; Sharp, 2011). The protests were peaceful, hopeful, and festive, reflecting a social movement with a strong image. The representations of the protest in the Tahrir Square embodied all the sentiments for a truly democratic and unified Egypt that was not fragmented by any social aspect (class, age, religion, ideology, etc.). On February 11, 2011, after only 18 days of demonstration, the Egyptian revolution succeeded in overthrowing Mohamed Hosni Mubarak, who had been the Egyptian President for three decades.

Organizing collective actions in Egypt was not easy, so the creation of this liberated space in the heart of Cairo was remarkable. Egyptians have lived in a culture of fear for generations; oppressive political conditions for citizens prevented free expression, general political participation, and protest opportunities. Even recently, Egyptians were reluctant to freely discuss public events, social problems, and political issues. Hence, the 2011 event captivated attention, evoked wonder, and aroused interest in the reasons behind this unforeseen incident. Many believe that the 2011 event in Egypt

is a story about the potential of social media to engender political change in authoritarian regimes. Yet, the important story of the 2011 Egyptian revolution and the fall of Mubarak is rooted in a number of contextual factors in the country that influenced the ways in which social media was used and contributed to the development of the conditions and activities that led to the political change and the deposition of Hosni Mubarak.

Mubarak became president of Egypt in 1981. Under Mubarak, the sociopolitical and economic climate was depressing. Although Mubarak was criticized by the media for a long time due to the degree of dictatorship and economic distress, he was able to keep Egypt under a tight autocratic rule for over 30 years. Thus, any hope for a truly democratic political process in Egypt was stifled (Cook, 2007; Hanna, 2009; Heydemann, 2007).

During his presidency, Mubarak created one of the largest state security forces. Egyptian State Security, which thrived under emergency law, reached deep into society, involving itself in every detail of life. The country was continually under a state of emergency that gave executive authorities the right to arrest, interrogate, and imprison citizens at any time for long periods, without a warrant or any legal grounds. Torture became systematic; there was an estimate of 10,000 detained persons (Amnesty international, 2011). The main reason of detaining citizens, "despite all the government rhetoric of 'safeguarding national security' and 'combating terrorism', was clear - to bypass normal criminal investigation procedures and judicial safeguards in order to lock away people who dared to criticize the authorities or who were deemed to be a threat to the government" (Amnesty international, 2011, p. 2). Additionally, corruption permeated

all government bodies, and abuses went unpunished, even those recorded by undercover cameras. The law empowered authorities to ban any type of group gatherings and protests lacking security clearance, and to squash or tightly control any opposition group. In many cases, protests came and went, and the plans for large-scale demonstrations often fizzled. Thus, with a historically low degree of freedom of speech, political participation, and opportunity for assembly, it could arguably be said that the impossibility of democracy and freedom was a common perspective of many people living in Egypt at that time.

Mubarak's regime also failed to achieve true social reform. The state tightly controlled the cultural and intellectual spheres, transforming them into highly bureaucratic and closely monitored activities. Education had sharply deteriorated, and a high percentage of Egyptians suffered from grinding poverty. A large number of university graduates were unemployed; workers' were suffering from low wages, which were at $7 per month and had not changed for twenty years. At the same time, the media was lacking transparency and independence. The press, radio, and television were controlled directly not only by the state but specifically by the security apparatus. This practice by the regime underpinned Mubarak's government effort to control information and thus restrict political discussion and opportunities for participation (Mellor, 2007).

Then the growth of the Internet prompted new opportunities for public exposure as well as free expression. As a result, many Egyptians used several Internet websites and blogs to challenge and resist government practices; in the early 2000s, several Egyptian bloggers became prominent for talking about several thorny issues in the country (Eltantawy, 2011). While the growth of the Egyptian blogosphere encouraged opposition

to increase among Egyptians, the regime's desire and capacity to carry out state censorship and official control were successfully extended to these relatively new (to Egypt) forms of communication. Hundreds of bloggers were arrested, tortured, and disappeared.

The combination of the these factors created a climate around the country in which public dissatisfaction with the regime was gradually intensifying, but the regime appeared to be enduring, as Mubarak was preparing his son, Gamal, to succeed him. Even with the increase in public dissatisfaction with the regime, Egyptians were hesitant to freely express feelings of resentment or to get involved in any conversation about social or political problems. Any political discussion had limits, or else one risked detention, police abuse, or worse, disappearance. Thus, despite the degree of dissatisfaction that was generally shared among the Egyptian people at large, and despite the growth of opposition groups, there was a missing link between public resentment of the ruling regime and public mobilization to effect meaningful change (Mosharafa, 2014; Khamis and Vaughn, 2011). Social media succeeded in creating this missing link, empowering Egyptians to come together under a shared view, unite around a shared cause, and mobilize and act toward a shared goal.

6.2. Producing Data Interpretation

Understanding the context of Egypt provided valuable insight into the past and present interplay of actors, actions, and meanings, and the role of social media in the process of social movement and political change. Using social media posts, we tried to track the process that led to the 2011 revolutionary political change in Egypt, and to

characterize the role of social media in the development of this process. Our narrative

sums up this process by highlighting five events preceding the political change. We

identified these events as the phases of the citizens' social movement process. These

phases covered a range of activities and conditions that linked citizens to political

activism and moved them forward toward developing a collective interpretation that

enabled them to act as one whole toward achieving the political change that occurred in

Egypt in 2011. Moreover, we characterized social media's role, where we described the

features of social media that supported the activities of each phase and played an

important part in generating a condition that underscored an important event in the

progress of our story. Each event, which was identified as an effect, formed the outcome

of a phase as well as a precondition for the following phase. These effects were identified

as followed: (1) public attention and recognition of social issues and the country's status;

(2) collective awareness, (3) collective memory, (4) collective interpretation, (5) social

movement political strategy implementation. We now present our data in a thickly

descriptive narrative. Throughout the narrative, we provide examples of raw data and

highlight the changing nature of the content and exchange throughout the social

movement process.

6.2.1. Phase 1: Social Media Enhanced Information Provision and Representation, Leading to the Effect of Public Attention and Recognition of Social Issues and the Country's Status

In the midst of the country's depressing circumstances and distressing political

conditions under the authoritarian government of Mubarak, many ordinary citizens relied

on social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, to provide written or

visual accounts of public events, and to spread materials about different social and political matters by providing text messages, posting pictures, uploading videos, and sharing comments. Suffering from the harsh reality and frustrated by the shortcomings of news coverage in the government-controlled media outlets, Egyptians found in social media a channel that enabled them to bypass the government's traditional gatekeepers, and publicize information that was previously not highly accessible on subjects that were generally avoided or neglected by local media, awakening many to the brutal reality of Mubarak's Egypt. Social media provided these citizen reporters with different mechanisms to support the conveying and documentation of news and to improve news-reporting practices, resulting in enhanced information provision and representation. Citizens' reporting, enhanced and supported by social media, constituted a collaborative activity that contributed directly to a news-making effort and shaped a public reality that unified Egyptians' experience of abuses under Mubarak's regime.

In many ways, the affordances of social media promoted the use of its tools by Egyptians to engage in reporting activities. These activities were reflected as many men and women involved directly in the act of creating, collecting, and sharing of texts, images, and videos of newsworthy materials to expose corruption, police brutality, and other problems. Utilizing social media platforms, Egyptians were able to construct a space free of government influence where they could present the issues about their society that they found important. The ability to support user-generated content enhanced users' capabilities of news-making and facilitated the communication of information. An example of how citizen reporters utilized social media to narrate about their lived

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experience under Mubarak's regime was an album created on Facebook titled "Police

Brutality in Egypt," which includes several powerful photos that expose police cruelty

directed toward citizens.

(https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.133967863308873.12078.13363421667557

1&type=1). Through social media, Egyptians were able to exploit the potential of image-

making to enhance the coverage of shared issues. Many of the images show bodies

beaten, bleeding, or disfigured by Egyptian police. The album publicized one of the

significant problems in Egypt, and the images of the album consolidated the dynamic of

oppressive power in Egypt. The online album was publicly viewable, providing citizens a

high level of information visibility to issues not covered on government-controlled news.

This album highlighted social media's role in educating people about the problems in

Egypt, and in granting a scope of coverage that was not provided by the traditional media

in Egypt. Similarly, another video clip

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s0hywxpH6pA) was created to provide a spectacle

of police violence, both physical and verbal, against Egyptian citizens.

Figure 4. A Video of Police Violence in Egypt

The video, also titled "police brutality in Egypt", included images and short clips

from Egyptian police stations, documenting a lot of beating, slapping, kicking, blood, and

humiliation. Additionally, the video conveyed the use of violence against protesters in Egypt by state security forces, which were lashing out ruthlessly on unarmed civilians. The imagery of the video agitated viewers' feelings of sorrow and reinforced a sense of powerlessness, as explained by the message that accompanied the video:

للاسف مفيش امل طول ما الناس خايفين
(In English: Unfortunately, there is no hope as long as people are afraid)
in Egypt , a police officer have the right to do anything, even kill someone and no one would ever blame him
people never do anything about it

Through the words of the post, the producer highlighted important information about the general context of Egyptian suffering. Emotions, such as the loss of hope and fear, were shared by the majority of people in Egypt as a result of the intimidation exerted by the regime against the Egyptians. Any police officer could do whatever he wanted, "even kill someone", and escape punishment. Under these conditions, citizens relied on social media to produce and disseminate materials about the violation of human rights in Egypt.

The words, images, and videos that citizens were posting in social media sites, such as the examples discussed, constituted a collective activity to record and broadcast citizens' painful reality of harassment and abuse by the government. Social media's capability of supporting digital content production and consumption allowed these citizens to share their experiences, venture into topics no one had dared to address before, and present what was happening in Egypt from a point of view that was almost invisible. Using the different forms of visual representation to convey Egyptian citizens' narratives of their grievous reality enhanced the communication of news because of the richer

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ability of visual images to elicit emotions. They also allowed citizens to document their stories and provide a visibility of their reality to a wider audience.

Images are easier and faster to produce and understand compared to text. As an illustration, the following post was produced and circulated by citizens in social media sites. The image below, which embodied Egyptians' experience of violence, provided an example that suggests something unique about the power of images and the battle of meaning.

Figure 5. A Photograph of Egyptian Policemen Hitting a Citizen

This image clearly conveyed a contradiction to the Egyptian National Police motto, which states in Arabic, "The police are in the service of the people." As a result, this image invoked a shift in people's perception about the police in Egypt. The photograph shows men in their official police attire openly kicking a man in the middle of the street and slapping him on the face, to publicize the great humiliation of Egyptians by the police.

Another citizen reporter's posts stated that "Torture continues in the jails with electrical shock, beatings and rape," and showed the image below of the back of man that is showing signs of lashing and trauma.

Figure 6. An Image of the Back of an Egyptian Showing Signs of Trauma

This is an example of posts that were produced by the users to provide accounts of their experiences or share information with other citizens about events in which they were personally involved. Posts like these revealed the extreme cruelty of the country's laws that supported such practices and shed light on problems that were rarely reported by the controlled-media outlets.

During the early days of social movement development, many young Egyptians utilized social media to create and disseminate content that exposed Mubarak's Egypt. Multiple telling, such as the posts discussed and other similar posts, provided everyday citizens a common impression and greater realization of the situation in which they were living under Mubarak. They also offered examples of how ordinary citizens used social media openly to alert other fellow citizens about the incidents occurring in their country. At the same time, these posts, while each was presenting a different experience, reflected a collaborative effort to shed light on happenings that were rarely covered by the heavily monitored Egyptian state media. In this sense, social media were capturing narratives beyond those coming from the politically dominate group in Egypt. As the language and imagery of violence, brutality, and corruption continued to be demonstrated in social

media pages, citizens were collectively engaging in the creation of their reality through their reporting without the constraints established by government or media outlets.

The reporting acts highlighted by the posts across social media sites during this phase highlight how many of the citizens were able to have a new, hands-on role in crafting news-making. For instance, YouTube was used by many Egyptians to produce dozens of videos, including clips depicting Egyptian officials' abuse and recording anti-government demonstrations; Facebook was used to spread the news of government corruption in the country to thousands of people in an instant, which was then echoed by family, friends, and acquaintances; Twitter was used by citizens to disseminate images of police violence in police stations and citizens' own words to each other. The ability of ordinary Egyptian citizens to play this role during this phase empowered them to exercise their agency and highlighted their capacity to exert influence, thus underlying the initial development of their politically engaged identity. The power of ordinary individuals to use media products allowed Egyptians to escape the control of the government over the media – government influence on thoughts and interpretation- and provide news based on their own wants and interests.

The use of social media to publicize first-hand reports, photographs, and videos improved the communication about the shared incidents, improved the reliability of that information, and helped to engage the audience in the conversation. The utilization of the visual imagery highlighted an important feature by which social media enhanced reporting activities during this phase. For instance, aggregating situational pictures and/or video footage with the words to produce the products of news facilitated the ability to

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preserve and recall the emotions associated with the news, compared to using text alone. Also, communicating the news using visual representations enabled citizens to release hidden truths of the shared events, while providing a documentation mechanism that enhanced the credibility of the information. In many cases, supporting the news with images and videos provided evidence so the audience could validate the shared news and information. Reporting news in social media in turn allowed the reporters to connect the audience with the events in their raw form, and at the same time, provided the material of interpretation, recurrently changing the role of the audience from passive receiver to active participant in the news-making process. Moreover, having additional communicative steps (i.e., the 'like' feature, retweeting, writing comments) that encouraged audiences to leave signs that they had read or viewed the post and in many cases responded to the post, highlighted an additional feature by which social media enhanced citizens' reporting practice. For instance, commenting posts like "Thanks, keep us posted if you hear anything else!" or "I will continue to check this page periodically to see what is happening. My prayers are with those who have suffered and died for the cause of a free and fair Egypt," provided a way to let the individuals who reported the news that their story was read, seen, or heard. In this sense, social media platforms not only facilitated a great use by citizen reporters to create and make use of digital news content, and to reach millions of people and publicize thorny issues in the country, but the platforms also encouraged feedback and collaboration among citizens without governmental constraints or barriers.

The collaborative reporting that was supported by social media emphasized its important role during this phase as an independent press, resistant to state control and an important source of a unifying reality. For instance, the case of Khaled Said provides a noteworthy illustration, as it became a symbol of the 2011 Egyptian revolution. Although the Said case was not the only event that highlighted the regime's repression and abusive practices, it was an incident that moved everyone in Egyptian society and became popular because of the photo of him being tortured. The photo below of Khaled Said, which was published online, was used to break the news of his death, despite the neglect and minimization of the importance of his case by the local media.

Figure 7. An Image of Khaled Said in the Morgue

This image shows Said's body lying in a pool of blood in the morgue, massively beaten: his head was smashed, teeth were missing, lips were torn, and jaw was broken. The picture of Said is emblematic of the police's vicious practices toward citizens in Egypt. At the same time, the citizen's report of the Said incident exemplifies how social media was used to provide many citizens access to information that was previously inaccessible, during times when the traditional media was controlled and distrusted. Through a simple click that took only a second, individuals could help to further disseminate public events like Said's death.

When this photo of Said was initially shared on social media, few knew about his story. But the details about his story emerged rapidly on social media, and Said's story became well known. Meanwhile, the official press remained silent. However, due to the controversy raised by Said's photo, the authorities decided to issue an account of Said's case that stained his reputation, in an effort to justify the police's crime. This official account accused Said of several crimes, such as drug-dealing, sexual harassment, and illegal position of a weapon. Traditional media in Egypt, according to a ministry of the interior account, reported that Said was involved in the drug trade and explained the reason of his death by presenting a story indicating that he died after suffocating on a packet of marijuana while in police custody. Through this report, and many media news shows, the government aimed to create a different understanding of the reality. Presenting the case of Said in this way denies the problem of police abuse and defines a cause for the public that is the exact opposite of the actual reality. People, however, found this story ridiculous and insulting to their intelligence. What made the government's version of Said's story unbelievable was the photo of Said's death. Consequently, citizens used social media platforms to support the case of Khaled Said with detailed reports.

Using social media provided these citizen reporters an unconventional, effective way of news making. These reporters used social media tools to utilize digital artifacts and creatively bring content together to produce news in ways that were not possible in the past. For instance, using Facebook, citizens provided a report of Khaled Said's death. This report included photographs of Said, links to news reports about his case, and links to videos of eyewitnesses that were posted in YouTube to support the account and

representation of his story. This exemplified how citizen reporters were able to blend

multiple forms of representation to produce and disseminate a novel creation of news

products. This integration enhanced the communication of the citizens' version of the

story in many ways. For instance, the page provided the audience the material for

interpretation, thus helping to engage them in the conversation. Here is an example of

how social media enhanced audience participation in the process of constructing the

citizens' version of the real story. One of the posts, presenting photos of Said before and

after the attack, stated the following:

> We will let you see Khaled's photos before and after the attack and let you judge
> yourselves: Does the following photos show that Khaled really died from
> swallowing something or was he killed from the banging of his head against several
> solid objects and the kicking and punching by the two policemen and as the many
> eye witnesses confirmed?

Figure 8. An Image of Said Before and After the Police Attack

This post highlights image production as communicative practice. Using the

images in the post enhanced the credibility of the shared story of Said in social media

sites. The images before and after Said's brutal death at the hands of Egyptian police

functioned as an additional source of data for Egyptians to "see ... and judge" for

themselves. A major purpose of Said's photograph here was to establish the fact that the

government's tale was fabricated.

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Reporting the news in social media also supported other forms of information validation. Many times, citizens would support the news by posting additional pictures and videos, publishing complementary materials, or simply confirming the news' reliability against the traditional media version of events. For instance, following the news of Said's death, many citizens responded to the official account with intense distrust, providing many sources to prove the 'actual' reason of his death. Many used social media tools to document interviews with eyewitnesses who saw the policemen arresting Said, or with other citizens who had known Said personally, and post them on YouTube. Reporting the news in social media sites also encouraged audience participation in the circulation of news through liking and attaching comments to the shared stories. This collective effort to produce and distribute a narrative that refuted the official account built a sense of credibility of the citizens' account of the Said case. At the same time, it contributed to the generation of their knowledge reality and a general sense of distrust toward the government. For instance, according to many citizens' accounts, Said's photo exhibited strong evidence that proved that he was treated in a vicious manner by the security officers, as one of the citizens put it (in Arabic):

> Ministry of Interior wait a moment
> Egypt youth are not stupid to this degree to believe your stories because you are able to ruin anyone's reputation to hide the crime

The Ministry of Interior of The Practice of Ministry of Interior, highlighted by the post, is symbolic of a larger ongoing struggle in Egypt. The post highlighted the widely held sentiment by youth, and by extension the people in Egypt, about the Ministry of Interior

and subsequently about Mubarak's government, who treated Egyptians as if they were

"stupid" to a degree that they would "believe their stories." These words underscored the

Egyptians' lack of trust in their government, which no longer could be believed. Instead

of safeguarding people's reputation, Egyptians believed that the government was willing

to intentionally "ruin anyone's reputation" in Egypt to cover the government's crimes.

The ability to reflect their strong distrust in the government openly and publicly is

something that was not possible or available to the citizens in Egypt through any of the

other traditional media outlets, where the government was actively engaging in reporting

activities to construct and disseminate narratives that masked their crimes.

This important role of visual representations to document news and provide

evidence that supported the credibility of the information was acknowledged by one of

the citizens at a later phase as he posted the message below in response to the album

titled "Police brutality in Egypt," which included images of Said.

> Please we need to gather all photos and videos exposing police brutality, assaults
> and violation of any human rights. This file must be as a documentation and
> evidences that should be presented to the highest juridical authority in Egypt with
> all the names of victims themselves and the parents of the victims and the
> witnesses… they can shut up dozen cases by lies and terrorism but they cannot
> silence thousands cases against them..

The evidence and documentation that were reported and recorded throughout social

media during this phase served as important resources for social movement during a later

phase. In this post, one of the activists is beseeching others to gather all the

documentation and evidence that expose police assaults and document their violations of

human rights of the Egyptian people. The post highlighted a collaborative effort that

aimed to put the important problems in Egypt under the spotlight and on the public's agenda. Social media in this sense became a stage for publicizing the extent of the regime's baseness, gathering all the documentation and evidence in one place and thus creating a shared database of Mubarak's Egypt. This post also highlighted the collective reality shared by many about the corruption in Egypt, where many cases against the authorities were silenced or forced to be dropped.

While citizens' posts were focusing attention on the Egyptian state's abuse, they were gradually generating a change in Egyptian citizens' thoughts and attitude toward their government. This shift was reflected in the following phase of social movement by many commentaries provided by the citizens, which helped to define the Egyptians' reality through their narrative and in their own words. For example, one of the audience wrote the following comments to the album:

> The Most Important Thng we Must Tell The world about, That police and Prosecution and Judiciary and Autopsy General Managers are in collusion together to cover The crime so As not to Expose Their Affairs .. Particularly This Fake autopsy report By Al- sebae about khalid's death lets send a message says there is a chaos all the time cause of the corrupt Government

This post reflected a thought – an understanding- that was shared by a great majority of people regarding the cause of Said's death in particular, and Mubarak's government personnel in general, who were "in collusion together to cover the crime so as not to expose their affairs." As this post highlights, the fake report about Said's death reflected the high level of corruption in the country and the government's willingness to do anything in order to cover up their crimes against the people of Egypt.

In sum, the provision and representation of a country's news in social media sites provided an added benefit. The openness of social media platforms promoted the social climate that influenced the message and meaning of communication. For instance, reporting Said's photograph in a newspaper and reporting the same photograph on an activist's Facebook page might seem the same. Yet, even if they both represent the same moment of a particular event, the processes of production and distribution as well as interpretation are certainly very different. In other words, by changing the source of the news and the channel by which news was created and circulated, social-media-enabled reporting by citizens alerted the process of news making: news production, dissemination, and interpretation. This change in the news-making process can be realized from the changing topics discussed in the messages being sent (what to think about?), the content shared in the messages (what is displayed?), the nature of the message (what to think?), and who the senders and receivers of that message are. Therefore, through social media's influence on the news-making process in Egypt, social media was influencing the public experience of public events and as a result their reality.

As citizens' observations of the country's social issues and public events were constantly documented and updated, the news was turned into stories. For example, the news and photograph that brought attention to the case of Khaled Said's death were turned into a story that was circulated through social media. The citizen reporters, who were frustrated with the traditional media's version of this event (and many other incidents that occurred in the country) used social media sites to deny the official account and narrate their own side of the story. According to a citizen reporter's version of the

story, Said was attacked in the street, beaten and killed by two police officers because they were angry at Said for shooting a video about their corruption. (The video was eventually posted on YouTube.) The Facebook site was used to report this conflicting version of Said's story:

> We are all Khaled Said
> Khaled Said, a 28-year-old Egyptian from the coastal city of Alexandria, Egypt, was tortured to death at the hands of two police officers. Several eye witnesses described how Khalid was taken by the two policemen into the entrance of a residential building where he was brutally punched and kicked. The two policemen ban...See More.

YouTube was used to upload many videos about Khaled Said, including rap songs and different solemn representations of his story with hunting music. The wide availability of social media provided ordinary citizens in Egypt the opportunity to document their version of the reality. Examples like Said's case reflect how social media facilitated news communication and representation, particularly in comparison to the absence of media coverage of similar events in the past in the country, and changed the way Egyptians experienced public events. The examples also highlight how citizens used social media platforms to ensure that their side of stories was told and heard. In this sense, social media platforms provided citizen reporters an alternative voice to the traditional media outlets that echoed official government policies and views. Additionally, the news product in the case of Said's death reflected the changing nature of the audience's role to become active contributors rather than passive receivers of news. At the same time, it showed how social media permitted citizens to work together, collectively, and rewrite

the way news reporting was enacted in the country. While social media users were

sharing their narratives and creating their stories, they were collaboratively contributing

to forming and defining the reality of the virtual space.

The role played by social media in news and information provision and

representation influenced the emergence of a credibility crisis in terms of the public's

perception of national, state-controlled media in Egypt. The presentation of the 'untrue'

stories undermined the regime's media's reporting of reality in a way that decreased

public trust in the regime's media, and in the news. Alternatively, social media at this

phase played a large role in providing the platform for social construction of the 'truthful'

reality in contrast to the 'falsehood' of the regime media. The 'reality', as a result,

became a combination of the offline and online worlds, as the two extended one another.

In other words, social media's virtual space became complementary to the material space

which generated the condition that triggered citizens' attention and facilitated their

recognition of current social issues and real status in the country, and thus social media

increased the potential for political change.

Through the use of social media sites, the news and stories of dramatic and

unexpected events in the country were collectively produced and highly publicized in

Egypt. Citizens' reporting actions helped political issues to gain traction in Egypt and

change who was involved in the political conversations. For instance, the photo of

Khaled Said crystallized a situation that initiates a tremendous amount of interaction on

social network sites, resulting in attracting citizens' attention to his case and generating an

understanding of his story that is different from that reported in traditional media. This

new understanding affected people's perception of the government, and established as a result a collective cognitive structure that initiated a social movement process leading to the political change that took place in Egypt in 2011. In this sense, social media served as an alternative press that provided a large base of records of spreadable content that brought attention to the ongoing issues and 'real' status. At the same time, it was facilitating the generation of an alternative reality by serving as a shared space that sets and reflects what and how issues are mutually faced by citizens. By utilizing social media platforms, citizen reporters were able to control their discourse and experience and provide Egyptian-citizens-given definitions of events or reality, rather than allowing the government to impose their own definitions. In other words, those reporters, who were also creators of citizens' reality, used social media's virtual space to re-present and reshape the 'real' world. Accordingly, social media served as a virtual platform of reality, which encompasses two realities: the world they live in, and the world they create.

Armed with pictures and video clips to educate Egyptians about social problems and document torture and oppression events, the widespread visualization of news and information about various social and political issues in social media became an obvious reality of the status in the country shared by many citizens. Citizens' interaction pattern as well as the learning that was generated during this phase formed a precondition that facilitated a development of democratic practices and discourses in the subsequent phases of the movement. Additionally, the unique networked structure of social media platforms helped to bring previously unconnected individuals together under a collectively-created reality, a reality that generated public outrage and a major change in people's attitude.

This reality formed the basis to establish a collective awareness that was of paramount importance to the 2011 Egyptian revolution, as we will discuss in the following phase of the social movement.

6.2.2. Phase 2: Social Media Fostered Civic Engagement and Political Participation, Leading to the Effect of Collective Awareness

The painful reality of Mubarak's Egypt, which was reproduced in the preceding phase and experienced by many citizens on social media, formed a groundswell of feelings of distress among people, giving them a reason to complain and a subject for conversations, as we highlighted in our discussion of Said's case in the previous phase. These conversations instigated a shift in the actors' orientation, their thoughts, and their attitude. This shift was reflected in social media users' exchange and the content of the messages they were posting. It was also reflected as many citizens became more civically and politically active through their engagement in a variety of activities on social media, in order to make their sentiments known. Egyptians who were once afraid to talk about politics found in social media a safe platform to complain about long-accepted practices by the government, and at the same time a safe platform on which to come together to discuss their problems and ideas on political matters without government interference or surveillance. Social media provided these Egyptians a public space that enabled them to put their experience of life under Mubarak in conversation with other fellow citizens, fostering as a result citizens' civic engagement and political participation. The citizens' exchanges that took place on social media sites during this phase shaped a collaborative process that helped Egyptians to produce a wide view, or perception, of their context and

at the same time made the participants aware of others who shared their feelings and views.

   As Egyptians were experiencing many events in the country on social media sites through texts, pictures, and videos that highlighted grievances under the Mubarak regime, many depressed citizens during this phase were approaching others to express their worries and anxieties and vent their feelings of resentment toward the government practices and the status in Egypt. Citizens would post messages, such as "I am in deep sadness over everything that is happening," revealing their sorrow with the situation in the country. Apart from such a message's functional role in informing the audiences of the producer's feeling toward their reality, the message, by implying that "everything that is happening" is disappointing, provokes an awareness of the problems in the country, which offer a reason to be in "a deep sadness." Messages were also highlighting that citizens were displeased with the traditional media outlets, which were presenting a distorted view of reality. Citizens would post conversations, such as "Everything so confusing now!! Media sucks and don't know what to believe anywhere!!" and "Go back to your work and jobs. Do not listen to sattelite t.v. but to your own conscience," highlighting a strong criticism of the traditional media, and a negative perception of its misleading and untruthful coverage. At the same time, the messages reflected citizens' feelings of uncertainty, and their struggle to make sense of their reality, a confusion about "everything."

   While citizens were sharing their sentiments, they were engaging others, directly or indirectly, to become part of the social exchange by agitating for their attention and

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feelings about public issues. As an illustration, a post stated "I have no words to go with this video, see for yourselves," and another post stated "This one made me cry - it's the best video compilation I have seen so far...." These were comments to videos that reflected the government's vicious practices. The construction of these posts was inviting an engagement in the conversation. The video helped greatly in capturing and reflecting what was actually happening in Egypt. Watching the video connected the audience with the feelings of pain and agony felt by many citizens, and reflected the horrific practices of the authorities that threatened the integrity of an ordinary citizen's life in Egypt. The first post was composed and shared with others to convey the producer's feelings of sorrow or anger, which seems to be close to "I am shocked and cannot find words to describe my feelings about the video," but the note also encouraged others to get involved to 'see for themselves' to believe what was happening. The second post, while highlighting the emotion of distress that was felt by the producer, was also motivating others to watch the video. Through these communications that conveyed the actors' feelings, citizens were establishing connections with others who shared their emotions, and also providing motivation for people to engage in a collective process of understanding, as one of the citizens pointed out in the following post:

> Fear-the most powerful tool a government can muster to control its people. Our own government uses it regularly to manipulate us to their ends. We must use our intellect to separate truth from propaganda

This message highlighted the producer's perception of the government in Egypt, which for a long time promoted a culture of fear among the people as a strategy to retain power.

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Through installing terror in the general population, the government would have people unquestionably believe and obey whatever the regime conveyed. Yet, in order to reduce the confusion in the mainstream media, and to find the truth, people needed to use their intelligence "to separate truth from propaganda." This post, on one hand, directed a critique at the government that sought to manipulate the public's opinion. On the other hand, the post encouraged people to break the barriers of fear and open their minds, together, to understand what was happening and come to correct conclusions that distinguished the reality from the fabricated truth that served the regime's agenda. Posts like this highlighted how individuals were using social media to turn to and initiate a connection with others who shared the same reality. The use of collective terms such as "our", we", and "us" reflected an initial development of a shared identity and a collective process by which people were thinking together to become fully aware of the truth.

Sometimes, citizens who were interested in the country's issues went a step further by submitting materials and initiating discussions around their posts by inviting people to share their opinions. For instance, the following image displayed a flow of brown water instead of clean water from a faucet in a bathroom sink.

Figure 9. An Image of a Flow of Water in a Bathroom Sink

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This was posted on social media sites to bring attention to the problems of a water crisis and poor sanitation in public facilities. This problem was one of many that highlighted the general social struggle of everyday life in Egypt. The picture underscored the absence of basic rights for citizens in Egypt, such as the right to clean water. The image highlighted one of the Mubarak government's many failures to provide basic goods and services to Egyptian citizens, such as having work opportunities and good education systems. Under these conditions, the majority of the Egyptian population had good reason to feel disenfranchised and dissatisfied.

People's messages, such as the post "What are your thoughts about this??," highlighted an effort to utilize social media by the citizens as a shared platform to initiate conversations about concerns that mattered to them. Posts like this reflected a change in the production and consumption of discourse in Egypt; they showed how the exchange of messages in social media gave everyday citizens a greater awareness of the situation in which they lived and opened a dialogue about issues that affected their lives. At the same time, they highlighted the opportunity provided by social media for citizens to communicate with others, express their feelings and thoughts, and to engage in conversations about public matters. Additionally, these posts highlighted the embodied connections between the participants, based on their shared experiences and the topics of the conversations. These conversations, though not necessarily political in nature, invited a pattern of exchange on social media sites that underlined a change in the nature (act) and function (purpose) of discourse as well as the actors' orientation during the time of this phase.

Social media fostered ordinary citizens' participation in civic and political life. For instance, it provided Egyptians a pivotal exposure to information and conversations on topics that promoted their attention and engagement in social and political issues. Also, it encouraged Egyptians to be active and open with their opinions, thus empowering ordinary citizens in Egypt to have a voice, and for their feelings and thoughts to receive a hearing and recognition by others. There were different ways in which citizens used social media platforms during this phase to promote their civic engagement and political participation. For instance, many young Egyptians decided to form online political groups around a shared cause by utilizing Facebook pages such as "We are all Khaled Said" and "The April 6 Youth Movement" to call people to join and support their struggle. In addition, many were producing and disseminating posts about political issues, belonging to a social networking site that is involved in political or social issues, and employing citizens as a part of the discourse by inviting them to respond and debate through open discussions. Through social media, young Egyptians who were not yet engaged or maybe not interested in politics were able to convey their frustrations, express their opinion freely, and raise their voice against the state in Egypt, and hence to become active participants. The evolving participatory orientation of the actors during this phase was highlighted by both the changing nature of exchange and the content of social media messages. This orientation of the actors also reflected the emerging role of social media as an agency to establish a democratic society.

The emerging role of social media during this phase was reflected in the different ways that it affected the political landscape in Egypt. First, social media granted the users

the ability to control not only their experience of the country's public events, but also the citizens' discourse around them. The design of social networking sites facilitated the use of their platforms as a shared space, where citizens could broadly discuss their issues and speak their mind. Hence, social media transformed the boundaries of discourse in Egypt by opening up democratic spaces for people to interact beyond the control of the regime. This affordance was very significant in influencing Egyptians' civic engagement and political participation, especially in a country like Egypt, where public and political discourse had been controlled, and opinions were not always tolerated.

Second, the technological environment of social media and the possibility of anonymity are characteristics that likely aided citizens' political activities. The separation of the online environment from the real world promoted a feeling of safety that may have encouraged more people to participate in risky activities. Also, if people could use social media to maintain their anonymity, many could browse the messages online and voice their opinion more freely, while avoiding possible abuse from the government. The affordances of social media allowed many fearful Egyptians to engage in public conversations by privately and publically articulating their political opinions, critiquing the government, and expressing their conflicting ideas. As a result, citizens were exposed to and became familiarized with forms of communication not previously available to them.

Third, the networked structure of social media supported associations among like-minded individuals. Social media is by default a built-in space for associations. By engaging in conversations and sharing their views across social media platforms, citizens

were establishing their connections through their posts that highlighted their shared interests. While Egyptian citizens were using social media to exchange their sentiments and engage in discussions, they were electronically connecting based on their homophily, or shared ideas.

The authoritative dominance of political discourse by the government in Egypt influenced the emergence of social media as a public space, where democracy become possible. The mode of exchange backed by social media platforms was decentralized, horizontal, and pluralistic, and it supported equality in communications; social media platforms promoted an environment where young Egyptians could engage in and network around political ideas while bypassing the government's restrictions and threats. This environment, in turn, invited the kind of practices and language that influenced the discourse dynamic within the country's political context to become more democratic and more free. Young Egyptians, as a result, became more engaged as they felt they had a role in which they could act.

Egypt cultural tradition and the earlier political environment did not support citizen participation in politics, or even citizen discussions about it. In Egypt, the socialization process, by which peoples' values and attitudes are internalized, was consistent with the values and attitudes emphasized by the country's authoritarian political culture and reinforced by the political discourse, which influences Egyptians' norms and ideas about politics. From a young age, Egyptian citizens were trained to obey parents, teachers, managers, policemen, and so on. This principle, which stems from an assumption of superiority, eventually defaults to any authority figures. Thus, for young

people in Egypt, the norm was to be talked at. This norm was explicit and more apparent

within the country's political realm. Political discourse in Egypt was usually controlled,

vertical, and directed to citizens by the regime, mainly through the communication

channels of mass media systems, including T.V, radio, and printed press. This meant

there was little chance for citizens to voice their opinions and share their feedback. It also

meant there were limited opportunities for citizens to participate in politics or even to

engage in conversations about social and political issues that mattered to them.

For these citizens, social media came in handy, without central authority to

control it, offering them autonomous, horizontal networks that supported an

unprecedented interactive form of exchange from many to many. Young Egyptians

interested in the country's public and political issues appropriated the strength of social

media many-to-many communication capabilities to initiate discussions about concerns

that affected their lives. Those citizens encouraged others to become part of the discourse

by asking the audience explicitly about their sentiments, and initiating debates to analyze

the situation in the country that they experienced together. One of the posts, giving an

example of these practices, stated the following:

> Overlooking the footage of the video, what do you think? What points do you
> agree or disagree with? It will be interesting to know your views and open up a
> discussion about it

Posts like this highlight how social media offered a shared space where citizens

felt comfortable to express their feelings and thoughts. This shared space was an

opportunity for Egyptians to come together in a way that was not previously available to

them. Young Egyptians built on this opportunity to initiate and participate in conversations about issues that mattered to them. This opportunity to speak their minds was also embraced by the public. Such conversations promoted self-expression values to become more widespread in society. The act of seeking, receiving, and imparting views and ideas underlies a fundamental human right of freedom of expression: the right and freedom to express what they think, to agree and disagree, to share their interpretations. This right was a very important aspect in establishing a democratic society. Speech was an important means of civic engagement and political participation. It was a vehicle through which individuals debated the everyday issues, shared their views, and actively influenced the political process. Free speech served as an important condition that fostered individuals to participate in politics, to stand up and feel counted, to be active players in democracy. Self-expression increased people's tendency to seek democracy. In a country like Egypt, free expression risked serious response from the state. Hence, in this context, social media played an important role in promoting democratic practices in Egypt.

   Access to many-to-many communication through social media platforms permitted social exchange on a new level and fostered citizens' conversations. In turn, many citizens during this phase were becoming participants, creating contents that asserted their experience and reflected their thoughts. These shared contents in many cases revealed a strong trend of discontent among the people. People's feelings of annoyance and displeasure were expressed in posts like these:

This is disgusting...

it is a crime against humanity. Absolutely disgraceful and is further evidence of a brutal regime that has no sense of humanity

Lets not forget....this is the one we can see.....how many more that we can't/didn't see.....hundreds

Messages like these demonstrated how citizens were participating in the conversation by expressing their emotions and thoughts about the material shared in the discussions in which they were involved. Through these conversations, participants were giving interpretations to their negative emotions. Social media, through its ability to support feedback communication, enabled the attainment of complete circuits of social and political exchange. In addition, it allowed for the back and forth of conversations, which supported citizens' collective establishing of an understanding. Hence, while citizens were generating their conversations in social media sites, they were revealing their dominant emotions and creating the truth of their reality. At the same time, they were overlapping into the same experience and around a common matter to form a collective. Thus, it can be argued that social media permitted associations that were never before possible. Additionally, through these conversations, social media was providing visibility to the truth that was created in a way that resonated with public consciousness. For instance, by using words such as "disgusting" and "disgraceful" to define the practices of the authorities, or the employment of negative attributes such as "brutal" and "no sense of humanity" to depict the regime, citizens were sharing their thoughts and also creating their collective perception about Mubarak's regime, which had no regard for its own

people. Also, words like "let's" and "we" reflected how individuals came to define themselves as part of a larger experience in which they were involved collectively. Alternatively, these words served the identification function of connecting the producers to the audience through their shared experience. Through utilizing social media networks, citizens were turning to other individuals to construct their interpretation together, as in the following post:

> Let's analyze the situation together. I need our input plz. I'm sure that many minds thinking together are very effective

In this post, the participant called other members in the social network group to get together to think as a whole with one mind, in an effort to shape their understanding about the situation in Egypt. The post paid attention to other participants and encouraged them to become engaged by providing their input. Also, the post implied the shared reality, or situation, of the participants, which served as a precondition for their collective understanding process, and as a basis for their possible connections. Through this post and other similar posts, social media triggered an important socialization process to resolve the uncertainty and confusion felt by Egyptian citizens and to develop a gradual understanding of how others viewed the reality. This process had the capacity to influence people's perception. Thus, the power to influence that was once held by Mubarak's regime was shifting to social media platforms that supported citizens' interactions and involvement in politics.

The discussions that were called upon by hundreds of people, without a central organization or an affiliation to a specific political party, drew the attention of many

citizens to public and political issues. Further, the horizontal mode of communication promoted by social media enabled the distribution of citizens' messages in ways that were trustworthy. At the same time, this property of social media gave a voice to the people's agenda by giving every participant the opportunity to contribute their own opinions and ideas. With limited surveillance of social media platforms from the authorities at that time, people were encouraged to continue to express their feelings and ideas freely. Thus, social media provided a sense of safety and protection that permitted people to break the psychological barriers of fear and encouraged their participation in public affairs. As a result, citizens were sharing their feedback and voicing their opinions from a point of view that was almost invisible, through messages such as this:

> Fire the police they are the problem. The Police need to be head by a military. If Police stayed after all, then the corruption will remain in place

In the post mentioned above, the producer pointed to the police as the source of the problem in the country. As the post highlighted, the police represented everything wrong with Egyptian society, and if the police stayed … then the problem would not be solved. Sharing this interpretation of the country's problem could trigger resistance among the general public. Through such a post, other fellow citizens were motivated to participate in political conversations to critique not only the police but also the regime; such a post might have encouraged many to make bolder statements that raised a shared concern for change in the state as they learned that they were not alone. The lack of confidence and trust in the government found a voice for young Egyptians in social media, as some participants pointed out:

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That is not going to change until the police change. They have their own divided agenda against Nationalism and perhaps political opponents in the future

EVERY SINGLE member of this regime is corrupt to the core - they have amassed forturnes both in Egypt and outside. Each of these individuals must be brought to justice!

The frequent conversations and open discussions on social media sites invited a shocking honesty and bluntness in a country known to have redlines when it came to authority. The mentioned posts and other similar posts gave meaning to the people's grievances and negative emotions arising from social repression, corruption, and humiliation. These posts highlighted an effort to identify the reason behind the country's problems. While the posts focused on requesting or forcing the resignation of government officials, at the same time they established or indicated the general view of the people about the regime and the perceived difference between what was and what should be. Such posts highlighted how social media and networks became a window used to express Egyptians' ideas about rejecting their regime. What is apparent from these posts is the strong discourse of reproach and criticism that they conveyed. Though sometimes not explicitly stated, the regime was depicted as 'corrupt' and 'unjust.' For the people in Egypt, social media conversations were an expression of their alienation and discontent with the government. Such freedom of expression would not have been possible through the traditional media channels such as TV, radio, and printed press, which were controlled by the government. So, while the government was using all possible mechanisms to control media channels and manipulate public opinion, online social sites provided a place and a voice for frightened and silenced individuals in Egypt to initiate a political discussion of

differing viewpoints. Thus, social media discourse allowed a room for citizens to offer

competing meanings and find support from the readers.

Also, through social media platforms, interactions between the media and the

audience were possible. The public discussions throughout social media sites created

links among the participants where individuals were able to engage in widespread

dialogue. Additionally, the easy possibility to communicate effectively and freely among

themselves allowed citizens to reorient themselves from passive readers, listeners, or

viewers, to potential writers, speakers, and participants. As a result, citizens who were

interested in keeping up with public affairs were allowed to become active participants in

political discussions by expressing their opinion. The change in the actors' orientation

discussed here was interrelated with a change in the act and purpose of the exchange. One

of the participants acknowledged these important changes that were promoted by social

media sites:

> great outcome of our discussions is that a large number of our younger generation
> is getting involved in politics. Something we missed for ages

This post highlighted how social media promoted a highly participatory political

engagement for young Egyptians, something they had missed for years. In addition, it

implied how citizens using social media were able to have an active role in changing the

dynamic of political discourse in the country to one where political participation was

enacted through their social media posts. While citizens were engaging in politics

through their texts and images, and the audience was participating in the conversations by

liking and commenting on the posts and sharing their feedback, they were establishing

relationships from which they both gain their new identity as participants. For many

Egyptians, social media was a means to reach likeminded individuals and foster

forbidden debates, particularly when traditional media channels served as blockades to

freedom of speech in Egypt. For instance, this was a participant's post:

> Hi all, time for me to hit the sack.
> Just want to say a big thank you to you all for the lively debate we have had again
> tonight. Although we are sacrificing a considerable amount of our time on FB,
> let's not forget that there are people in Egypt who are sacrificing much much
> more.
> God bless my friends, and be safe whereever you are.

This post highlights an important aspect of the citizens' political discussions that were

supported by social media: they were public, dynamic, and interactive. Having access to

these discussions gave many citizens in Egypt the opportunity to engage in politics. It

also helped the participants to identify with one another. Through these discussions in

social media sites, those who were interested in public matters were able to find others

who shared their concerns. This in turn promoted a condition that supported the

possibility of forming an aggregate of 'friends' that manifest the concerns and interests of

citizens.

Social media influenced a political change in Egypt through introducing

incremental changes in Egypt's authoritarian context. By granting open and interactive

platforms, social media provided Egyptian citizens a shared space that they could claim

as their own and a realm of freedom where they could feel comfortable speaking their

minds and venting their frustrations, which was a great starting point for civic

engagement and political participation. Social media's participatory environment

promoted citizen political opinions, steeped in anti-government sentiments, to be voiced

and shared. Thus, social media motivated citizens' expression and fostered citizens'

cognitive development with public debate and participation. Moreover, by responding to

the invitations and engaging in open discussions, citizens were establishing connections

that were formed among the participants, while generating a critical discursive flow that

helped to create their collective meanings. Consequently, social media created for young

Egyptians new possibilities and influenced democratic habits acquired from their

interaction with fellow citizens, which in turn helped to reshape the participants' shared

views and attitudes toward the regime in Egypt. Alternatively, social media served as a

democratic public sphere, especially in a context like that of Egypt, providing effective

tools and transparent channels that supported the production and consumption of political

discourse, freedom of speech, and autonomous associations among those who shared

common grievances. Thus, social media promoted the growth of democratic habits and

political awareness among the people. Egyptians learned that they have a voice, and most

importantly, they learned that they have a right to form political views and a freedom to

express those views.

The impact of social media on citizens' civic engagement and political

participation was reflected in the words and images posted on social media, which

highlighted the growing number of voices calling for freedom and democracy. Here is an

example of how citizens expressed their aspirations for democracy:

> We want freedom and justice for our country and our world. We will never be silent
> again …

This post highlighted citizens' aspirations for democracy and their desire for liberty, which underlies a development of the value of free expression. By facilitating the exchange of ideas and views among young Egyptians, the discussions on social media eventually affected public opinion among many citizens, who rejected what was happening in Egypt. Young Egyptians began to reach out to the public more aggressively, highlighting their right to know the real status (the truth), which is vital to democracy. For instance, one of the citizens posted: "Egyptian people deserve to know the truth." This post highlights how social media was a revelation on reality in Egypt for the youth, and also how social media was a means to control their discourse around this reality. It reflects 'Egyptian people' evolving demands for their civic rights, the right to information. Citizens were reflecting through their posts to some degree an affective attachment to democracy. For instance, one of the participants posted:

> Is there a chance for democracy in Egypt? Are there any blueprints for future Egypt blossoming with human rights written down in constitution, Bill of Rights and Declaration of Human Rights which are essential to a complete U-turn in the Arabic and Moslem world, and to change all those countries into progressive ones?

The post shows a growing interest in the idea of democracy in Egypt. It reflects a concern for changing the future of Egypt, and addresses the possibility to create this change through democracy. This desire for change became a vast public demand expressed in many of the posts. Here are two examples of how citizens were expressing this demand for change:

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I support Egyptian people's aspirations to a just and free democratic society...Mubarak should quit …fair and free elections should be held to bring the best leaders out in the front to lead the nation where everyone is cared for and politicians work to create employment for it's citizens and education for the young and growing… QUIT MUBARAK QUIT…FREE YOUR PEOPLE FROM YOUR AUTOCRATIC SLAVERY

FREEDOM LOADING ███████████████ 99% [Error : Please remove Mubarak and try again !

Both of these posts, and many other similar messages, reflected the participants' desire for freedom and their demand for the resignation of Mubarak. The construction of the posts communicated to Egyptians that their long struggle for freedom and democracy would come to an end by removing Mubarak. The form of representation in the second post presented Mubarak as an obstacle to freedom, making him a political target toward which their effort should be turned to achieve their goal.

These posts revealed a change in the society. Social media during this phase inspired people to clamor for their rights and call for more freedom. In other words, social media played an important role in conserving and reviving democratic forms of actions from the ways it was used to facilitate citizens' engagement and discussions, broaden the expression of citizens' feelings and ideas about social injustices, and increase the visibility to others who shared similar frustrations and struggles. These forms of (inter)actions fostered citizen civic engagement and political participation in Egypt, and played an important role in changing the political landscape.

The government, which for a long had control over where, when, and how messages were communicated to citizens started losing bits and pieces of that power as

portions of their controlling role were taken over by the creations of social media. In sum, the citizens' conversations about the country's issues, government practices, and political conditions in Egypt during this phase generated a general sense of frustration, resentment, and anger among the participants in these dialogues and provided an emotional connection among them and a new level of understanding about the seriousness of the problems and the involvement of the regime. While citizens were interacting, their discourse was shaping their collective awareness. As more news of new public events in the country continued to spread throughout social media sites, people's complaints and discussions grew, adding to the feelings of dissatisfaction, converting citizens' feelings into public judgments of injustice, and shaping a shared reference basis from which the citizens perceived their reality. Social media here functioned as a platform where people's ideas and trends were shared and reflected. Also, by revealing others who experiencing similar hardships, it created a sense of community that gave individuals the feeling that they were not alone. This feeling of connection provided a basis for developing an autonomous aggregate that bound citizens together in a common concern. In other words, the people's act of complaining contributed to the generation of a condition that reinforced a shared sense of grievances about life under the Mubarak regime and inspired a rapport among them. The outcome of this phase was the construction of a shared view, or a collective awareness, that highlighted the actors' shared concerns, conveyed that the actors were deeply troubled, and revealed the trend in society. This collective awareness was a vital precondition for engagement in activities that fostered the organization of a social movement structure to support advancing toward their goal. In other words, the

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construction of a collective awareness during this phase facilitated the development of a collective memory structure that activated and facilitated a social movement formation, as we will discuss in the following phase.

6.2.3. Phase 3: Social Media Boosted Social Movement Structure and Campaign Formation, Leading to the Effect of Collective Memory

The growing consciousness of the public discontent that was the result of the previous phase created a precondition that prompted the emergence of a sense of attachment among a group of actors who shared a dissatisfaction with the state of affairs and a vision for a better future. This sense of belonging was reflected in social media exchanges during this phase, which revealed a transformation of the actors' orientation as members of a group. The group shared views held them together as a collective. These actors became more engaged and more active in associating with specific meanings and actions. Social media messages also revealed changes in the act and purpose of the exchanges; the messages featured activities establishing the society's agenda, solidifying frames of reference, and concerting a public representation of the social movement group. These activities supported the formation of an online protest structure that formed the basis for an active opposition and helped in advancing the social movement cause.

Many posts during this phase highlighted an attempt to establish an autonomous group structure independent from the state. The common feelings of frustration and grievances and the collective perception of Mubarak's regime shared among many discontented Egyptians across the country strengthened their connectedness and reinforced a mutual sense of belonging among the adherents of the social movement group. While citizens were participating in the conversations, social media was

transforming their engagement form in a way that allowed their collective "we" sense of identity to grow and mature. This collective identity actualized and reinforced the group's unique characteristics: their shared experiences, their shared expectations, and the meanings around which the group members coalesced. The construction of this collective "we" sense of identity mirrored a transformation in the messages exchanged in social media sites at this phase of the social movement. For instance, the actors during this phase posted messages such as: "overall u see how their police lie" and "This, more than anything, has been a war of ideas. Ours is freedom, personal rights & end of dictatorship; theirs isn't." These messages reflected how citizens were becoming a collective "we" that was increasingly upset with the regime, which was perceived as "they." The choice of words in these posts highlighted a collective political representation of the actors in which the boundaries were created by the members of the group to divide and reinforce the "we" vs. "they" distinction, where "they" referenced Mubarak and his government. The first message begins with engaging the audience and confirming them into a shared perception about the untruthful police in Egypt. A central highlight underlined by this message is that those who constitute the "they," in contrast to "we," are deprived of the moral adherence to representing the truth. So, by using the word "their" to identify the Egyptian police, the message underscores the perception conveyed of the police as a characteristic of the members of a different group, namely Mubarak's regime. The second post provides a categorical distinction of "our" versus "their" that promotes a collective identity shared by those belonging to the group. It also provides a cognitive frame that highlights collective ideas, such as "freedom, personal rights and end of dictatorship,"

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that helped the group to activate their collective identity and identify themselves as members of the same group. These examples indicate an effort to manufacture shared meanings by which the group defined themselves, while reinforcing a collective sense of identity for the members who shared these meanings. Another message states: "Did anyone else notice #Mubarak referring to the dead protesters in his speech as 'YOUR dead' rather than 'OUR'!" This post attempted to reinforce the conceptual distinction established by the social movement members between the collective "we" and the use of "they" to identify the Mubarak regime; it was also reflected by Mubarak himself, who referred to the dead Egyptians as "'Your dead' rather than 'Our.'"

The use of words such as "our," "we," and "us,'" as highlighted in the examples discussed, illustrated a collective identity of the 2011 social movement's members. This collective identity was reflected in social networking platforms such as Facebook and Twitter during the 2011 Egyptian revolution, where individuals came to view and identify themselves as part of the social movement group. This collective identity highlighted a development of interdependent relationships as well as a shared cooperative structure by which the members of the group were able to work together. This structure was highlighted by the following tweet: "There's no state at the moment, we're governing ourselves #Jan25." This tweet implied the established structure of the social movement, which was referenced using the hashtag "Jan25". By emphasizing the idea of self-governance and self-organization of the social movement group by its own members, the producer emphasized the control and power of the social movement group and at the same time their independence from the state. Establishing this structure was an important

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precondition to establish a grassroots opposition; this will be elaborated in the discussion on the following phase of the social movement. Social media played an important role during this phase in establishing social movement structure as well as organizing its campaign.

The development of social movement structure and the organization of its campaign was supported by social media in many ways. For instance, social media helped Egyptians establish society's political agenda. Social media networking opportunities allowed participants to funnel their ideas and goals into a common set of preferences that were responsive of their views; the preferences then became the thinking characteristics of the group. Also, social media allowed members to redefine their vocabularies and establish shared frames of reference in a way that solidified their association. By supporting digital content production and visual documentation, social media facilitated the construction, storage, and dissemination of political representations that were infused with emotions and meanings for those involved in the social movement. These representations, or symbols, were employed by the actors to activate their relationships as members of the same group. Moreover, social media enabled the social movement's members to concert a public representation that served as a source of meaning and power. The actors, who at this phase became members of an online community, used social media to formally promote their network, share their views widely with fellow citizens, and spread the word about their social movement. These activities in turn supported the formation of a social movement structure and campaign that made the collective action possible.

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Hoping for change, many Egyptian citizens were able to produce and reproduce the concerns that signified and justified the idea of protest against the Mubarak regime. These citizens used social media platforms to promote a 'master narrative' that communicated their concerns and reflected their demands. While the demands of the social movement group were generally highlighting political issues such as freedom, social justice, and participation, the main concern was to reform the country. These demands, which inspired and encouraged the idea of political change, transformed into a full-fledged political agenda that was channeled into the 2011 Egyptian social movement's collective identity. As an example, the post below, which communicated the following demands (in Arabic), highlights how social media was used to funnel public ideas that were discussed and shared on social media into an organized set of demands:

مطالبنا: اسقاط الرئيس، حل مجلس الشعب والشورى المزورين، إنهاء حالة الطوارئ فورا، تشكيل حكومة انتقالية، برلمان منتخب يقوم بعمل التعديلات الدستورية لإجراء انتخابات رئاسية
(In English: Our demands are: bring down the president; dissolve the fake chambers of parliament and Constative assembly; ending the emergency law immediately; the formation of a transitional government; an elected parliament doing a constitutional amendment to hold presidential elections)

This post highlights how social media was at the forefront when it came to setting society's political agenda. The message conveyed the social movement's motives by indicating the issues to be addressed or pursued by the group. Egyptian citizens used social media to bring the issues that concerned their welfare into the public spotlight. This implies that the traditional media outlets in Egypt no longer had full control of the national narrative and political agenda-setting. This development highlighted an important role of social media, which was used by an opposition group to its advantage to

establish and broadcast its political agenda to the public. The post details and clearly prioritizes the issues to be addressed by the social movement. The list of demands started with the overthrow of President Mubarak, the central goal of the movement, followed by the other demands. The representation of the demands in this form reflects a maturity of the group's formation, and provides an indication of the development of a structure. It reflects that the members understood the social movement goals and were motivated to act on behalf of these goals. Through such posts, social media emerged as a major forum in Egypt to challenge Mubarak and his regime and shift the power structure of Egyptian society. Social media, which reflected and communicated the desire of the people, granted Egyptian citizens an ability to establish a structure that challenged the state and its once unquestionable power and absolute ownership of the discourse in Egypt.

Social media also helped social movement members to reproduce the historical events and to construct political representations in a way that promoted their version of reality and helped to establish the collective identity of its group. This process aimed to establish a network of active relationships between the group participants through their shared experiences. In addition, this process helped them use the existing networks to concert a public representation of the social movement. For instance, social movement members used social media at this phase to recollect, reconstruct, and share several representations of their political standpoint, in an effort to construct a shared frame of reference that linked them as one body. In order to do so, they selected aspects of their perceived reality and made them more salient in a way that promoted a particular definition of the problems in the country, a particular interpretation of the cause, and a

particular suggestion for a solution. Social media's digital documentation function and the persistence of its memory facilitated a collective way of remembering the news and events in Egypt and at the same time supported this process. For instance, simple stories, such as Khaled Said, connote simply forgotten. This function facilitated the social movement members' ability to establish and redefine the group's collective memory.

Social movement members utilized social media to construct political representations by reproducing and disseminating word phrases and photographs or videos of individuals, events, and places. They did this to promote particular definitions or interpretations of many issues through their interactions, to employ their memories, and to reinforce their emotions. A great example of this practice is the photograph of Khaled Said, who become the face of the 2011 Egyptian revolution. The photographs of Said before and after his violent death were first captured through visual representations, then spread through social media platforms. Social movement members used social media to get involved in activities that transformed Khaled Said's photograph into a representation that evokes deep memories and carries powerful meaning. This representation was then reproduced and redistributed by many Egyptians during the 2011 Egyptian revolution throughout Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, and quickly became a symbol independent of any object of retelling of its story, to provide a meaning of who "we" were as a group. The following post provided an illustration of the use of the shared experience of Said to establish unity among the members:

انا اسمى خالد محمد سعيد
كلنا بنحب مصر .. كلنا خالد سعيد

(In English: <u>I am Khaled Mohamed Said</u>
We all love Egypt … We are all Khaled Said)

Figure 10. A Symbol of Khaled Said

This image and the associated text represented important symbols that were constructed by the 2011 social movement group. The image shows Khaled Said looking like any Egyptian young man, and featuring him against the Egyptian flag. The text associated with the image says, "I am Khaled Mohamed Said, we all love Egypt … we are all Khaled Said." The chosen image of Said showed the face of an innocent-looking young man with half a smile, wearing a grey pullover. This image portrayed Said as an ordinary middle-class Egyptian. The image also displayed the Egyptian flag, which symbolized the nation. The use of this image of Said capitalized on a shared reality and a story that triggered many powerful emotions among Egyptians. The image reminded Egyptians of many of the country's issues: oppression, brutality, and human rights violations. Said's image helped Egyptians to identify with him and with the social movement cause; it was a reminder not only of Said, but also that any one of them could

have been Khaled Said. The meaning of the text reinforced this message of the image, which in combination provided a shared identity and a unifying feature to the members of the social movement. The "I" in "I am Khaled Mohamed Said," which defines the actor, was used to blend the actors' identities into a collective whole. By identifying themselves as Khaled Said, actors were highlighting their sense of belonging to the social movement group. The words of the post, "We all love Egypt… We are all Khaled Said," personalized the problem of Said to everyone who loved Egypt. The text not only represented a social movement brand – the group self-image - it also communicated a strong emotion that all young Egyptians ("We") could be killed like Said, and no one would be held accountable. Through the use of the words "We all love Egypt" and the image of the Egyptian flag behind Said's image, social movement members were able to successfully identify the social movement with the Egyptian nation itself. This image of Said provides one of many examples that show how the story and image of Said were used to symbolize and unify the group of the social movement.

The practices that were facilitated by social media to document, manipulate, and transform the original images of Said were crucial to the creation of a global injustice symbol. By standing for itself to convey an objective reality of police brutality and the loss of individual dignity prevalent across the country, it became one of the main symbols that Egyptians used to reference corruption of the regime, motivate opposition against Mubarak, and trigger several activities that supported the 2011 social movement. The symbol of Said's image locates all Egyptians who dreamed of their country free of brutality, torture, and ill treatment in a complex shared present based on a collective

experience that highlighted the inhumane treatment they faced on a daily basis in streets
and police stations everywhere in Egypt.

This symbol become part of the social movement's collective memory that was
channeled into a collective identity by which social movement members defined
themselves. For instance, this symbol of Said was employed to mobilize and formalize
individual membership in the social movement and establish unity among them. This
collective memory of Said was used to justify and motivate each citizen's participation as
an active member or even just a temporary participant in the social movement group.
Members were invited to change their Facebook profile pictures to the image of Said
and to photograph themselves holding an image of Said or a paper sign reading "We are
All Khaled Said" in Arabic. Several pictures published in social media showed members
displaying their solidarity.

Figure 11. Photographs of Citizens' Solidarity around Said's Case

By doing so, individuals were actively associating around the social movement meaning.
This practice helped Egyptians to identify with one cause, and at the same time enabled
them to unite against one enemy. The political symbol of Said was a catalyst of a process
of group identification and social movement community building.

Another example was the use of the phrase "jan25", and the place Tahrir Square. ("Tahrir" is an Arabic word for "liberation"). January 25th was a public holiday celebrated in Egypt as "National Police Day". This day was selected to send a direct message to the police and the authorities in Egypt that their practices were not acceptable. Tahrir Square, in downtown Cairo, the capital of Egypt, is a symbolic center for all Egyptians. The members of the social movement chose the physical location of Tahrir Square as a place to gather all the Egyptian protesters against Mubarak and as a symbol of the social movement to liberate all Egyptians from his repressive regime. Social movement members utilized social media platforms to redefine these symbols and to rebrand this day and place. They created an "event" on social media for January 25, and attached to the day an alternative, threatening description: "The Day of the Revolution Against Torture, Poverty, Corruption, and Unemployment" to refer to major protests planned for Tahrir Square on January 25, 2011, which eventually emerged as a name for the 2011 Egyptian revolution. Social movement members agreed on the "jan25" hashtag, as the following post points out: "ok this is our hashtag #jan25."

Using a shared phrase (hashtag) allowed the social movement's members to define and consolidate the social movement through their social media messages. Members called people repeatedly to use the same hashtag (#jan25) to promote their conformity and collective identity: "Please DO NOT use #Jan26 and STICK TO #Jan25. We have to be consistent! One hashtag for all protests! Just like #sidibouzid for example." The significance of this hashtag expanded the naming of a defining event; it was a stand that signaled their unification. At the same time, it established an abstract

idea of the 2011 protests to the people who eventually become holders of this idea. #Jan25 became a collective memory for Egyptians of the social movement's cause, a reminder that summarized social movement demands, as stated in this post: "Let's not lose focus. Let's keep reminding ourselves of **#Jan25** demands. Our road to freedom is full of challenges that we shall overcome!"

Messages like the above posts underpinned a social process to construct a collective identity of the group. As the actors were establishing the name of the revolution, they were engaged in a collaborative and powerful process of meaning making. This hashtag later became a mechanism for activists to bring both actors and actions into a defined coherent movement. Jan 25 became a symbol of their social movement, a rallying point, and a powerful way to connect their abstract plan and organize communications around and about their protests that lasted beyond Jan 25, 2011, as highlighted in this post: "Those tweeting about the protest in Egypt, please use the hashtag #Jan25 in order to spread any information."

Hashtag #Jan25 eventually became a catalyst to bring activists, adherents, and the global audience together: "Twitter for #Egyptians post **#jan25** is no longer just social media. Its a lifestyle. new friends are made, alliances forged & enemies gained." This message stressed the importance of the Twitter platform for the Egyptians' social movement, which in the post is referred to using the hashtag #jan25. For Egyptians, Twitter was no longer considered just a tool; it became an inseparable part of their life and a source of influence. Messages like this illustrate the way in which digital symbols like #jan25 sparked relationships that were maintained across social media platforms,

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providing a shared identity for the actors as members in the 2011 Egyptian social movement.

The discussed posts showed how social media allowed consensus to build to hold the movement together, and enabled the movement to transform shared meanings into symbols that became carriers of the generalized emotions and ideas built into them. These symbols that were produced, distributed, and stored in social media sites at this phase became part of their particular "we", and formed part of the social movement's collective memory. They acted like integration forces of solidarity to link individuals together into a unified whole. Moreover, through social media, prior news and events that had been documented on social media sites and linked in the mind of many Egyptians were reconnected to the preexisting shared grievances to become part of the social movement's collective memory. This in turn contributed to a cumulative process of collective identity formation.

A collective memory is generated in a distributed social atmosphere, typically from not just one incident but from an accumulation of incidents that occurred in the country over a period of time prior to the outbreak of the social movement. Therefore, social media that stored people's collective memory – the experiences that people shared with each other - allowed to control the boundaries of the social actors' emergent network. In this sense, social relations constructed through social media sites became a network of shared frames. Therefore, collective identity can be seen as a proxy for a specific type of social relations that was embedded in the network of the social movement collective memory and was produced and reproduced in ongoing social communication

mediated by these relations between individuals who shared the same cognitive structure of the incidents and issues in the country. The process of identity formation cannot be separated from the symbolic definition of what is real and possible. This stage, therefore, highlighted the symbolic role of IS as grounds for human activity. The embeddedness of social media in human activities and everyday life improved the chances of creative forms of symbolic and political action and facilitated the social process of construction of a group identity.

This phase of the movement, therefore, highlighted two important roles of social media. First, as discussed previously, social media allowed the construction of a collective identity based on a collective memory that was embedded in an emerging network of social relations among people who shared the same situation. Second, social media enabled the social movement members to engage in ongoing social communications with fellow citizens to produce and reproduce their shared cognitive frames; thus, social media facilitated the propagation of a social movement campaign. The outcome of this phase was a collective memory distributed on social media sites. This distributed memory stored the history of incidents and reflected the experiences of the social movement's members captured through online text, pictures, and videos; this allowed citizens to be connected with the protest experience in its raw form and to virtually share the related emotions of anger and frustration. This ability of social media to preserve the emotions associated with the events that underpinned social movement frames provided the condition that derived the power of the structure that held together the entire group of social movement participants and contributed to the mobilizing of

grievances among many potential adherents. We will discuss this in the following

section.

6.2.4. Phase 4: Social Media Fostered Community Formation and Political Mobilization, Leading to the Effect of Collective Interpretation

At this phase of social movement, social interactions, which were defined by the

social movement meanings generated during the previous stage, took a different form.

Social media messages during this phase revealed a desire to connect with Egyptian

citizens in an effort to build an online community around social movement goals. The

process of community building that took place at this stage of the social movement can

be viewed as a form of political mobilization that aimed to strengthen the internalization

of social movement identity among Egyptian citizens. This new form of social

interaction, as reflected in the change of social media content and exchange, highlighted a

transformation in the actor orientation, and underscores a change in the act and purpose

of the narrative. Social movement members, who shared the idea of political change

rooted in their shared grievance, started to employ the meanings formulated during the

previous phase, in order to raise awareness and inspire people in Egypt to identify with

their idea of change. These actors used social media to establish connections with

adherents, extend social movement collective identity, and motivate people to get

involved in the movement. The actors' political involvement as reflected through these

activities highlighted their orientation as activists, more concerned with changing the

country for the better and engaged to support a shared cause. These activists used social

media to mobilize citizen' participation in the social movement as a part of a larger

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project to implement collective action and achieve the social movement goal of political change.

As mentioned previously, the activists' mobilization effort during this phase highlighted a process of community building and engagement. Through different mechanisms such as liking, changing social media status, and being social and sharing, citizens were encouraged to become a part of the social movement online community. For instance, this post emphasized the process of community building and engagement:

انضم معانا علي صفحة ...دي اول خطوة توحيد علي الفيسبوك..تعالو يامصريين نتجمع هنا)
SHARE and (LIKE) ma3a kol el masreyeen...LIVE!

UNITE HERE!

(Come all Egyptians unite here. This is the first step to unify on the Facebook. Join us on (LIVE) page. Share and Like with all Egyptians).

This post provides an example that highlights social media's role during this phase as a mobilization agency that was used to build a community around a shared goal. Activists used social media to recruit participation and build a network, and at the same time to establish a collective unity among Egyptian citizens. The visual representation of the words "Unite Here!" invokes all Egyptians to come together and organize in a cohesive way (LIVE) on a social media page, and indicate their support to the social movement cause by joining, liking, and sharing. Also, through this post, activists were establishing an interactive circuit that promoted the growth of the social movement network by inviting all Egyptians to Share and like with all (other) Egyptians. The phrase

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"all Egyptians" extended social movement identity to Egyptians' identity by implying, in a way, that "this social movement belongs to Egyptians, so come and unite with all Egyptians". Activists described this as the first step to establish their unison and build a network around a shared vision as part of a bigger project to fight Mubarak's regime and create a political change in Egypt, as indicated by one of the activists in this post:

> this small network is a part of a bigger project antony, the fight for a democratic state where all egyptians have equal rights , i think this is the direction we should be taking now

This post highlighted the underlying goal of engaging Egyptians and establishing this network on social media platforms around a shared vision toward achieving a shared goal. The goal was to establish a democratic system in Egypt that provided a natural environment for the protection and effective realization of human rights. The post reveals that the associations that were created among the participants through the online networks had a symbolic meaning, by which the online community was founded on the collective meaning of the affiliation to the social movement group, and was part of a project to facilitate collective actions for political change in Egypt. Therefore, as the post highlighted, building this small network in social media was a part of the process to mobilize citizens to internalized social movement identity, including its meanings and goals.

Both of those posts, and other similar ones, illustrate how actors were able to discover new and secure ways to interact with a broader audience and establish connections around a common purpose. Also, these posts reflect a form of digital

activism that in turn underscores the new role of the actors during this phase as activists, which without social media would not be propitious under Mubarak's regime, where any form of political activism was not tolerated. Thus, the affordance of social media empowered many men and women in Egypt to become the new influencers, promoting awareness among citizens and demanding social and political changes in the country. In this sense, through social media, 'unpoliticalized' actors became actively involved in the political process in Egypt.

Actors' orientation as activists highlighted a form of engagement during this phase that went beyond voicing their opinions and participating in discussions around the country's issues. Activists' involvement implicated activities that aimed to transform their ideas into a group-based movement and ensure that the desired change took place. Their social media posts were calling Egyptians to unite against abuse, violence, and harassment – against Mubarak's Egypt - and encouraging them to stop being silent, to speak out against social injustice and brutality, and to take a stand to free Egypt. For instance, a post stated: "Take a Stand...Free Egypt and so forth. They need to be exposed on where they stand…Not in a hateful way but nonetheless challenged." This post called on Egyptians to take a clear stance by adopting a social movement position that supported the principles of democracy and freedom, and to take part in the opposition against the rule of President Hosni Mubarak and his government practices, to achieve the change they wanted for a new "free Egypt" to be born. The post promoted the importance of raising the awareness among Egyptians so the 'truth' would be exposed, not necessarily in a violent way, but overtly in a way that challenged Mubarak's regime.

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The ways social media was used by young Egyptians during this phase inspired creative forms of political activism and citizens' engagement. As an example, one of the activists used social media to inspire citizens' political participation to help them promote their collective understanding among the general public. The post put forward the following request:

> I'm sure there are a lot of creative artistic graphic designers and video creators. can you help us by creating some videos using today and yesterday's images and videos with our page url on it? We need to spread awareness using such videos. Can anyone help?

The message communicated in the post emphasized the important role of social media in promoting the activists' participatory culture. Social media served as a key resource for activists to access and recruit creative artistic graphic designers and video creators in an easy manner. The message highlighted the producer's realization of the importance of extending the generated collective awareness of the activists to the public. The visible engagement of the producer, highlighted by the message, to develop or participate in spreading awareness reflects an important form of activism. Also, the post's use of collective identification, seen in "help us" and "we need to spread awareness," provides an indication of the producer's connections with other activists and implies a group structure.

In these examples, activists' interactions on social media were driven by the desire to construct an internal view to be shared by a large number of Egyptians. Through creative use of the tools and digital contents in social media, these activists were able to extend beyond a particular political issue to mobilize citizens and build solidarity in a

safe way. If Egyptians' only activism options had been offline, such as attending a meeting or a rally, then most likely they would not have gotten involved in the social movement; those offline options demanded more from the activists in term of time and personal risk, especially in a repressive country like Egypt. The observation of the messages during this phase reflected activity forms that highlighted different ways by which social media could support activism not only to raise political awareness but also to express political demands and shape certain public attitudes.

Social media, in this sense, served as a mobilization agency that mediated between social movement members and adherents. The networks of social media provided channels for recruiting participants. By providing an environment that supported accessibility to a large number of people, social media provided activists new possibilities to spread social movement presence openly and broadly, circulate social movement ideas and actions, and extend its agenda among the masses in all forms. Through a purposive deployment of the collective identity's meanings, activists used social media strategically and creatively to build a community that internalized the social movement purpose of creating political change in Egypt. Moreover, social media was used to inspire citizens' political engagement by which citizens were encouraged to be part of the solution by working together for change.

Many posts reflected how social media was used to establish a widespread network around a social movement cause. In these posts, Egyptian citizens were motivated to be part of a social movement online community through different forms of engagement. For instance, activists posted messages such as the following:

Yalla ngamma3 kol el masreyeen !! Egyptians UNITE ! Click LIKE...and SHARE !!!
(In Arabic: Let's unite all Egyptians!!)

Christians and Muslims UNITE against dictatorship!

Egyptians around the world... UNITE !

«إيه مستنيين» (What are you waiting for?)
(This is what one of the activists wrote on a Facebook page, asking thousands to act and join the social movement.)

Through these posts, social media was utilized to recruit participation and establish collective unity among Egyptians, regardless of their background, not only in Egypt but also around the world. The posts highlighted that activists understood that Egyptians, whether Muslims or Christians, could not afford to be divided if they wanted the social movement to succeed. This effort to unite all Egyptians around a social movement cause through clicking, liking, and sharing established and strengthened the connections among citizens with different degrees of political engagement. For instance, due to social media, "unpoliticalized" individuals could participate and become part of the community of the social movement by liking and sharing the demands conveyed by the social movement network. Through these different forms of involvement via social media, the collective identity of the participants could be constructed and communicated as a unity that built an Egyptians' bond around a social movement purpose.

Social media also served as a platform to extend social movement collective identity. Posts were used to disseminate social movement ideas and actions, and to

inspire people to identify with the idea of change. Through social media, activists were able to discover new mobilization forms to bring their message to broader audiences. The affiliation with pre-existing groups and networks helped activists to find one another, helped them connect to a larger group, and induced social movement frames. These frames, which mirrored social movement internal meanings, suggested repeatedly that removing Mubarak, who symbolized corrupt officials and a bad political system and institutions, would be a step toward solving the country's problems. Egyptian people were encouraged to start an online protest by adopting slogans that supported this social movement members' shared view. These slogans propagated, through social interactions, to perform as the greatest motivations for many to participate in a social movement that aimed to influence a change in Egypt. For instance, one of the posts stated:

> guys we are trying to get all Egyptian on FB to have the same status saying " leave and let us live" if millions of us on FB saying the same message, it will have an impact. Please let all your friends know and encourage them to have the same status

This post highlighted an effort to get all Egyptians to have the same status on their Facebook page, "leave and let us live," which summarized the social movement's basic demand. Facebook statuses are a feature that allows users to reflect their thoughts. Through using this identification mechanism, activists were trying to establish a connection among all Egyptians based on a shared demand for the corrupt president to step down. Through adopting this shared definition, which was a reflection of a social movement goal, activists were able to reinforce their bond and increase awareness of the social movement cause. Individuals were encouraged to disseminate this idea among their

friends, and to encourage them to adopt the stand. Using the participant groups' ties of

acquaintances, or informal networks, allowed the social movement group to reach a

larger population and get them to join the movement. It also built their ability to

collaborate and act collectively, which in turn could facilitate their efforts to redress the

problems in Egypt. If social movement participation options had only been offline,

Egyptians might not have gotten involved at all in the social movement cause. However,

because it was so much easier and most importantly safer to take the first step digitally,

they were more likely to get involved. Then it was easier to convince them and motivate

them to become more involved in the campaign to have greater impact.

Moreover, using social media sites, Egyptians were motivated to take actions

online to raise awareness and were inspired to support the solution by working together

for change. For instance, citizens were encouraged to produce and disseminate text,

images, and videos that documented the social movement effort to challenge the regime,

or take greater steps to facilitate change in Egypt. One post states:

> start a newspaper or tv channel, invite peoplw with common sense and some
> experience Or as simple as just starting a blog or a FB page...something
> affordable

This post showed the role of social media in transforming how people could get involved

in social movements by inviting people … or as simple as just starting a blog or a FB

page. The post invited people in Egypt to take a broad initiative to further the cause of the

movement. Such a post could be empowering for others to see themselves as resources

and agents of change.

Social media provided Egyptians an interactive environment that not only permitted exchanges between activists and the citizens' network group but also helped to keep communication among them alive, allowing citizens in turn to become partners of activism. For instance, activists used social media platforms to open up discussions about methods and goals of protests and to conduct polls about citizens' views, in an effort to increase people's engagement in a collective process to develop a shared meaning about the protest action plan that was later supported by widespread demonstrations. This exchange in turn supported an interactive process by which action was stimulated – planned and carried out by community individuals - on a participatory and sustained basis. As a result, it was possible to transform social media platforms into platforms to take action.

Activists would post messages full of exhortation, reports or videos that documented successful revolutions, such as the Tunisian revolution, or share textual and visual discourse that built on their oppression and struggle stories as forms of a mobilization mechanism aiming to foster their feeling of common unity. Eventually, social movement collective identity became the source of meaning and inspiration for the projection of political change. For instance, one of the posts communicated the following message: "25th January is the official Egyptian Police day (in which they celebrate torturing us). Do you want to be part of change in Egypt? & help creating it?" This post indicates an effort to spread the new meaning of Jan25 among Egyptians, which according to the post, had been the day that police used to celebrate torturing Egyptians. The post suggested that this day have new meaning, a day to create change in Egypt. This

post employed social movement meanings to encourage others to be part of the change. Another example that was disseminated was a political cartoon of Said with #Jan25 written on his t-shirt screaming a wake-up call to all Egyptians for a complete change to happen.

Figure 12. A Cartoon of Said Calling Egyptians

This post of Said focused on a shared experience and sought to make a shared idea powerfully clear to a broad number of people. In the image, Said's sweater has the hashtag Jan25, which symbolizes the revolution. In the image, Said's body, which appears bigger than Mubarak's, is an extension of Egypt's map. This representation in a way identified with the Egyptian nation. It also highlighted that if they acted collectively, their effort would create an impact. While the cartoon use of Said supported the goal of the social movement, it did so by steering a number of emotions. For Egyptians, Said symbolized the struggle against the police and the underlying hatred of people for daily oppression. Thus, the use of his image facilitated an emotional condition of Egyptians' anger at the regime. The symbol also highlighted their aspiration of a better future. Hence, while the image provoked feelings of resentment and agony, it also raised feelings of hope and solidarity around shared grievances. These feelings were implied in the text that accompanied the image, "WAKE UP EGYPT," that was used to awaken an emotion

or response. Therefore, the image of Said was used successfully to reinforce the collective perception of injustice and at the same time promote a belief that an alternative was possible if Egyptians acted collectively. Similarly, the following post provides an example of how the social movement group used preexisting memories as an influence mechanism to spread social movement:

This post includes an image that combined some of the victims of police brutality. The Egyptians in the photographs were all ordinary citizens; they were not activists and did not belong to any political party or social movement. Using these images helps to reconnect past events, which provide a motive for change, with a present goal, which aims to achieve political change. Under the photographs of the victims, the text reads "January 25, 2011, the day of change, the day of people, the day of will. I will return my country's right, we all redeem ourselves to Egypt." Through social media, social movement members were able to recollect and redefine past events as a part of the social movement memory and share them with other citizens as a reminder for Egyptians of the social movement cause and a means to reinforce their shared identity. Jan25 became the day of people in Egypt, not the day of police. Through this discourse, the social movement was extending its established meaning to others.

Figure 13. An Image of Police Brutality's Victims in Egypt

Posts like this helped to establish Egyptians' homophilic connections, which were built on

their shared experience. Activists then capitalized on these relationships to influence the

perception of the risk associated with their social movement and then inspire further

engagement. The following post is an example: "PEOPLE – UNITED – WILL NEVER

BE DEFEATED!" Another post made this idea even clearer when it stated:

> They could imprison thousands if they want, there are more than 80 mln
> Egyptians. "UNITED WE STAND, DEVIDED WE FALL"...

Activists realized that the Egyptians people's willingness to participate in risky

demonstrations opposing a repressive government such as Mubarak's required an

enforcement of the strong connections among multiple participants due to the potential

strong negative outcomes associated with the demonstrations. Social networks provided

these activists the tools to capitalize on potential participants' feelings of trust. Messages

highlighted the potential impact they could achieve, established confidence in many

citizens, and ensured them that if they worked together, they would never be defeated.

The language of the messages was action-oriented, motivating others to take practical steps to deal with the problem. The posts enlisted the enthusiastic support of the Egyptians using patriotic and common-sense rhetoric that described their participation as crucial for their success.

Through these posts, activists raised the awareness among citizens on the possibility of shaping their future and promoted the idea that change was possible. Social movement members realized that if people knew about those who were going to protest, others would join. So, they started to encourage people to invite their friends and other Egyptians to join them as well. Moreover, social media provided the means to increase the degree of audience involvement and evaluate their acceptance of the messages. For instance, activists would poll the people, asking them about the methods or times/places of the protest events, then giving a breakdown of the votes and thus giving them a sense of involvement that was otherwise almost non-existent at the time, or request that people reflect on their potential participation in the planned events. As an example, a link to a Facebook page that contained an outline of the protesters' demands included an invitation to participate in a protest event on the 25th of January. The page also provided a mechanism for citizens to RSVP: "A Facebook event for a revolution in Egypt: http://on.fb.me/hQiioSI. Don't' forget to RSVP. ("Maybe" if you're still unsure of your schedule)." In another posts, they were providing estimates of the people who indicated their participation in the protest, for instance: "http://on.fb.me/fQosDi over 16000 of us are taking the street! Join us." Through sharing such messages, the activists were trying to highlight the strength of their opposition, as a way to influence further engagement in

the movement. In response, many Egyptians posted texts, photos, and videos informing others that they were joining the movement, and appealing to fellow citizens to join in the protests to demand their rights. One of the citizens, for instance, posted the following image of himself, holding a paper that reads (in Arabic): Without any hesitance or thinking, I am joining on the 25 to protest against any principle of corrupt.

Figure 14. An Image of a Citizen Reflecting his Protest's Participation Plan

These conversations supported the circulation of social movement meanings among the activists and the adherents. This exchange also provided a condition within the context that mitigated the perception of risk and increased citizens' engagement in the social movement. The fact that others were going to protest was likely to affect the decision of other citizens to join, and if many citizens participate in the demonstrations, the risk of capture is reduced. Thus, people will trust that participation in the collective action itself will not place them at risk, which as a result increased the likelihood of their participation. In this sense, social media provided a less threatening environment than the physical space for Egyptians to take the initial steps that were necessary to activate the revolt. This in turn promoted the feelings for many individuals that their goal from their

collective actions was likely attainable. The use of social media to support different

mechanisms of mobilization corresponded to an effort of community building. The use of

social media to support different mobilization mechanisms to increase citizens'

involvement during this phase was instrumental in the formation of social movement

community.

Therefore, this phase of the movement highlighted the critical role of social media

as a mobilization agency in building social movement community and extending its

collective identity to the larger public; this role was especially critical in the context of an

Egypt with limited opportunities for political participation. Citizens' affiliation with the

social movement networks helped to shape and unify Egyptian society's view and

political position against Mubarak's rule, as stated in this post (in Arabic):

يحاولون الان ترسيخ الصورة وكأنها مشكلة بين المسيحيين والمسلمين، المشكلة أصلا مشكلة الشعب مع
حكم مبارك
(Now they are trying to establish an image like it's a problem between Christians
and Muslims, the problem in fact is a problem of the people with Mubarak's rule)

This post reinforced the campaign of the social movement by the people of Egypt. It

highlighted how Mubarak's government was trying to foster the inequalities between

Muslims and Christians in an effort to use the religious divide in Egypt to its own

advantage. This was something that had been really played upon by the repressive

government in the past as part of its 'divide-and-rule strategy' to divide people and keep

them apart. This post also highlighted how activists finally seemed to understand the

priority of uniting all Egyptians around a common goal. The mainstream media tried to

represent the social movement's enemy as the religious conflict between Christians and

Muslims; the post established that the issue the Egyptian social movement was trying to resolve was the people's problem with Mubarak's rule.

The collective interpretation among many Egyptians in regard to the problems in the country, together with the solution that put forth the idea of political change, formed a stable cognitive basis that bonded social movement participants together and generated a structure that supported their social cohesion and solidarity. At the same time, this mutual interpretation was an important source of trust evolution, translating their connections in the virtual platforms into stable ties that facilitated their collaboration. Many social media text, images, and video during the Egyptian revolution reflected the strong community structure that underpinned the social movement. This community structure was reflected in the use of words like "brothers and sisters" to refer to protesters, as in the following post: "Please pray for our brothers and sisters." This post highlights how the weak connections among people initiated on the web can grow to become strong ties and forge close relationships that are effective in organizing a social movement for political change. Another post, referring to the following video that featured Christians protecting Muslims in Egypt during their prayers in Tahrir Square during one of the protest events, stated the following:

Figure 15. A Video of Christians Protecting Muslims during their prayers in Tahrir Square – Egypt

لما عشرات الآلاف من المسيحيين يحموا اخواتهم المسلمين وهما بيصلوا ..وعشرات الآلاف من المسلمين يحموا اخواتهم المسيحيين وهما بيصلوا ..يبقى لازم كلنا نفهم

(As tens of thousands of Christians protect Muslim brothers and sisters when they pray … and tens of thousands of Muslims, protect their sisters and brothers when they pray ... We should have all of us understand)

The video posted shows Egyptian Christians forming a cordon to protect anti-government Egyptian Muslims protestors as they kneel for afternoon prayers in Cairo. This post reflects how the social movement brought Muslims and Christians together, side by side in a social harmony. The post illustrates a symbolic gesture that the two communities were united against President Mubarak and his government. It also shows the ability provided to activists by social media to construct social movement community.

In conclusion, the memory constructed in the previous phase provided the condition necessary to construct the social movement internal meanings that influenced Egyptians to think, feel, and act as a whole. The technical capabilities offered by social media enabled individuals not only to represent and disseminate the symbols of the social movement that influenced Egyptian's collective behavior, but also to store, access, and retrieve knowledge of the social movement anytime, anywhere, and by anyone. The interdependency and interconnectedness offered by social media enabled social movement frames to propagate and made the idea of political change favorable. As a result, many individuals were able to identify with past events and situate themselves as part of a social movement aiming to end the rule of Mubarak. The outcome of this stage was a construction of the past; subsequent interpretation became reinterpretations of the way events were experienced by the social movement community to which one belonged. This shared interpretation was reflected in the subsequent social interactions and sharing

practices, in which individuals were able to harness information and resources to achieve several organization and implementation purposes. The power of social media was not only reflected in the social interactions used to promote participation but also in the different techniques that were used by the activists to influence public perception and to create the emotional motivation to engage others to be part of the social movement against Mubarak's regime. These techniques enabled the formation of an online structure that then evolved into a community in which members were able to interact and coordinate their efforts efficiently and effectively toward achieving a mutual goal. This community formed a strategic resource that facilitated the implementation of social movement strategy, and was a precondition that strengthened collective actions during the following phase, as we will discuss in the following section.

6.2.5. Phase 5: Social Media Facilitated Collective Action Coordination and Participation, Leading to the Effect of Social Movement Political Strategy Implementation

By this phase of the movement, Egyptians were empowered to fulfill their social movement. In this phase, the role of communication and information exchange on social media changed to promote a distributed process of coordination to support protests on the ground. Postings were geared toward sustaining collective action participation and maintaining social movement. Using social media, the protest community was able to mobilize resources and maximize their impact on supporting their collective action. Social media granted the protest members an improved opportunity to support their collective actions by providing a virtual structure to organize activities and access resources, enabling them to share updates and disseminate information immediately, and

allowing them to extend the support base and raise the awareness of the local struggle globally. Accordingly, social media empowered Egyptians to implement social movement political strategy to accomplish their desired political change in Egypt.

Social media was highly effective in bringing different elements and interactions into a series of coordinated collective actions that made political change in Egypt possible. During this phase of the movement, protest members employed social media platforms strategically to support their protest movement and achieve the social movement goal. Social media provided the protesters opportunities for organization that enabled them to protest in a way that was unprecedented. It served as a fundamental infrastructure for the coordination of political actions. This role had proven to be effective in accelerating the growth of the revolution not only locally but also globally. One of the protesters declared this important role of social media in the following way: "we use Facebook to schedule the protests, Twitter to coordinate, and YouTube to tell the world." This post highlights how the different types of social media platform, which offer relatively different features, were employed to facilitate different aspects of the collective actions. Through these words, the producer of the post emphasizes the role of social media during this phase of the social movement through the different ways it was used to support demonstrations in Egypt. Social media provided protesters a virtual structure to prepare for and organize their collective actions. This structure facilitated the interactions among the protest members as well as potential adherents and supporters. Through online communications on Facebook, protests were planned and scheduled, and then Twitter was used to disseminate details on mobilization strategies and to facilitate offline tactics.

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Social media was also used to increase the international visibility of the conditions in Egypt. With YouTube, Egyptians were able to reach global audiences and share with them what was happening. Hence, social media during this phase played an important role in turning the social movement into mass collective actions capable of achieving change.

During this phase, participation in protests was supported by social media. Social media's impact on protesters' participation highlighted a clear linkage between mobilizing demonstrators online and the mobilization of demonstrators on the street. The online users who were interested in protesting were encouraged to participate in collective action in real life, which was shown in several locations throughout Cairo, where protestors mobilized. Hence, social media's effect on online political participation was important in transforming citizens into active protesters offline. For instance, one of the protesters posted: "This is the first time I am protesting, but we have been a cowardly nation. We have to finally say no." This post highlights the fundamental role fear played between the Egyptians and the regime. This fear, which was a mechanism practiced by the government for a long time in Egypt, produced a legacy of cowardice. Due to social media, many Egyptians for their first time were able to overcome the barrier of this legacy and join the protest movement against the regime practices. This means that the movement was successful in mobilizing encouragement among participants, transforming social movement motivations into actions on the ground, and turning Egyptians into brave protest participants who confronted their government and finally said, "No."

The protesters' participation was called publicly on social media sites, and the extent of the demonstrations on the street transmitted important motivation for Egyptians who may have been afraid to protest by joining mass disobedience. Many of the protest participants wanted Mubarak to step down, echoing the vision that was shared among the actors online. These protesters held marches and rallies in Cairo, and eventually congregated in Tahrir (Liberation) Square, where they waved flags and chanted anti-government slogans, and some burned portraits of Mubarak. Besides the demonstrations in Cairo, protestors participated in demonstrations in Alexandria, Suez, and other Egyptian cities. The demonstrations were captured in many images and videos, which reflected a peaceful and democratic social movement with a strong image. The protesters' participation highlighted an important connection between the online and offline spheres that was mirrored in many of the protesters' posts, indicating online their preparation effort to join the protest movement on the street. In one post, a protester stated: "Charging my phone and getting water supplies to tahrir peeps. Do the same. Support ur people. #jan25." Social media posts during this phase emphasize the actors' orientation as protesters, engaging in activities to support the collective action's movement on the ground. The previous post provided information about the protest in Tahrir Square, and also the producer's intent to take part in this collective action. The post also encouraged Egyptians to support the #25Jan social movement by doing the same.

By supporting group interactions and actions, social media was inseparable from the collective actions on the street. During this phase of the movement, social media played an important role in supporting this protest movement in different ways. First,

social media reshaped the context within which protest participants operated. It provided

the participants a virtual structure where they were able to hold meetings and discussions,

and work collectively to schedule the uprising events, organize the tasks, publicize the

plans, and provide the resources necessary for effective actions. Second, social media

enabled protestors to back up their activities with real-time coverage and instant

feedback. This in turn helped protest members to shape the public opinion about the

collective action itself. At the same time, it helped them to update people when they

needed help or support in case of danger. Third, social media enabled protestors to extend

the social movement support base and outreach. It helped Egyptians to increase the

awareness about collective action events on a wider scale, which was an important

element in gaining international support. The combination of these features enhanced the

ability of protesters to implement collective actions effectively and maintain their social

movement.

Protest members used social media to arrange the protest events. Using social

media platforms, protesters provided the times and locations of gathering, and called

adherents to join. Also, they used social media to provide participants with resources to

support their potential activities, such as a comprehensive list of emergency contacts in

case of trouble or arrest, and information guidelines for things like what to wear and what

to do. These were some of the guidelines: wear running shoes, bring plenty of water,

bring your flags, don't use any political emblems, no violence. Additionally, they used

social media to support real-time coordination. Many of the posts during this phase

highlighted this important aspect of social media as a medium that supported the

organization and coordination of collective actions. These posts supported strategic tasks related to the social movement, such as arranging and publicizing the protest plans, as in these posts:

Our 100meeting tommrrow to organize a vigil will be at 11& broad way at 5pm

Tomorrow: protests are planned in Egypt. We will be using #25 if you can

union square at 5.30pm...all the power for egyptian people

Protest members used social media to hold many meetings to plan and organize protests in Egypt, and also to mobilize participation. In a context like Egypt, it can be fully argued that holding a meeting and timing the uprising would have been impossible without social media. The previous posts are some examples that illustrate the link between online and offline participation in the protests. One of the posts encouraged protesters to use the #Jan25 hashtag to communicate and keep in touch with each other. Using this mechanism helped protesters to learn about any changes, or to get updates about the progress of their protest's activities and about the next steps in the protest plan. In this sense, Twitter had become a medium to post and coordinate social movement mobilization strategies. At the same time, using this mechanism helped to reproduce social movement collective memory. The permanent nature of social media's digital memory granted Egyptians a shared repository of text, visual, and recorded contents related to their social movement. Using the hashtags supported this memory by providing a mechanism for documentation of the protest activities and events. This in turn helped to

establish an archive - a memory – of symbolic materials related to social movement

plans, tactics, organizations, and protests, while at the same time feeding to all Egyptians

the shared grievances and struggles that contributed to the social movement's collective

memory. Moreover, this mechanism enabled others to access news about the collective

actions. By using the #Jan25 hashtag, people were able to access Twitter to get updates

about the uprisings.

Social media allowed protest members to support protest events and bring

multiple groups and resources together for a larger-scale act without the previous

restrictions of space, time, and cost. Protesters used social media to arrange the protests'

plan online; then, with the offline tactics on activities, social media played an important

role as a coordinating tool for facilitating collective actions on the ground. These are

examples of posts:

> Tomorrow Friday will be our biggest day to date. We are aiming to achieve 1 million marchers. We will be peaceful and just calling for our rights. If we stay peaceful we will win over some of the police. Its time they listen.

> Every protester in Egypt is advised to protest tomorrow one block of 8 hours: Morning, afternoon or evening. This way we don't get tired while police stay up around the clock. Then on Friday: National Protests ALL over Egypt after Friday prayers from every town, city and village. Civil disobedience until the dictatorship falls

> Looking forward to our event this evening! Don't forget to bring your flags!! We got a DJ so after the reading of the names, we will celebrate some, and join in solidarity with our Arab brothers and sisters still fighting for democracy!

These examples illustrate how protest events were shared publically across social media platforms. The posts provided details that instructed protesters on the form of the collective actions. For instance, marches should be peaceful, protesters should only call for their rights, protests are advised to be in 8-hour blocks. In addition, to supporting the social movement strategy, the posts supported the social movement cause. They reinforced the shared identity around the social movement brand, which was promoted as a civil and democratic movement against the dictatorship of Mubarak. The posts mobilized others to participate and join in the movement by steering a number of emotions. For instance, they raised among Egyptians the feelings of hope that they would win, the feelings of determination to protest around the clock until the dictatorship fell, and the feelings of solidarity with their brothers and sisters fighting for democracy. Through these words, social media was used to inspire potential adherents that the social movement cause was worthy of their support. By guiding and inspiring Egyptians, the social movement community was able to enlist an enthusiastic grassroots participation and to implement the social movement strategy.

Protesters also used social media to get help with different tasks and to acquire resources and special skills related to the collective actions. For instance, some would ask others to post or translate slogans that could be used in the protests; this is one of the posts that reflected this practice:

ياجماعة نشتي ترجمة شعارات باللغة الإنجليزية من قبيل الشعب يريد إسقاط النظام ، وتقرير المصير .
ونريد شعارت بالغة الإنجليزية والعربية . حطوها هنا ... ولكم تحية من الشباب المعتصمين في ساحة
الحرية الأن

(In English: O group we wish to translate slogans in English, in the form of the people want to overthrow the regime, and self-determination. We want slogans in

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English and Arabic. And post them here… and greetings from the young
protesters in the Freedom Square right now).

Slogans are basic resources for collective actions. They communicate the reasons and

goals of action, and help to reinforce the social movement's narrative of opposition to the

government. Slogans also mobilize people and reinforce their collective bond as well as

help to support protesters in the middle of their struggles by providing energy and

keeping them focused on their goal. Thus, slogans signify performative acts that play an

important role in formatting and maintaining collective actions. Social media enabled

protesters on the ground to support their strategic practices and maintain their protest

through providing access to networks that supplied a variety of resources, including

political slogans.

The stable network among participants promoted the acquisition of other essential

resources such as information, people, and materials, when they were needed for action.

This advantage was used by the protesters to mobilize people to join in and to acquire

people's support for the movement. In no time, protesters could easily invite citizens to

participate in the demonstrations on the ground, as in this post:

إلى كل من شارك في مظاهرة المليون أمس.. أنزل ميدان التحرير الآن.. نحن هناك في انتظار مساندتنا
(In English: To everyone who participated in the "million" demonstration
yesterday.. Down to the Tahrir square now, we are there waiting for our support)

Social media provided protesters the capability to mobilize people and acquire

backup instantly. This message sought to encourage more people to join protesters in the

Tahrir Square. During the protest events, many practices highlighted the important

interrelated connection created via social media between the online and offline realms to organize and coordinate the collective actions. Aligned with this idea, another post sought to obtain information from the protesters to update the news about the protests online:

الي عندة تليفون ارضي لاي حد في منطقة المظاهرات..اكتب الرقم هنا علشان نتصل بيهم و نآبديت الوضع ‘‘
‘‘اونلاين
(In English: Who has a landline to anyone who is in the demonstrations region … write the number here so we can contact them and update the information about the situation online)

This post highlights another important aspect of social media's role during this phase. Social media provided protesters the capability to support their collective actions with real-time feedback and continuous updates. Protesters acknowledged the importance of their role in providing coverage of the protest events in social media, as one of them posted:

> Shower, Cargo pants, Hoodie, running shoes, phone charged, cash, ID, cigs (for jail) and some mace just in case. Am ready! Today's our day as #CitizenJournalists to cover and share the truth feely. Regardless of the outcome we are winners cuz we're a team #Jan25.

This post includes many elements of the social movement process. Through citizen journalism, or social media citizens' reporting acts, Egyptians were able to support their collective actions, and also to freely share the 'truth' about the happenings in Egypt, such as the protest events, without interference from the government. That means social media's value and role did not end once the collective action occurred, but this role of social media cycles back to the beginning of the social movement process, to provide and represent news and information about the reality in Egypt. Through this new

role, however, journalist protesters were the ones who defined and represented the protest events and reported the news related to their revolution. These journalists, who identified themselves as team #Jan25 to situate themselves as members of the social movement community, were also contributing through their coverage to the collective memory of the movement.

This communication activity highlights a very important strategic aspect to sustain collective action participation and maintain the social movement, since the autocratic regime of Mubarak tried many means to inhibit the circulation of the protests' information in an effort break up the revolution. The ability to rapidly disseminate and receive detailed onsite information and up-to-date feedback provided instant coverage during the different cycles of the demonstrations and improved the performance of the collective action strategy in different ways. For instance, reporting protests played an important role in increasing participation in collective actions. During the Egyptian revolution, social media was the prime tool to provide citizens with real-time news about the different uprisings in Egypt's cities and areas. In these posts, Egyptians used text, images, and videos to share news and information about the progressive events of the protests:

Protesters in Dokki on there way to join Ta7rir protest.

Reports of huge demonstration in Mansoura, northern Egypt, with protesters numbering as many as 250,000 and minor clashes with security forces

Protesters in Mansoura surrounding the police forces

Protesters on there way from Mohandisin to Ta7rir.

Protesters in Moustafa Mahmoud street (

Thousands of People are protesting in Tahrir Square now.

WE STILL HOLD TAHRIR SQUARE #Jan25 #Egypt

Figure 16. Selected Posts of the 2011 Egyptian Demonstrations

These posts conveyed important textual and visual information about the

magnitude of the anti-government collective action in the country. Through such posts,

protesters were publicly celebrating small and large wins to boost participants and

increase mobilization. For instance, the last post informed others that the protest group

still held Tharir Square. This place held an important symbolic meaning for the feeling of

belonging among the social movement group. At the same time, holding this place

conveyed an important signal about the power of the opposition. Immediate coverage of

the protest events influenced people's perceived viability of the collective actions, while

promoting the potential benefit of participating in the protests. It was also important in

countering the regime's strategy to minimize the movement by avoiding mainstream

media coverage of the protest events.

During the revolution, media scenes in Egypt were divided into two kinds: the

mainstream of pro-regime outlets, which was fabricating news and spreading propaganda

to discredit the revolution in its early days; and social media, which was circulating texts,

images, and videos about the social movement and raising awareness about different

demonstrations in Egypt. Through social media discourses, which reflected the social

movement community narrative's version of reality, citizens provided continuous

coverage of the real situation in Egypt, compared to news channels that, according to

many sources, featured a series about the type of elephants in Africa, or reported a calm

view of the Nile while many were being attacked and killed on the nearby bridges

(Abdulla, 2014). Some protesters posted messages calling this practice of the state media

a crime, as stated in the following post: "#Egypt state TV: You were the butt of our jokes

during the **#Jan25** revolution, but this isn't funny any more. This is criminal." Under this

absence of state media coverage of the protest events, the social media citizens' real-time

coverage was critical in providing information about the general public's attitudes toward

the regime as well as shaping public opinion of the collective action itself. This coverage

was also important in influencing potential citizens' disposition to revolt and their

decision about whether to participate in the collective actions. Therefore, social media

coverage was important in providing a comprehensive view of the protest movement, as

in the words of one of the protesters:

> Eyewitness in the Protests: From 2:30 pm, and for the whole day, the
> demonstration was extremely civilized... People have taken the Square safely,
> nothing was broken, nor was moved from its place. Instead, some people were
> actually collecting the bags, and empty bottles from the streets. Some people were
> reading Quran, others were sitting together talking.. and some were speaking to
> the officers.

This post provided information about an upcoming demonstration:

> The Protest admins and organizers have announced the continuity of the
> demonstrations tomorrow at the same places as today. More people are to join
> tomorrow's demonstrations according to the estimates.

These posts highlight how social media enabled protesters to spread important

information and updates about the collective action. Additionally, protesters utilized this

capability to enhance organization with speed and efficiency. For instance, social media

was used to disseminate critical organization information that helped them to protect

themselves from harm as well as manage any obstacles they faced. At the same time, live

coverage provided protester feedback about what was happening on the spot and updated

them with critical information, thus allowing protesters to make the right strategic move

and respond rapidly to changing circumstances. The messages below illustrate this:

Cairo: SHUTTING DOWN MOST BRIDGES AND ROADS LEADING TO
TAHRIR SQUARE

We're fighting on the bridge now. They don't exceed 100. We need to hold on for
30 more minutes. #Tahrir

Security tried to storm protesters. Failed. Regrouping. #jan25

These messages provide examples of how social media was used to coordinate

protests in real-time. Through social media, Egyptians were able to carry out their

protests and reduce the state's capacity for repression by hindering the state's ability to

control and stop the social movement. For instance, social media enabled protesters to

overcome one of the major struggles between the protesters trying to reach Tahrir Square

and the security forces trying to stop them. Using social media, protesters frequently

updated fellow citizens with the situation at Tahrir Square and provided instructions on

what to do. Another incident showed how social media enabled protesters to fight state

repression through overcoming obstacles to communication. This obstacle was imposed

on the movement by Mubarak's government during the early days of the collective

actions as the government was losing control over news coverage to social media. As a

fighting mechanism, the government tried to cut off the Internet and wireless

communication by denying Internet access and blocking servers. Once this happened,

protesters quickly began posting messages like the following, to help keep the

interactions and information flowing despite the state efforts:

> The Government has disconnected all the communication networks, so there will
> be no mobile signal for those in EL TAHRIR,To fix
> 2- Go to network selection---->select manual.
> 3- The mobile phone will start searching for available networks---> choose yours.
> 4- Remove the battery straight away from the mobile phone without switching
> off.
> 5- wait for seconds then insert back again and switch on the mobile phone again.
> Our DSL IS STILL WORKING IN EGYPT USING DIAL UP 0777 7776 or
> 07777 66 Share with every one asap

> to avoid blocking of #twitter in #egypt use www.ultrareach.com you can get on
> #twitter from #egypt #jan25 plz retweet all over the #world

> ATTENTION ALL EGYPTIANS! you can still enter websites by using these
> codes:
> for twitter "128.242.240.52"
> for google "72.14.204.99"
> for facebook "69.63.189.34
> SPREAD THIS INFORMATION!!!

Social media enabled protesters to find new ways for communication, such as using a

proxy of international servers to bypass the firewalls blocking the social media sites, and

thus to sustain their resistance against the regime. Although the government tried to

disable communications, protesters managed to share their coverage and send their

massages out.

Social media also allowed protesters to notify people when they encountered

critical situations, in order to get their help and support. Protesters were easily able to call

citizens immediately for their support and protection, as in these posts:

Everyone in Cairo who wants Mubarak out and stands for justice come to Tahrir NOW!

دعوة عاجلة الى شباب القاهرة بالتوجه فورا الى ميدان التحرير لحماية الشباب المحاصر هناك من عصابات مبارك
(Urgent call to the Cairo youth to go immediately to Tahrir Square to protect the young besieged there by Mubarak gangs)

Through the posts of the protesters themselves, social media played a powerful role in addressing the events as they were unfolding. This advantage was used by the protesters to promote and maintain the social movement. Thus, social media played an important role for news producers and news consumers during the events of the revolt by providing real-time coverage that offered protesters a dynamic coordination capability. In other words, social media allowed citizen journalists and protesters to connect the progressive events of the protests and to provide continuous updates to fellow citizens who sought information about the protest events.

Furthermore, social media provided the capability of spreading information not only faster but further. During the revolution, protesters were aware of the need for international audience recognition and support of the social movement. Social media provided protesters a variety of mechanisms to support their interaction with the outside world and raise global awareness of the local struggle. For instance, the ability to support different languages enabled Egyptians to reach a global audience. As an illustration, a different version of the Facebook page "Kullena Khaled Said" – "We are all Khaled Said" – was created in English. The protesters were successful in linking a massive Arabic-speaking network with networks of English-speaking observers. Such a practice expanded the international community's awareness about the ongoing events in Egypt as

well as human rights violations. It also helped establish advocates in other nations and

helped create more widespread public pressure to change the country's polices.

Through different mechanisms, protest members were able to take advantage of

social media tools to draw international attention to the Egyptian revolution and extend

the movement's support base. For instance, they created parallel events on social media to

acquire support and participation in the movement from other countries, and they

disseminated tweets urging the international community to spread the movement or

provide ways to help the Egyptian revolution. For instance, one of the posts stated:

> Tomorrow!! This is a collaborative event with many other countries to stand in
> solidarity for self-determination. Please join us and share!!
> https://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=148951621863411

Social media also cited other initiatives that aimed to establish a solidarity with the

movement worldwide. This included a series of virtual protests in support of the Egyptian

revolution. One example was an event organized in Facebook called "March of

Millions," which was explained by the following messages:

> you can also signup for the virtual "March of Millions" on Facebook:
> http://on.fb.me/i5ye8e

> As one million march on the streets of Egypt, our goal is to reach one million voices
> in support of their march.

Virtual events like "March of Millions" helped to connect Egyptians and non-Egyptians

together through social media in solidarity for the revolution. Additionally, as protesters

were using social media platforms to provide coverage of the Egyptian revolution, many

Egyptians and non-Egyptians living abroad were able to access the information about the developments of the demonstrations. For instance, individuals in other countries could follow along using the instructions in this social media tweet:

> Follow the hashtag @25 to keep track of the protest day in #Egypt tomorrow #sidibouzid #mideat #Arabprotest.

The above post connected the protests to the world using hashtag #Jan25. Through the retweeting mechanism, protesters were able to ensure the circulation of the post and increase the visibility of the revolution to a larger scale. As a result, events in Egypt on social media sites captured the attention of people across the world.

Social media also facilitated a global diffusion of solidarity with the revolution. Egyptians were able to build alliances to advocate their social movement and build relationships that enabled collaboration across local boundaries. During the protests in the street, protesters acknowledged the importance of social media in providing coverage of the events and gaining support from the international community, as one of them posted:

> If you can take pictures, take pictures . . . if you can use Twitter, send tweets . . . if you can blog, blog from the street. There are people demonstrating for our cause in Tunisia and Jordan, and I just found out that there are people demonstrating in Paris too. All of these people have faith in us.

Many international supporters organized rallies in their countries, including Canada, Germany, France, UK, and the USA, to support the Egyptian revolution. People around the world were helping the revolution in many different ways. These posts are examples:

Please!! People Circulate this so my friends in Egypt can Get back on the #internet to show the world what they are going through. Please !! The Need Our Help They Are Counting on the WORLD. #internet & cellphone blackouts #STAY #ONLINE #FREESpeech #FreeWEB #FreeDom"

من تونس الشقيق:الى كل اخواننا الثوار في مصراستخدمو الاسبراي الاسود او البويا لتغطية زجاج السيارات المصفحة لتشلو حركتها Jan25 #Egypt #angrdy #

(In Engligh: From Tunisia, brother of Egypt: to all our rebel brothers in Egypt, use the black spray or paint to cover the glass of the armored cars for immobilize their movement (# Jan25 # Egypt # angrdy))

Through social media, protesters in Egypt were receiving support not only locally, but also globally. Many social media posts reflected the solidarity and support from citizens around the world, as on these posts:

Many many Americans are praying for you. I am grateful to have my opened regarding how our country has been supporting Mubarak's police state. May God bless you.

Will there be a monument in Tahrir Square for those who were died and injure?. I would like to be able to contribute from the US to such a project.

Solidarity from Germany!

The Egyptian revolution's international support was captured in many video clips, documenting the protests in many cities around the world as well as many individuals sharing phrases like: "I support you, I support peace, I support freedom" in several languages.

In conclusion, the massive protests that were carried out by young Egyptians came as a surprise in a context like Egypt, where people had been unable to secure basic

freedoms of speech, participation, and assembly. Social media enabled the protesters to reduce the space and time constraints and overcome the limitations of the organization's resources in a way that was not possible during past movements. Due to social media, protesters were able to manage and coordinate their activities virtually and more effectively. Social media also allowed protesters to spread the movement campaign boundaries, and thus to increase the mobilization potential and alter the world's opinion to help grow opposition. As a result, the Egyptian revolution was successful in linking online and offline participation into a great revolution of a size sufficient to topple the authoritarian regime in Egypt.

Images and videos of the 2011 Egyptian revolution showed a mobilization of crowds that was unprecedented in Egypt at political demonstrations. Protests' slogans were not supporting any particular party, but were projecting a message of unity among all Egyptians. These visual representations also illustrated an impressive solidarity among protestors with a diversity of social class, gender, age, and religion. Thus, the 2011 Egyptian revolution reflected the success of the social movement in identifying itself with the Egyptian nation, as reflected in this social media post:

> This is not a political revolution. This is not a religious revolution, This is an all Egyptians revolution. This is the dignity and freedom revolution

The Egyptian revolution would not likely have been massive without the coordinating capacity of social media. Social media provided protesters an alternative virtual structure that enabled them to plan and facilitate social movement mobilization on the street. In addition, the organization and execution of such political protests would have been a

significantly more difficult task under the authoritarian government of Mubarak, which typically resorted to a mix of censorship, intimidation, and persecution to prevent any effort that might negatively affect the regime. Social media also helped protesters to provide and acquire real-time accurate information about the development of the demonstrations. This ability enhanced protesters' ability to coordinate their collective actions and to increase awareness about the demonstration events on a much wider and even international scale. This in turn increased the participation of people in the protests. It also helped the revolution in gaining sympathy and support from the international community, particularly from those who have strong influence like the USA and EU, imposing additional pressure on Mubarak to step down. Therefore, social media enabled Egyptians to turn online interaction and mobilization into offline collective action for a revolution. These collective actions demonstrated the power and role of social media in turning online plans into a massive revolution that made political change possible in Egypt. This link between social media and national political change is evident from the success of the 2011 Cairo revolts.

6.2.6. The Outcome: National Political Change

Political change is "the process by which alternatives occur" (Rogers, 1996, p. 7). Goodein (2001) defined a political revolution as "any and all instances in which a state or a political regime is overthrown and thereby transformed by a popular movement in an irregular, extraconstitutional, and/or violent fashion." He added, "Revolutions entail not only mass mobilization and regime change, but also more or less rapid fundamental social, economic, and/or cultural change, during soon after the struggle for state power"

(p. 9). In this sense, national political change can be viewed as a special kind of diffusion. When new political ideas are invented, diffused, and adopted, the political change occurs. National political change entails any shift in a national political regime, including changing regulations, changing laws, or even creating new laws resulting from a social movement.

There is no doubt that the 2011 events brought a radical, dramatic changes to Egyptian reality. On February 11, 2011, after only 18 days of demonstration, the Egyptian revolution succeeded in overthrowing Mohamed Hosni Mubarak, the head of a regime that had ruled Egypt with increasing repression for thirty years. This revolution, through many of its component elements, challenged the regime and shook it to its roots. Therefore, there is no doubt that the events in Egypt in 2011 were a glorious political change. Within minutes of Mubarak's resignation a spread of tweets occurred:

Congratulations Egypt, you are free

Congratulations... you have shown the world that you can achieve anything without resorting to violence.

Feb. 11 is Historic day in Egypt. We will celebrate it forwver ☺ Jan215

This is a classic revolution of the 21st Century, a momentous event. Khaled Said and others who had fallen, did not die, in vain. Egypt will be in good hands. Congratulations.

Through messages like these, citizens expressed their emotions of jubilation for the political change in Egypt and their pride in the social movement. Other messages

were exchanged on social media sites thanking all the social media friends and acknowledging the role of social media in supporting and helping the social movement and collective actions:

> thanks to all of facebook friends have supported the Egypt!!!!! ♥♥♥
> Thank God. Thanks to all those who died for us to live in freedom. Thanks to all Egyptians who slept rough in Tahrir, Alexandria and everywhere. Thank you all on this page for your support & your amazing greatness & help. . . Thank you Tunisia.

These messages reflected the collective identity for all Egyptians worldwide. The messages also highlighted the link between the online and offline realms that facilitated the social movement and made this revolution possible. The substantial role of sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube during the 2011 Cairo revolts highlighted their powerful impact on national political change. In Egypt, opposition existed long before social media. Yet, social media helped to turn the dissatisfaction of individual citizens into an organized social movement with a collective awareness of the shared grievances and a collective view of political change. The link between the online social movement, collective action, and national political change is evident from the success of the Cairo revolts. As stated by Tapscott (2011) "If Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube did not exist, Hosni Mubarak would still be president of Egypt" (para. 2).

CHAPTER IX

LOOKING BACK AND PLANNING FORWARD

Networks constitute the new social morphology of our societies, and the diffusion of networking logic substantially modifies the operation and outcomes in processes of production, experience, power and culture.

Manuel Castells

There is a little doubt that social media played a significant role in the uprising events that cascaded across the Arab world. The case of the 2011 Egyptian revolution highlighted the political power of social media in promoting participation of the citizenry. It demonstrated how social media tools can be used by citizens to engage in social movement activities and to organize collective action toward achieving national political change. Although the idea of a social movement is not new, the means employed by the actors for communication and implementation of the 2011 Egyptian protest movement represent an important and different dynamic for collective action; they also present new research opportunities for scholars interested in studying the impact of IS on politics. Although a large body of literature has been developed addressing the impact of social movements on society, culture, legislation, state policy, and political change (Snow et al., 2004), the link between information technologies and social movements for political change has barely begun to be explored.

Past research in the area of social and political change has treated sudden changes in regulation, law, and even norms and values as exogenous, and has generally ignored

the role that IS plays in engineering and leveraging such changes. This dissertation explores the role of social media in the 2011 Egyptian revolution to examine the role of IS in social movements and political change. In order to address the complexity underlying the process of social movement and political change, the dissertation focuses on the activities and conditions that contributed to the development of the events leading to the 2011 political change in Egypt. Social media provides a rich information environment that can increase the capacity for public participation. A fundamental aspect of social media is that the contents are in the hand of the "consumers", who have the tools to create, shape, and use the news and information for their needs. Instead of having news-making bundled in its traditional containers, such as newspapers, television, and websites, consumers are taking control of the news-making processes: production, manipulation, and distribution. In addition, social media offers a public space for political discussion and creates discursive focal points for it. The independency of the discourse offered through social media sites is also a critical factor in building citizens' collective meanings. In addition, the unique network structure of social media introduces speed, interactivity, and new possibilities for organization that were previously impossible, or difficult at best, through reliance on traditional means of communication. Thus, social media can play an important role in providing the environment and the means to shape the conditions by which political change emerges.

That is not to say that information and communication technologies themselves are determinative of political outcomes. We must consider the contextual factors and influential circumstances of the movements, as well as the interplay of social media and

the actors who use social media tools and platforms to meet their goals. In our research, we conceptualize the role of social media through actions, agents, and actors. The actions that are reflected in the form and nature of the sharing practices of the digital contents of "personal messages, news, ideas, and cultural products"; the agents that provide "the information infrastructure and tools used to produce and distribute content" to perform the actions; and the actors, "the people … that produce and consume digital content." (Howard, 2012, p. 362). Additionally, the properties and conditions of the context in which action occurred were considered. Reflecting the role of social media through these elements highlights the difficulty in drawing the boundaries between the technological and social aspects of the 2011 Egyptian revolutionary political change. Hence, this study views social movements as dynamic, multi-dimensional processes through which meanings and actions are constituted, and in which social and political changes emerge unpredictably as a result of the interactions between the people and technology within a particular social context. These processes were explored using data collected from social media and a narrative approach for process analysis.

When we look at the social media layers, and how different tools and different platforms have been used at different times to perform different acts for different purposes, narrative-based process analysis provides a suitable approach for eliciting these interwoven details about citizens' social movement processes. Narratives involve "actors undertaking actions intended to accomplish certain goals by certain means, within specific settings, leading to particular outcomes" (Ramiller & Pentland, 2009, p. 478). Narrative approach provides tools for interpreting text such as written interactions and

visual materials, and for "understanding the ways in which people perceived reality, make sense of their words, and perform social actions." (Riessman, 2008, p.11). The combination of social media data and narrative analysis helped us to move from surface observations to the deep structure of the social movement process, to highlight the contextual factors and conditions of this process, and to address the complexity of technology-people interactions and the process that gave rise to the revolution's events. In this chapter, we summarize the results of our analysis based on the case of the 2011 Egyptian revolution, and we develop a narrative conceptual model of social media and the citizens' social movement process. The chapter's discussion section presents our contributions in relation to the literature. Limitations and future research will be addressed last.

7.1.   Summary and Research Narrative-Based Model

Our analysis of the citizens' social movement process revealed five distinct phases preceding the political change. These phases highlight the unique nature of each stage of the social movement development in relation to the five narrative elements (scene, act, actor, agency, purpose), the different effects of the stages, and the different roles played by social media throughout the social movement process, which were all reflected in the content and indicated by the changing nature of the exchange in social media postings. As demonstrated in Chapter 6, our study addresses the role of IS in political change through understanding the context of social media and explaining its role in each phase of the process that shaped the citizens' social movement. The ways in which social media was used were patterned with the time period and the local context, which helps explain

how IS contributes to and affects a citizens' social movement leading to a revolutionary political change (See Table 9).

In the following section, we present our research-narrative-based model of the role of social media in a citizens' social movement process (Figure 17). This model demonstrates the progressive nature of social movements through highlighting the change in the story's events (effects) as part of our process explanation, and presents political change as an outcome of this process.

Table 9. The Role of Social Media and its Impact on the 2011 Citizens' Social Movement Process and the Revolutionary Political Change in Egypt
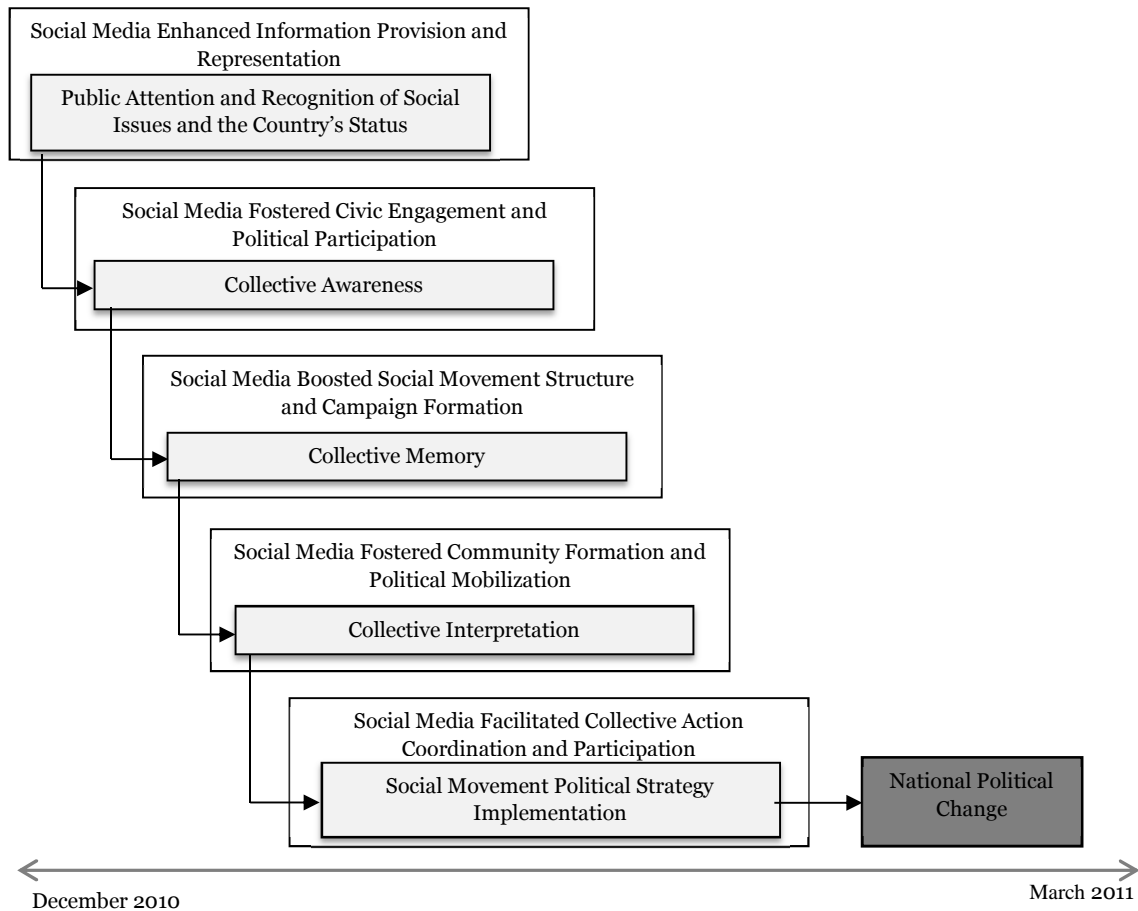
Social Movement Process Timeline	Social Media's Role	Effect on Citizens' Social Movement Process	Impact on Revolutionary Political Change
Phase 1	Social media enhanced information provision and representation	Public attention and recognition of social issues and the country's status	The greater attention and recognition of the country's public events with political ramifications can increase the potential and opportunity for citizens for to participate in political engagement and consequently the potential for political change.
Phase 2	Social media fostered civic engagement and political participation	Collective awareness	The formation of a collective awareness that contradicts the existing citizens' perceptions improves chances of creative forms of symbolic and political actions for political change.
Phase 3	Social media boosted social movement structure and campaign formation	Collective memory	A constructed collective memory determines interpretations that may activate and motivate oppositional adherence, and thus increase the probability of social movement progression toward political change.
Phase 4	Social media fostered community formation and political mobilization	Collective interpretation	Disseminating social movement collective meanings and ideas promotes the construction of a community structure, which increases the probability of effective implementation of social movement activities toward a political change.
Phase 5	Social media facilitated collective action coordination and participation	Social movement political strategy implementation	Effective social movement political strategy implementation increases the probability of the success of protest activities and can lead to political change.

7.1.1. A Narrative Model of Social Media and Citizens' Social Movement Process

Our research model, presented in Figure 17 below, describes the process by which a social movement evolves through social media. The process consists of five phases (represented by white rectangles in our research model) that address our research question. These phases are viewed as necessary precursors to a revolutionary national political change (represented by a dark grey rectangle). Identifying this process and conceptualizing the phases by the researcher was a matter of subjective judgment based on an analysis of the collected data (Van de Ven & Poole, 2005). These categorizations were useful in our analysis, but others are possible, of course.

In the development of our model, we focused on the generative mechanisms that are considered to be important to develop our process explanation. These generative mechanisms (highlighted by the arrows in our research model) link the phases' effects (represented by light grey rectangles within the white rectangles) as preconditions and consequences. Each phase highlights a state of affairs during a particular point in time within the context that shaped the nature and form of exchange in a subsequent phase, eventually causing its outcome. The generative mechanisms were presented as the research propositions in Chapter 5. These generative mechanisms reflect the process – the underlying structure – that permits the progression of the events in the story detailed in our narrative, leading to political change. The first proposition represented the initial or triggering event of the social movement process.

Figure 17. A Narrative-Based Model of the Role of Social Media in Citizens' Social Movement for Revolutionary Political Change

Our research model introduces an explicit treatment of social media to our process

analysis by emphasizing the changing role of social media within each phase, in terms of

its effect on the actors' activities and the circumstances within its context, that are

considered important for the progression of the citizens' social movement process.

Highlighting social media's role in our research model was driven by our research

question, the study's perspective, and the centrality of social media in the 2011 citizens'

social movement for political change in Egypt. In reality, the five elements of the

narrative are not discrete and unrelated. As indicated in our definition of social media, emphasizing the role of social media entails all the elements of the narrative. It is important to note that while the visual representation of the citizens' social movement process in our research model reflects a temporal sequence of the events, aspects of the analysis of social media posts reflected the non-linear and possibly iterative nature of the process development. For instance, when a public incident occurs, it passes through citizens' cognitive structure (awareness and memory), which provides the context for recognizing it. A public incident can be understood as something that has social and/or political ramifications and occurs in a certain place during a certain time. For instance, the death of Khaled Said occurred in Egypt prior to the protest movement events. Multiple public incidents may occur in a country before a social movement process for revolutionary political change fully develops.

The development of a citizens' social movement process is usually triggered by a significant public incident. We conceptualize the incident that activated the 2011 Egyptian social movement process as the trigger of the political change process. This trigger was identified at the time when online conversations were sparked in social media around a public incident. Many studies have indicated that before reaching a momentum of complexity, any collective behavior starts by a spark that generates a chain of events that eventually lead to political change. This initiating incident forms a prerequisite for mobilizing a social movement. Jasper (1997) called it a moral shock, which is defined as "an event or piece of information that raises a sense of outrage in a person that she becomes inclined toward political action" (p. 106). Others conceptualized it as a "critical

event," or as a "suddenly imposed grievance" that motivates ordinary citizens to get politically active (Opp, 2009, p. 96). We believe that the attention and recognition of Khaled Said's death provided this trigger for Egyptians to become politically motivated and engaged.

Public incidents can be experienced as some sort of social interaction. They can also be encountered through the materials of news representation, as citizens observe and consume second-hand information about public issues and events. For instance, the information about a police brutality incident can be obtained from social interaction or from other sources such as social media posts. Social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, host a substantial amount of social interaction as well as user-generated materials (i.e., textual content, photographs, links to websites, videos) for a wide variety of incidents. These incidents are usually associated with user-contributed materials (i.e., comments). In this sense, social media can play an important role in triggering a citizens' social movement process by providing the technological and material contents that support the exchange of social interactions and information as well as the documentation of the country's public incidents and the exchange around them.

Phase 1 in Figure 17 (Public Attention and Recognition of Social Issues and the Country's Status) refers to the condition of a general noticing of a public event, and accepting the truth of it or admitting the occurrence of the public event as something important. Public attention and recognition of social issues and the country's status is very important to the development process of a social movement. If a public incident is not observed and acknowledged by the public as something important (Phase 1 of the

social movement process), no subsequent phases will take place, current awareness remains the same, and the incident is likely not retained in the citizens' collective memory. Thus, we suggest that public attention and recognition of social issues and the country's status is a necessary first phase that occurs before political change can emerge. In terms of our research model, the effect of the first phase introduces a condition in the context that relates positively to the subsequent phase's effect. Yet, this condition is not sufficient for the political change to occur, further development of the social movement process is required before that happens. However, this condition increases the opportunity for citizens' political engagement and thus the potential for political change. This depiction and explanation of the developmental processes was suggested by Mohr (1982). That is, public attention and recognition of social issues and the county's status is a necessary but not sufficient condition for political change to take place.

This phase of a citizens' social movement process highlights an important aspect of social media, especially in a context like Egypt, where the information environment was controlled by a government that used the media to serve its agenda and spread its messages. During the 2011 Egyptian revolution, social media played an important role in public attention and recognition of social issues and the country's status through different impacts. For instance, it provided a platform for citizens to tell their side of the stories, facilitating in turn a social construction of 'truthful' reality, which increased people's attention and recognition of the country's problems and state abuse. Also, the availability and visibility of public incidents in social media sites allowed many Egyptians to observe and remember them in a way that instigates a collective awareness. Therefore, Public

Attention and Recognition of Social issues and the Country's Status (Phase 1) necessarily precedes Collective Awareness (Phase 2), because as stated by Louis and Sutton (1991), "if events are noticed, people make sense of them; and if events are not noticed, they are not available for sensemaking" (pp. 58-59). Similarly, other phases are linked in the same manner. For instance in Figure 17, Phase 2 (Collective Awareness) involves a process of collective sensemaking that is a necessary condition that occurs prior to the collective memory phase. A collective sensemaking is a conversational process, where people come together for the purpose of exchanging their sentiments about an incident or issue they are mutually facing.

This process produces a shared perception of the incident or issue, and reveals the trend of the community by the extent of the agreement on the same interpretation. In other words, this phase highlights a condition of sharing a collective meaning of the context that is created socially. When this happens, a Collective Memory (Phase 3) is initiated, and the incident, along with its meaning, become part of the cognitive structure of the group of people who share this meaning of the incident. This cognitive structure brings the shared interpretation to the group perceptual system that encounters other public incidents when they occur. Accordingly, the collective memory is updated or constructed every time Phase 1 and Phase 2 occurs, even when Phase 3 does not lead to the progression of the citizens' social movement process to the following phases. These assumptions underline our research model and form the basis of our process theory. The necessity of each phase of the social movement process and the way in which a phase leads to, or depends on, other phases caused us to categorize them as structural units that

underpin the generative mechanisms of the social movement process. However, these phases do not determine the factors sufficient for political change; they highlight the necessary conditions and provide assumptions that guide the explanation of the outcome (Mohr, 1982). We now provide a discussion of our findings in relation to the existing literature.

7.2. Discussion

This dissertation applies a new lens – process theory – to examine social movements. The process analysis of the case of the Egyptian revolution generated a detailed qualitative explanation of the process through which the 2011 political change unfolded over time. This analysis involved the production of a process narrative in which a citizens' social movement is theorized as a dynamic and multi-dimensional process that reflects the complexity of the interactions between people and technology within a particular social context. Our analysis identified five phases of the citizens' social movement process that are inherently involved in political change: public attention and recognition of the social issues and the country's status, collective awareness, collective memory, collective interpretation, and social movement political strategy implementation. Also, we developed a unique narrative-based model that highlights the role of social media in each phase of the social movement process and also how that role affects the way political change emerges. We know of no study that has proposed and used a narrative analysis approach to investigate the role of social media in social movements for revolutionary political change. Our study delves into the more specific level of social movements' cognitive mechanisms and interpretations associated with

social movements and also explores the way social media functions within its context to influence and enable political change through the social movement process. By exploring the interconnected social, technical, and contextual elements of a citizens' social movement process for political change, our study demonstrates the utility of the process approach to narrative analysis for conducting qualitative research in the IS discipline. This dissertation provides several intriguing insights into how information and communication technologies influence social and political actions and how political change, within the context of Egypt, emerged (somewhat unpredictably) over time. By doing so, this dissertation contributes to IS literature in several ways beyond its traditional focus on business.

First, the emphasis on temporality facilitated the analysis of a citizens' social movement as a process of connected phases that reveals the complexity of the social and technological interactions within a specific context. The importance of time in our analysis is reflected in the changing nature of the exchange and content of social media. These changes in the nature of exchange and content underscored the changing forms of the activities and goals, the characteristics of the actors' involvement, the roles of the agency, and the contexts and time frames in which the effects of phases occurred and affected future interactions. This finding revealed different important aspects of social media's role, and a core duality of social media impact and context that pervades theories of information systems. Many research studies have highlighted the significance of context in information systems research (Goldkuhal, 2012; Myers, 1997; Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991; Walsham, 1993). The expansion on the notion of context in IS research

allows us to reformulate the nature of the relationship between humans and technology "as different forms of being-with-technology rather than using the technology" (Croon, 1998, p. 140). This focus facilitates an understanding of the nature of interactions between people and technology, along with the influence of these interactions on the context that people experience in their relationship with technology. In this sense, context is not only a container in which people act, it is a condition that is generated through the enactment of an activity involving people and agency (Burk, 1969). Our study contributes to the ongoing discussion about the importance of context in theory development, and provides a framework that guides context-specific theorizing in IS research.

Second, combining narrative analysis and social media data facilitated an understanding of the complexity of the human sensemaking process as situations emerge. Our approach revealed how actors' meaning and interpretation shifted over time. This understanding of a phenomenon from the participants' viewpoint and its particular context can be largely lost when textual data are quantified (Kaplan & Maxwell, 1994; Myers, 1997). Narrative approach treats stories as a method to study social life, and social media data provide an opportunity to access participant's discourses. These discourses represent the participants' narrative that lets the actors of the narrative tell their own story. In other words, social media data provide an access to social movement participants' interpretation as a political change unfolds. Using narrative analysis and social media data to study social movements provides a window through which other aspects of the social world can be accessed and revealed. As stated by Mantovani (1996), "Life is not primarily a choice; it is interpretation. Outcomes are generally less significant

(both behaviorally and ethically) than processes. It is the process that gives meaning to life, and meaning is the core of life" (p. 50). Our dissertation revealed the important impact of social media on the process of social movements' sensemaking. It also provided an approach to examine this process in which people give meaning to their experiences, and understand the process' impact on their actions and interactions.

Third, our research introduced an explicit treatment of social media to our process analysis (Orlikowski & Iacono, 2001), recognizing its significance in the activities and process of a citizens' social movement. By examining the 2011 Cairo revolts, this dissertation explores the potential offered by social media to influence a citizens' social movement that creates a political change. Social media has influenced the way we can experience events. This influence of social media can take different forms, such as an influence on information flow, group conversations and relationships, and actions performance. Many scholars have highlighted the strong relationship between the flow of information provided by IS and political behavior, including political cognition (Bimber, 2001; Eveland et al., 2004), political meaning (Davenport, 2007), political discussion (Eveland et al., 2004; Norris, 2001), political participation (Bimber, 2001), public opinion (Norris, 2001), and political mobilization (Dahlgren, 2005). Also, one of the major influences of social media's role can be realized from its role on group conversations. These conversations play an important role in opinion expression and dissemination (Qu et al., 2012). According to Joseph (2012), "access to information leads to conversation and debate, through which political opinion is formed" (p. 155). Politically, access to conversation is more important than access to information (Shirky,

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2011). Additionally, these conversations can play an important role in participants' understanding and political engagement, which in turn unpredictably affects the progression of their political identity. As indicated by Rochon (2000), "an activist's view of the world becomes politicalized, sometimes before one is even aware of it" (p. 139). Social media conversations can also form a basis for a formation of relationships among the participants. Brown et al. (2007) state, "individuals tend to affiliate with others who share similar interests or who are in a similar situation," and he added, "The similarity of individuals predisposes them toward a greater level of interpersonal attraction, trust, and understanding" (p. 5). He highlighted that "when enough people carry on computer-mediated non-private discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling," (p. 3) social relationships with other participants are developed.

In a non-democratic country, such as Egypt, governments use all possible mechanisms to control media channels (Haider, 2009), in an effort to limit access to information and conversations. As a result, individuals cannot express their opinions freely or discuss differing viewpoints (Haider, 2009). Social media sites provided an information-technology-based platform where social interactions occurred among a multitude of social actors interested in achieving change in Egypt, and interestingly, these social interactions overcame the limitations of nation-states. A novel aspect of social media conversation is that "it is not limited to one-to-one conversation"; it enables conversation from many to many (Joseph, 2012; Shirky, 2011). By providing the space and tools that support wide forms of social interaction among a social movement's participants, social media facilitated the development of relationships and a collective

memory as a by-product of the interaction. Fine and Beim (2007) highlight that collective memory is related to the bundles of memory schemata that are located at the supraindividual level of social life and formed through social interaction. Additionally, as an information system, social media provided a permanency and an easy accessibility to the informative acts that were integral to the formation of collective memory. This collective memory not only reflects participants' experiences, it also has an orientational function (Schwartz, 1996). As stated by Schwartz, "collective memory is both a mirror and a lamp – a model of and a model for society" communication. In this sense, collective memory provides the cognitive structure necessary to achieve a collective interpretation important for collective actions. Hobsbawm (1972) stated that "to be a member of any human community [means situating] oneself with regard to its past" (p. 153). Furthermore, social media provided the activists "more sophisticated opportunities for their actions" (Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010, p. 1149). The technological evolution offered by social media supported group actions and conversations around these actions in a way that previously could not be achieved. These different forms of social media influences have proved to be important to achieve the political change that occurred in Egypt in 2011. Therefore, social media can be viewed as an effective means, or agency, to build profound social and political changes (Morozov, 2011; Shirky, 2008).

Finally, this research moves from surface observations and points out the initial conditions and antecedent actions underlying the process that give rise to political change events. It demonstrated how narrative analysis can illuminate the emergence and internal dynamics of a social movement process and address the underlying complexity of

political change phenomena. Understanding "how" something changes is important, as the combined conditions and cognitions that cause change to emerge over time are often a complex phenomenon that is difficult to examine with variance theories (Mitchelle & James, 2001). Our findings show that political change can be understood in more depth at the level of the mechanisms behind it. Yet, it is hard to predict the occurrence of social and political changes; thus, we argue that change should be viewed as an indeterminate happening. In IS research, Markus and Robey (1988) explain that process theories specify how particular effects or outcomes unfold and develop over time through necessary but not sufficient conditions. In other words, the focus here is on understanding the process, and as a consequence, events and states are 'unpacked' to reveal the complex processes from which they are constituted (Hernes et al., 2009). This view is consistent with our modeling of social movement mechanisms as necessary but not sufficient conditions for political change to occur.

7.3.   Emergent and Unanswered Issues

Narrative research and analysis includes a range of challenges besides those traditionally associated with qualitative research. As a qualitative approach, the research is not intended to be generalizable (Bhattacherjee, 2012; Creswell, 2009). Hence, researchers need to avoid "the illusion of causality" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 7). Instead, the goal is to provide insights into the phenomena of interest. Narrative research is driven based on the explanations established from the overall narrative (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Polkinghorn, 1988). As stated by Polkinghorn, "change from 'beginning' to 'end'" (p. 116). Through our research, we provided a rich description of

the sequence of events and showed how the pieces of our narrative data capture the array of elements that shape and reflect the process of the story of interest. In addition, we provided an explanation of the process that was situated within its context. Our research findings highlight the need for continued efforts to leverage new genres and perspectives on subject matters in efforts to understand the social and political impacts in the field of IS.

Additional challenges are related to the lack of both a definitive framework and a systematic inquiry for narrative research, as well as the issue of a researcher's biases and subjectivity. An important part of conducting qualitative research in general, and narrative research in particular is for the researchers to construct their own narrative (Davis, 1992; Riessman, 2008; Van de Ven & Poole, 2005). Narrative requires scholars to piece the fragments of narratives together to create composite narratives. Yet, narrative research can take several forms, depending on the researcher's questions and perspectives. Thus, given the complexity of narrative research, the identification, selection, and representation of the events of the story are challenging issues that received a great attention in our study and were approached with an understanding of their complexity. Additionally, the variety of types and volume of narrative data, along with the interpretation of data, introduced challenges. While analysis of critical events in the story is a major goal, the selection of narratives data for elaboration remains a challenging issue. Also, it is important to acknowledge that the identifications and definitions we used were mediums to communicate our findings; they are not the only way to describe the events and process. Yet, by taking an ample time to conduct the

research, by providing transparency with the guidelines of our design and methodological reflection of our narrative analysis, and by highlighting the key choices made in collecting, analyzing, and presenting our narrative, we believe that we addressed these challenges, and we hope that our research inspires further studies in the area.

Overall, this study shows that the role of social media in political change can be understood in more depth at the level of its impact on the process underlying the change. This is an important finding that should lead to more detailed studies of the IS role in social movements. Due to the need to go through a complex set of activities that underlined the cognitive aspect of a social movement in order for the social movement to progress, this study raises questions such as "What makes social movements fail to achieve political change?" and "How hard is it to achieve a successful political revolution?" Future research can focus on the role of social media throughout the different phases of social movements that operate as mechanisms behind political change and many other collective phenomena. Also, while several studies in the past that examined the ICT role in democratization and political change had a Western focus, our study proposes a new theoretical perspective on the role of ICT, specifically social media, in authoritarian regimes, consequently offering challenges to the traditional idea of democracy as well as opportunities for the study of civil society. In addition, it is important to point out the double-edged-sword nature of social media's impact on social movements and political change. For instance, while it becomes increasingly difficult for governments to control or manipulate information, social media could easily facilitate oppression and create new risks of repressive surveillance. Studies can examine how

social media could be used to undermine democracy, disturb social movement processes, and empower local governments to inhibit social and political change.

The political power of social media can also confront organizations with new challenges to which they must respond. Unfolding over time, consumers' empowerment provided by social media requires continual adjustment by businesses; it highlights an important need for businesses to address the impact of social media on collective behavior. Studies can focus on understanding the cognitive basis of a social movement's participants, to enhance the effectiveness of businesses to detect changes in customers' needs and respond to their demands.

The study also highlights methodological opportunities for IS scholars to use narrative in their research. By outlining the underlying assumptions of a narrative approach, reflecting distinctive ontological and epistemological foundations, and developing narrative theorizing and method along such lines, we advanced narrative applications in IS studies. Our study highlighted many opportunities for narrative research to become a key part of exploring topic areas in IS and offered a starting point to engage with narrative research. Additionally, given the amount and variety of narrative data that exist on social media, including text, pictures, and videos, narrative provides great opportunities for increasingly comprehensive analysis that harnesses the richness of social media data, to study and explore several social and political phenomena. As the technology continues to advance, we will likely see new and creative forms of data beyond the written text. Researchers can use more creativity with the sources of data and

experiment with richer modes of narrative presentation that take us beyond the traditional focus on written text.

7.4.   Conclusion

Over the last decade, the political role of IS has become a well-established area of research concerning a range of political issues from political communication and engagement to political mobilization and origination. Yet, the political implications of IS in authoritarian political systems are still in early development. Autocratic rulers use propaganda and repression to silence dissentong voices and limit opposition. Therefore, in contrast to participation in a democracy, participating in politics under an authoritarian system is significantly distinct, more difficult, and more risky. Social media's noticeable impact on popular protest events cascaded across the Arab world; its prominent role in toppling the authoritarian regime in Egypt put a spotlight on the implications of IS on public participation in politics, reinvigorating the debate of its role in social movements and political change in authoritarian contexts. Much attention in the literature has been given to the question of whether and how social media has an impact on social movement and political change. However, the literature in this area is still far from having a clear understanding of the complexity of this role.

Our results show for the first time the role of social media through the effects on political change of five necessary, but not sufficient, phases. This study also opens new avenues for the political impact of IS research. It develops a theory around the process by which social media influences political change, using narrative analysis and rich narrative data collected from social media sites. By doing so, our study shows that one can study IS

and political change phenomena at a new and crucial level of analysis. Clearly, there is still much to learn about information systems impact on the process of social movement and political change. The phases outlined in our research provide a step toward an enhanced understating of social and political change. The ultimate purpose of this study is to lay the foundation for much-needed research on the role of social media in political engagement, social movements, and revolutionary political change. Our sincere hope is that IS researches will investigate the larger role of information systems and technologies in our social and political systems, both for the benefit of business organizations and for the larger society.

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