

## SOCIAL MEDIA AS A FIELD OF SOCIAL STRUGGLE

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*"If your government shuts down the internet,  
shut down your government."*

*(Message on social networks during the 2011 Egypt revolution)*

During the past ten years, attention has been drawn to the democratising functions of the internet thanks to the rise of social media. This emphasis is apparently one of the renewed interpretations of the obsolete technological determinism approach, which is considered as an output of modernism, and was pushed by the social elites. The discussions on the "revolutionary" potential of communication technologies are not a new issue. However, they have once again come to the fore - perhaps slightly exaggerated - thanks to the current global social movements, such as "Arab Spring" and "Occupy Wall Street". Further, it is possible to find the early examples of digital activism in the second half of the 90's, when internet began to become popular. For instance, the EZLN (Zapatista Army of National Liberation) uprising against the Mexican Government commenced on January 1st, 1994, the day when the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) came into effect. Castells (2008:102) defines the EZLN uprising as the world's "first informational guerrilla movement", because the internet was used as an alternative communication tool to broadcast this rebellion. Ever since, the new media has become the primary or an important means of campaigns to inform, organize and protest.

Digital activism has entered into a new era with the widespread use of electronic social networks, and new digital activism practices have emerged. Although limited to the Web 1.0 trends including discussion forums, e-mail chains, websites and chat softwares, it has gained a new insight with Web 2.0. The differences between the first and the second internet generations appear to be a leading factor, which determine the use of internet by general users and notably the opposing voices. Compared to Web 1.0, the striking features of Web 2.0 are as follows; (more) instant, (much) faster, user-generated, self-sharing, collaborative, amateur, mobile, interactive and open to dialogue, horizontal, viral, imponderable, hard to control, responsive, daily, assembling individual and different voices, visible, hybrid, alternative, and participatory. It is also

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possible to describe social media as a communi-cative field, which gives priority to identity-sharing and the freedom of expression.

Indeed, the world would become a better place to live if all of the above-mentioned features and terms were used to increase the technological potential of social media. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the impact of this potential on social movements.

It appears that social media reshapes the forms of social movements and oppositions, which, in turn, has introduced "resistance culture". As mentioned before, as a user-generated content platform, and based on instant information exchange and high interaction, social media offers ample opportunities. The instant sharing feature of social media allows people to communicate and organize within social circles; social movements are able to create their own alternative media tools at low costs; political identities can become visible; the movements are able to advertise themselves from local to global platforms without space-time restrictions; new alternative and global public spheres can be estab-lished by introducing different voices. Besides, social media is outside of the hierarchical system; provides the opportunity for lateral commu-nication; informs mainstream media about social movements; increases the impacts and the continuity of campaigns thanks to social sharing before, during and after the movements; allows for online-offline organization; integrate different campaign practices; conveys the voices of social movements to larger masses with voluntary and individual sharing, and has the potential to organize "disorganized masses". However, it should be borne in mind that this new resistance culture has many not only technological, but also social limitations. This article is aimed to discuss the opportunities and the limitations of social media in connection with social movements and with reference to some current examples.

The transformations of social movements with respect to communi-cation, organization and campaign practices could be assembled under the following headings:

**Faster Communication:** Instant and fast communication are presu-mably the most important features of social media, which distinguish it from the other communication tools. It could be argued that communi-cation, organization and action processes of social movements acele-rate thanks to the user-generated media content and both voluntary and "communicable" dissemination of messages within social circles. Therefore, electronic social networks have become the principal communication tool in order to circulate social events. It seems that citizens can instantly respond to social events and problems on social media. As an example, the hashtags concerning any social problem are updated on Twitter every second. Furthermore, the faster information exchange allows activists to organize much quicker. That is, social struggles are gaining speed. The head of the opposition group Think-Moldova, which campaigned against the 2009 general elections in Moldavia, seems to illustrate this point. As Natalia Morar (Evans, 2010) put it: "After a ten-minute brainstorming and decision-making process with six people, it just happened through social networks, Facebook, the blogosphere, SMS and e-mails. Only in a few hours, we disseminated all information, and 15,000 people came out into the streets." Likewise, in Iran's Green

Movement, the protesters poured into Tehran and Esfahan streets, and communicated with each other and various international communities through photos, videos, blog posts, tweets and SMS. In addition to this, Twitter was the most influential communication tool to find hospitals for injured people, and disseminate information about the conflict zones. It is stated that approximately 480,000 Twitter users sent more than 2 million tweets between 7 - 26 July. This number reached to nearly 200,000 tweets on the day of general elections (Howard, 2009). In the course of "Occupy Wall Street" demonstrations, 20,000 videos were released on YouTube in October 2011. In December 2011, the number was 95,000 (Lucas, 2012). It may well be argued that professional information production takes a much longer time, and is presented with professional editing through conventional media. On the other hand, social media users can instantly save information, and share on-site. The faster information flow, therefore, appears to accelerate the organization and the action processes of social movements. To illustrate this, the people taking place in Oda TV case journalists Nedim Şener and Ahmet Şik's trial, released the information to the public earlier than the conventional mass media. Similarly, soon after the attacks on an Alawi family in Malatya, Turkey was communicated on Twitter, many NGOs and activists organized protests. All of these examples would indicate that social media speeds up the information process, and makes the voices of opposition heard much quicker.

Global Solidarity Networks: In consideration of social movements, the concept of "beyond space" is likely to be one the distinctive features of social media. Social media also attracts international societies, and fosters solidarity. Given the fact that social networks are global, and the messages are "communicable" within social circles, it becomes much easier for users to follow other countries, and support the cases similar to theirs. For instance, the videos of Mohammed Bouazizi, the icon of Arab Spring, were primarily circulated through social networks, such as Twitter and YouTube. Another example might be the Turkish theatre players' demonstrations against the Government of Turkey in favour of the privatization of theatres. Many other players from different countries supported their fellows by sharing video clips. Social media was also influential to popularise Occupy Wall Street protests in the US and around the world. Demonstrations took place more than 80 countries, and the "Day of Rage" was observed from Hong Kong to Fairbanks, and Miami to London (Taylor, 2011). Following the two weeks after the resignation of Hosni Mubarak, the Egyptian President, an average of 300 messages daily were tweeted in the neighbouring countries (Howard, 2011:14). It appears that social movements can add a global dimension to the struggles with the use of social media. Considering the "voluntary" sharing and "viral" dissemination of messages, demonstrations and cases can create an impact in different regions. It has also become possible to broadcast the voices of opposition throughout the global social media map with messages, sound recordings and videos of all stakeholders participated in demonstrations. Investigating the role of the internet on Aboriginal Australians' movements, Petray (2011:932-933) points out that "the interactivity enabled by Web 2.0 serves to expand the 'virtual we', and

encompasses not just Indigenous people but their supporters, and many sympathetic individuals from around the world".

**Alternative Public Spheres:** Since after the internet was popularized with its commercialization, digital media has started not only to communicate political developments, but also to create them. Chatfield (2012:122) claims that the minority groups traditionally monopolizing information flow and means of organization have lost their power, and today, there are different entities including global demonstration policies, Wikileaks and some hacker groups, such as Anonymous. Therefore, it seems that social media creates fragmented public spheres, which are originated from social movements, have no frontiers, and integrate streets with the virtual world. These public spheres are considered a place in which social struggles dart in and out of the information flow. Indeed, a social movement is created itself on social media. As Alexanyan et al. (2012:6) quote from Benkler, "the networked public sphere [is] an online space where members of society can cooperate, present political opinions, and collectively serve as 'watchdogs' over society, all through an online, cooperative, peer-produced model that is less subject to state authority than the traditional media." Further, the preliminary studies on digital activism suggest that there is a weak link between the online and the offline spheres. However, this hypothesis has become obsolete today.

Social media has also broken silence upon mass media. As already mentioned, people produce messages, and try to make their responses heard in alternative public spheres. The content of social media is generated by its users, and what they share is all voluntary. Thus, it might be argued that these messages are more authentic, and based upon criticism and action. It is widely known that we swarm around computers at the time of a social movement. Moreover, social media is seen as a remedy for the citizens, who can not find a solution to the problems of the institutions of representative democracy. It may well be argued that we somewhat serve as "watchdogs", and try to create a public opinion impact. In particular, social media acts as a watchdog of state controlled national media, and alerts international new media to growing opposition and dissent events (Cottle, 2011:652). There are several examples which could be illustrative of this point. As Alexanyan et al. (2012:7) observe, "A community of activists and bloggers were able to highlight the negative impacts of a planned Gazprom tower in St. Petersburg on important historic areas of the city. Their reporting helped to mobilize opposition [...] and ultimately put a stop to construction." Another recent example is from Turkey. Cihan Kırmızıgül, a Turkish student at Galatasaray University, was accused of being a terrorist, and on pending trial because of his keffiyeh (i.e. cotton headdress commonly worn by Arabs and Kurds). However, his friends and many other students from different universities supported Kırmızıgül on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Besides this, social media seems to be a communication tool which could create a conflict zone for two different social groups, and where users can observe the polarization of different ideologies. For example, the conservative residents of Istanbul's Eyüp district displayed their opposition to Efes Pilsen's "One Love" concerts with "eyuptebirafestivalinehayir" (i.e. No Beer Festival in Eyüp) hashtags. Whilst they were able to create a public opinion, the Turkish

citizens in favour of secularism organized on Twitter to resist. As already discussed, the criticisms towards current political systems and democratic views spread like a virus, and easily reach to masses on social media. Therefore, social networking sites, such as Twitter and Facebook, create public spheres based upon horizontal communication, where users can observe different views on political problems, and different people's opinions. It is claimed that not only organizations, but also individuals give response. As Petray (2011:934, based on Kavada 2010) maintains, "Using email lists and social networking sites, it is now possible to organize non-hierarchically across large geographical ranges, and to incorporate individuals and organizations from a range of ideological positions. It has also become possible to make the violations of human rights and the dissatisfaction about political systems visible. The motto of Anonymous may support this view, "We use the internet to disclose what is hidden and to spread the facts all around the world". Thus, social media has become a means of resistance enabling people to put pressure on politicians, hierarchical system and strict political organizations. In this respect, it is necessary to create a new political culture which will force politicians to be open to criticism, draws attention to user responses, and allows people to act much quicker. This culture should also introduce not a strict, hierarchical and bureaucratic, but a horizontal communication platform.

Re-Exploring Collective Struggle: It appears that social media has become the new place of collective struggle. It is also likely to describe this platform as a co-operation, where people in collective solidarity movements find solutions with their own knowledge and abilities. Cottle (2011: 651, based on Dahlgren 2010) suggests that "Social media helps a new space emerge for social inclusivity, group recognition and pluralized participation as well as different forms of political conversation and engagement". The struggles on social media might not always represent what is actually happening in the streets. However, it has created a new collective spirit, which is different from streets, and mediated by communication tools. In this new public sphere, it is possible to find a different type of collective spirit, which is far from standing shoulder to shoulder, shouting slogans or a collective emotion. This new collective spirit seems to look like "imagined communities". Therefore, a collective struggle is generated from social media. There are people, who take an active, less active or a passive role in social movements. These people disseminate all community struggles through Twitter' hashtags, Facebook groups, YouTube or Foursquare. They are trying to find solutions, and feel like a part of the aforementioned "imagined communities". It could be argued that the popularization of the words "democracy" and "revolution" at the time of Arab Spring, and the "visibility" of the problems concerning political regimes in the countries with conventional media censorships indicate the importance of collective struggles on social networking sites. In addition to this, it has become possible for users not only to demonstrate (and to gain appreciation from) their political views by sharing, but also to learn and sympathize with other people's political approaches on these sites. Therefore, Facebook is one of these platforms, which is more intimate and is comprised of our acquaintances. As

Jeffrey S. Juris (2012, based on Postill n.d.) suggests, “The use of Twitter and Facebook can also produce a sense of connectedness and co-presence, potentially eliciting powerful feelings of solidarity as protesters read about distant and not-so-distant others engaged in the same or kindred actions and protests.” Therefore, new connections are created by the users’ rage, feelings and political views, and circulated throughout the world.

The Action Zone: In connection with the previous discussions, it appears that social media has become a channel from which demonstrations are originated. At the time of the 2009 general elections in Moldavia, the opposition groups rebelling against the election results organized demonstrations on Twitter, LiveJournal and Facebook. Likewise, pro-Jewish groups organized through SMS, Twitter and other social media tools in Iran's Green Movement. Even without TV coverage before the Bolotnaya protest, one of the largest demonstrations in recent Russian history, organizers were able to use social networks, blogs, Twitter and YouTube to rally between 50,000 and 70,000 protesters in Moscow, and tens of thousands in other cities (Alexanyan et al., 2012:9). Furthermore, many demonstrations organized on social media can sustain their continuity. Organizers efficiently use social media before, during and after social movements. The demonstrations on May 1st, International Workers’ Day are organized in Istanbul’s Taksim Square and on social media concurrently. There is, hence, a continuous interaction between online-offline spheres. As a similar example from Spain, the 15-M movement was primarily organized through the internet before coming up into the streets, and then continued on the social media (Feixa, 2012). It might be concluded that there is two different demonstrations, one is in the streets and the other on social networking sites. Social media is also considered as an alternative and complementary means of struggles. In Sennet’s words, “the fall of public man” is accompanied by the emerging internet. The people, who have become lonely on computers, try to rebel against political systems with daily practises and through social media tools. Considering the privatization of public realm, streets are no longer the authentic place of social transformation, or at least the primary. It is likely to suggest that social media has not eliminated the streets at all, and there are still crowds with rage on squares, which are able to influence the political decision-making mechanism. However, it should be borne in mind that the struggles are no longer restricted to streets. On social media, various opinions become visible, that is, something not possible to see in many street demonstrations. The struggles are able to continue through different channels and sustain their continuity. Above all, the internet can create its own demonstrations. It has become not only a means of political struggle, but a sphere. For instance, the activists notified their locations through Foursquare at the time of Occupy Wall Street movements. This would indicate the impact of social movements on virtual spaces. Investigating Occupy Wall Street movements in Pittsburgh, Mattoni (2012: Online) argues that the campsites are an important place of struggles, however they are not the only place for organization. Mattoni (2012: Online) further claims that it is possible to organize at different levels with the use of different media tools.

New Forms of Participation: New forms of participation have been emerged with social media. As an example, Scotland has planned to prepare the first e-constitution, which will allow the citizens actively participate in constitution-making process. Today, it is not necessary to become an active member of a social movement. Instead, it is possible to create social transformation in smaller groups or individually. Moreover, the role of activists has changed, as well. This new type of activist groups is comprised of the postmodern and creative individuals who are sitting at their computers, and produce and consume at the same time. Therefore, the notion of responsiveness is presumably the leading feature of social media. It could be claimed that the users' responses are the reflection of cultural, social and ideological codes collected in mind throughout the life (Irak and Yazıcıoğlu, 2012:31). Benkirane (2012:3) divides the protestors of Arab Spring into two different categories, i.e. nomads and monads. As Benkirane (2012:3) further observes:

Involved in social revolutions, they do not intend to represent a political force or to organize themselves in a political party. They represent “all the time, everywhere” a wide spectrum of political, social and cultural sensitivities. Though they are collectively powerful, they do not seek power but want it to radically generate change [...] Those educated, multilingual and often unemployed young adults are the cognitive nomads and monads [...] of the new Arab consciousness (Benkirane, 2012:3).

Apart from these discussions, it appears that the language of social struggles on social media is different, much closer to daily language. Language has also become an important factor in this new type of activism, which use hybrid media including printed and audio-visual materials. The response of RedHack (RedHack, 2012), the hacker group attacked on the Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry and other Ministries' websites, outlines the use of social media in social movements as follows:

The activities of RedHack could also be considered as the creation and reformation of language. This group intends to raise awareness to create the language of struggles. It pays attention to highlight this intention in every social movement. The expressions of this language are the reflections of hot struggle zones, and do not refer to a democratic achievement or a demonstration. Instead, this language refers to revolutions. A revolution cannot be described with the words "hope", "wish" or "a pleasant memory" because of its intrinsic nature. It has a physical reality, and the participating people are the ones experiencing problems with current systems one way or another. For this reason, RedHack aims to raise awareness about the common language of struggles.

In this respect, it could be argued that social media is a realm, where social movements are able to produce a collective language and discourse. With regard to Occupy Wall Street demonstrations, "mixing analogical and digital media channels, combining low tech and high tech media materials, using fixed and mobile media supports, activists developed a rich 'repertoire of communication' (Mattoni, 2012: Online). Today, the forms of daily demonstrations include tweeting or re-tweeting a motto and sharing Anonymous's viral videos. Therefore, visual media is able to present the evidences of social injustices and rebellions. Mass demonstrations, expert and

citizen opinions are recorded and then shared on YouTube and Vimeo. According to the figures of PEW, Internet and American Life Project, 45% of the adult internet users in the US watched political videos at the time of general elections, and one third of the users shared the uploaded videos (Evans, 2009: 38-41, based on Wright). In this particular context, it appears that political demonstrations have been transformed into daily practices. Marchart's concept of "minimal politics" could be considered as an umbrella term to describe doing politics on social media. As the channels of minimal politics, there are three different functions of social networking sites, blogs and etc. First, rebutting the arguments of others, second, reflecting on the discursive or media strategies in operation and, third, re-articulating the concepts and positions articulated by others. Therefore, rather than seeing "alternative" or "marginal" political media as failing to live up to expectations, it is possible to see them as active participants in 'minimal politics' (Macgilchrist ve Böhmig, 2012:91-97).

**As a Tool to Form and Display Political Identity:** It is possible to display our personal, in particular, political identity on social media. Given the fact that the youth is criticised of being apolitical, social media offers an opportunity to enhance the interest in politics. Indeed, it seems impractical for the users of social media who follow the daily news to become indifferent in politics. As Chatfield (2012:122) suggests, "Politics is no longer considered as a separate action, but rather has become a part in the flow and tides of daily life for the citizens of 21st century, who are able to access and contribute to the digital groups with thousand or even millions of people." On social networking sites, such as Facebook, which is a more intimate, and comprised of acquaintances, it becomes possible to display our political identities, world perspectives and seek support from our friends with similar views. We are trying to create ideological friendships. Besides, social media has been used as a tool to assemble sympathizers for social movements. As an example, thousands of people follow the Facebook page of Khaled Said, an Egyptian liberal blogger died under torture in police custody. Thus, social media enables the people, who were indifferent to politics, to express their own political opinions. Similarly, Twitter was used as a tool for political demonstrations by the supporters of Turkish football club Fenerbahçe, at the time when the president of Fenerbahçe Aziz Yıldırım, and his assistants were arrested. Fenerbahçe supporters have been still following the case of Aziz Yıldırım, protested against the police officers using tear gas, been making contacts with lawyers, and making this case a "topic trend" on Twitter. It could be suggested that social media has accomplished to gather people with no experience in social movements in Occupy demonstrations (Juris, 2012).

**Alternative Media:** Social media is able to communicate the news that conventional media tools overlook or intentionally ignore. In particular, alternative media has become more important in the countries, where censorship or self-censorship is rampant. It is shown that there are between 40,000-70,000 active blogs in Iran (Howard, 2009). Likewise, the Russian blogosphere has become an alternative media tool to state-owned TV channels and elite media. Therefore, social media appears to be rivalling with conventional mass media, much closer to streets, and share citizen-generated information. Social media can be described as a more authentic alternative



media. Besides, this platform has emerged the concept of "citizen journalism", which enables people to broadcast social injustices through mobile devices at any time. Social movements can announce their activities on social media at low costs and in a rapid way. Social media is also likely to set today's agenda. For example, subsequent to sharing their activities on Twitter, the news about RedHack, the Turkish hacker group, took place in the national mass media. On the other hand, the conventional media working with international news agencies use social media as an information resource. Social media is able to broadcast news earlier than conventional media. There are different examples illustrating this point, such as the assassination of Benazir Bhutto and Osama Bin Laden, and the death of 26 year-old age Neda Agha-Soltan in Iran's "Green Movement". Another example is from Turkey. It is shown that social media far rapidly communicated the news about the massacre of 34 smuggling civilians by the Turkish Armed Forces at Uludere (Robotski) border (Irak and Yazıcıoğlu, 2012:84). Thus, it can be concluded that conventional media takes social media into consideration, and invests in human capital and technological infrastructure for its development (Irak and Yazıcıoğlu, 2012:17). As mentioned earlier, the language of social media is influenced by the user-generated content. This language seems to be close to our daily language, and thereby is much basic and frank. In other words, there is no professional language on social media, and what is communicated is all about the raw information without editing or censor.

**The Statistical Gap:** Although the 32.7% of world population (Internet World Statistics, 2012) has access to the internet, the inequality in the access to recent information and communication technologies at intra/international level still exists. Furthermore, social movements are not independent from this statistical gap. In this respect, Arab Spring would be one of the significant examples: Facebook's penetration rate was 17.99% in Tunisia, followed by 5.49% in Egypt and 3.4% in Libya in 2011 (Arab Social Media Report, 2011). The internet and mobile device users mainly consist of the urban youth from middle and upper classes in the Middle East. For instance, the 90% of Twitter users in Iran live in Tehran, the capital city. On the other hand, although 78.3% of the US population has access to the internet (Internet World Statistics, 2012), Occupy Wall Street demonstrations were not able to create a transformation similar with Arab Spring. It can therefore be argued that the internet cannot be considered as a means of revolution on its own. The factors of the statistical gap, i.e. geographical location, socio-economic status, sex, age, educational and professional background, language etc., have also possible impacts on social movements. In Turkey, some left-wing and conservative groups adopt a technophobic approach to social media. It is also possible to observe distinct differences between the activities of the youth and those in middle ages. Similarly, there is a significant discrepancy in the internet use between the younger generation of labour unions' social movements and the senior ones.

**The Culture of Democracy and Censorship:** The different traditions and the views on the freedom of expression and censorship in many countries appear to be the most important obstacles to describe social media as a democratizing force. Social

media is not only extending the freedom of expression, but also has become the most influential surveillance tool of states and capital markets. In Morozov's words (2011), "global digital panopticon" allows not only to monitor citizen-consumers at low costs, but also create new digital dictatorships. There are various strategies to put pressure on citizens in digital dictatorships. To illustrate, opposing web sites and blogs were censored, and many bloggers were arrested by the authoritarian regimes in the course of Arab Spring. In Tunisia, the government stole the Facebook passwords of its citizens. Similarly, the internet was blocked in Libya and Egypt. In Iran and China, online opposing propagandas were observed<sup>1</sup>; the internet accounts of opposing groups were hacked by the Syrian Electronic Party; the Moldavian Government cut off communication through mobile phones at the time of the 2009 general elections; the Turkish government denounced RedHack as a terrorist group, and removed its Twitter account; and a Turkish teacher was discharged from her position due to her comments on Facebook (Milliyet, 2012: Online). There are so many other regimes currently using social media to identify activists and sympathisers, and to put them into their blacklist. In China, the messages concerning the senior politicians and the previous head of states were blocked by the microblogging services (Kaufman, 2012:20). Further, the Chinese Government spends 56 million dollars per annum to broadcast pro-government propagandas on the internet (Kanally, 2012). There are also softer versions of censorship. In the US, where the freedom of expression and opinion variations are exported to the world, Twitter was criticised for excluding Occupy Wall Street demonstrations from its "topic trends", and Yahoo for blocking e-mails about the protests. On the other hand, the activists have developed different strategies to resist. As an example, in the Middle East countries, the activists generally use anonymous identities. To combat with state censorship at the time Arab Spring, the website of Global Voices translated the Arabic news to English. Anonymous attacked on the digital sphere of the Tunisian Government. Google provided Egyptian citizens without internet access with the opportunity via its "speaktotweet" program. Many Egyptian people were able to send voice messages to Twitter through their phones. The video coverages of Khaled Saed circulated through mobile devices, even though the internet was blocked. Apart from the problems in censorship, the countries' unique political cultures also influence the use of social media. Irak and Yazıcıoğlu (2012: 42-76) argue that conspiracy theories, political polarization, "the spiral of silence" theory, revanchism and gossip circles have an impact on the use of social media.

**The Enduring Effect of Conventional Media:** Whilst social media has established an alternative media sphere, and made different voices heard, popular culture has colonized social media, and, at times, turns it into an entertainment tool. Although social media provides news resource to printed and visual media, public agenda has still been determined by mass media tools. Then, this agenda is re-produced on social networking sites, such as Twitter or Facebook. However, users have become socialized "online" by using the internet as an entertainment resource, e.g. playing online games,

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<sup>1</sup> The Chinese hacker group "The 50 Cent Party" has been organizing cyber attacks on Weibo, which is known as China's Twitter-like platform with 350 million users.

visiting chat rooms. That is, the internet makes them alienated from strong interpersonal ties in the offline community, which eventually erodes civic engagement (Zhang, 2010:78, based on Shah 2001). There are also instances where social media cannot escape from conventional media censor. For instance, the Turkish conventional media merely broadcasted the funerals of the soldiers died during the confrontations (when this article was being written) in Şemdilli district, city of Hakkari. Social media was also unable to provide sufficient information about this news.

**Keyboard Activism:** Another most important discussion concerns to what extend "keyboard activism" is influential. It is necessary to investigate the impact of sharing political messages on Twitter or Facebook. According to some researchers, the number of people, who were previously indifferent to social movements, has been increasing with the use of social media. Therefore, social media is considered as a place where people can pour their hearts out and express their complaints. It is possible to suggest that there is an "immobile politicisation" and "lazy activism" on social media. In connection with politicisation, sharing our opinions and identity would be important, even though there is no mobile movement. "Push-button activism" allows people to feel as if they are involved in a movement with minimal participation, e.g. supporting Greenpeace's activities with 1-click, or sharing a video related with Stop Kony campaigns. As Petray (2011:934) puts it:

"Movement participants can easily feel a part of the movement, by displaying their interest on their Facebook profile. But strong feelings of collective identity do not always translate into a strong movement. In other words, Web 2.0 may increase the numbers of inactive members of social movements" (Petray, 2011: 934).

Therefore, movements may reach to masses, but with minimal participations. Social media is able to connect us with others in a rapid way and through weak links.

**Individualism:** In today's world, interpersonal communication is mediated through various tools. Thus, it might be useful to answer this question: Is there a demand for face-to-face communication in social movements and solidarity groups? According to Negri and Hardt, the answer is "yes". Social movements require face-to-face communication and solidarity. As Negri and Hardt (2012:25) further suggest:

Facebook, Twitter, the Internet, and other kinds of communications mechanisms are useful, but nothing can replace the being together of bodies and the corporeal communication that is the basis of collective political intelligence and action. In all the occupations throughout the United States and around the world, from Rio de Janeiro to Ljubljana, from Oakland to Amsterdam, even in cases when they lasted only a short time, the participants experienced the power of creating new political affects through being together. [...] An occupation is a kind of happening, a performance piece that generates political affects (Negri and Hardt, 2012:25).

Many people rushing onto their computers at the time of social movements may not be as interested as the previous day in participating a demonstration. There are also other social movements, during which the internet is not preferred or considered as a struggle tool for ideological or other reasons.

**Cacophony:** Allowing people to send hundreds of messages in seconds, social networking sites appear to create a cacophonous atmosphere. Thus, it is important to explore the degree of its influence on political transformations and discussions. Investigating Occupy Wall Street demonstrations in Pittsburgh, Mattoni (2012) argues that, apart from the clashes on campsites, the activists sometimes cannot negotiate with each other on Facebook, and revealed the intra-group hierarchies on the online platform, which escalated the passions. Another feature of social media is its inability to control messages, and thereby the discourse of “rage” is rapidly circulated. Social media also seems to have established the discourse of rage in many social movements, which increases political polarization.

To summarize, it might be important to answer this question: How could we interpret the social media-generated opinions concerning social movements? It is presumably too early to introduce certain predictions about this daily-changed and user-generated media. Indeed, social media is all about what we share. Whether it should be used as a means of revolutions or a radical social transformation is subjected to further studies. Many opposing groups cannot create a social transformation on social media. A revolution is generally depended upon people's will rather than communication tools. Social media would be helpful only if citizens find it necessary in social transformations. Analysing the Twitter messages sent in the course of Arab Spring, Benkirane (2012:2) suggests, “social networks cannot be understood without factoring in their contexts and without identifying who actually uses Twitter, and what users write about and in which language they communicate”. Fadi Salem considers social media as a tool, which allows critical groups to communicate with each other in Arab countries. Even though social media is not seen as the only means of revolutions or political transformations, it offers the opportunity to its user to faster communicate, organize, and act in the course of social movements. Social media is not independent from conventional media, yet still has been complementing it. In other words, it has become an alternative voice of the citizens, who are kept away from the interaction of mass media tools in the countries with representative democracy.

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