

## **DOES THE OPPOSITION PROGRESS IN NETWORKS? DOES THE OPPOSITION GET CAUGHT IN THE NET?\***

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The fact that social media allows for a multi-directional communication in which ordinary citizens are able to make their oppositional stance, observations and voices heard has been promising for the democratization of communication. For this reason, in conjunction with the social events unfolding in 2011, the revolutionary power of social media with its contribution to the improvement of freedom of expression and democracy was reemphasized. Revolutionary characters have been attributed to the social networks used in the social events developing in the world. From the Green Movement in Iran to the news of the Occupy Wall Street, we encounter terms such as “Facebook Revolution” or “Twitter Revolution” for the social events that take place all around the world. To such an extent that communication carried out on Twitter by the opponents in the Arab uprisings was followed by the whole world. In fact, the mainstream media used this medium as a news source. Digital media activism has enabled local issues to be shared with the world public and particularly, social networks like Twitter have acted as media providing economic, facilitating and interactive communication and logistic coordination. (Segerberg and Bennett, 2011:198). What is the role of social media on the power–opposition sides in terms of the social transformations in question?

### **IS EVERY MEDIUM A REVOLUTION?**

As technology develops, the nascence of each medium carries with it revolutionary characteristics. As Murthy states, starting from Morse’s first message floating through the telegraph wire and then Graham Bell’s first words on the telephone to his assistant; radio, television and Internet media, respectively, brought with them a ‘revolution’ at every turn. However, social values attributed to the technological innovations are reminiscent of a ‘déjà vu’ rather than a revolution. Although each medium is inherently different from the other, debates on their potentials for social evolution show similarities. In the 16th century, when Luther, professor of theology, posted his ninety-five theses which opposed indulgence, on the door of the Wittenberg University, it attracted everyone’s attention. With the effect of the printing press, the Reform

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movement led to a social transformation spreading over a wide area. In fact, John Foxe, an English protestant, made the following statement with regards to the media attacks (printed materials, ballads, pictures, plays etc.), ‘Either the pope must abolish knowledge and printing, or printing must at length root him out’ (Briggs and Burke, 2004:96). Zeynep Tüfekçi, who links the public awareness created by the reform movement against the practices of the church to the role of social media in the Arab uprisings, states that the ones who felt discontent with the repressive regimes became cognizant of people who thought alike through social media and started taking collective action. They were particularly able to get their preferences en masse to the common people quickly by reaching them in an informational cascade (The Economist, 2012:41). Robert Darnton, a historian at Harvard University, states that although there are inherent differences, the social impact of social media has a history which can be traced back to past centuries and that social media is not a beginning of a phenomenon but a part of a continuity. He makes the following observation concerning his investigation of information sharing networks in pre-revolutionary France: ‘the marvels of communication technology in the present have produced a false consciousness about the past—even a sense that communication has no history, or had nothing of importance to consider before the days of television and the internet’ (The Economist, 2011:41). Technology and society constantly construct each other; therefore, the discourse created in this context is repeated in the historical process. As a matter of fact, even though Fisher’s statement ‘that technology makes society’ (Christensen, 2011:235) and McLuhan’s (2001) statement ‘we shape our tools and thereafter our tools shape us’ remain moot, they emphasize the social transformations of the media.

### **THE HACKTIVISM POTENTIAL IN SOCIAL NETWORKS: Twitter sometimes in the leading role and sometimes in the supporting role**

The Internet is able to meet the needs of the differences and requirements arising from the transformation within social movements. Collective action is based on three elements; psychological motivation, organization carrier and communicative action. Emotional factors that impel people to action constitute the psychological motivation. However, taking into account those who complain about the existing situation but prefer to remain passive, it becomes obvious that psychological factors are not sufficient. Hence, organizational behaviors can sometimes be more leading than psychological factors. In fact, the organizational forms of the new generation movements have abandoned corporate approaches, old-fashioned membership and leaderships. Which way of communication and tactical forms they adopt becomes more of an issue (‘Mediated Network, ty:7-9). For this reason, festival-like approaches and visual performances in creative acts draw attention. The way they say things can compete with what they say. The decentralized, flexible and scattered nature of social networks offer a communicational opportunity well suited for grassroots movements. With the same features, it becomes easier to create a psychologically motivated network coalition which is ready for activism through social networks. Among the forms of protests in which the Internet is used as a means of action; online

notifications, online petitions and Hacktivism help to establish recognition and awareness. With the collective identity which is established over networks, awareness and cooperation become widespread easily and rapidly. Cooperation is provided by reinforcing the feeling of being 'us'. According to Natalie Fenton, new social movements share similar features with web-based communication;

New Social Movements share common characteristics with web-based communication: they lack membership forms, statutes and other formal means of organizing; they may have phases of visibility and phases of relative invisibility; NSMs may have significant overlaps with each other and are liable to rapid change in form, approach and mission. Furthermore, the ability of new communication technologies to operate globally and respond to global economic agendas in a swift and timely manner is key to their contemporary capacity to mobilize against the vagaries of global capital (Fenton, 2008:40).

We are currently witnessing the fact that digital media can play important roles in the mobilization of political participation, campaign management and social movements. Social networks give the Internet access groups the opportunity to express themselves against the 'tyranny of the majority' defined by Tocqueville. As a matter of fact, in their articles, S. Lindgren and R. Lundström study Twitter as a potential area for activism approaching the subject from the Wikileaks case. They state that social movements are able to form a 'networked public' due to the flexible and transitive structure of Twitter. The networked public is a participative and a collaborative environment where enthusiasts and volunteers create something together, technology and tactics are developed, interests are shared and meanings are appropriated, re-made and re-distributed. (Lindgren and Lundström, 2011:1000). One of the principles published on the Wikileaks' website, which is a hacktivist project, was 'to give the public the chance to rewrite history.' Hacktivism, which is a form of activism where documents are appropriated and distributed, is supported by new communication technologies. By making the language of his message visual and viral, he explains what kind of activism structure is created by personal tweets. The online culture consisting of a written discourse by tweets and social network relations generated by 'tweeters' constitute two important chapters of his study. While censorship and democracy issues come to the fore in the semantic examination of Twitter language generated by Wikileaks 'hashtags,' others are debates on what to do to support Wikileaks, asking for donations and the content of some particular documents that were leaked (Lindgren and Lundström, 2011:1005). There are three types of contents emphasized in the Wikileaks politics on Twitter. The first one is the sharing and redistribution of information and knowledge on Twitter activism. It is challenging that the majority of tweets has links to news put out by mainstream media companies. Moreover, the discussion platform is shaped around these pieces of news with the links being 'retweeted.' Secondly, it is used as a medium where calls for donations are made and mobilization for common action is undertaken. Lastly, it is a medium where slogans for the advocacy of freedom of expression and free media are shouted out. The article examines the tweets, by a user nicknamed Freakingcat, regarding the Thai

government preventing access to the Wikileaks website. It draws attention to the sphere of influence created by the retweeting of their tweets by a large group of different users in 20 minutes. In this way, it shows how a single user can have influence over the language of a large group. (Lindgren and Lundström, 2011: 1012).

The authors draw attention to important logical errors in the social media debate. In particular, the risk of fetishization of social networking media such as Facebook and Twitter leads to their presumptive portrayal without exploring the social characteristics of the technology. In addition, instead of approaching Twitter, which is examined out of the broader political context, as a “stand-alone” platform, the important thing is to understand the role of these technologies in the organizing mechanisms and realize the diversity of this role in wide range oppositional ecologies (Segerberg and Bennett, 2011:199). Following the message traffic created by various actors or organizational structures on Twitter, it becomes easier to track the development of a collective action through technology and gives us an idea about the protest ecology (Segerberg and Bennett, 2011:199). Depending on the situation, organizational structure, messages of individuals or groups and areas of cooperation can change and shape the collective action. Twitter, as one of the digital mechanisms, configures and forms the protest space. Another point of view suggests that Twitter streams can give clues regarding the formation of the protest ecology. Users who contribute to the stream and those who connect to this stream can directly protest this ecology. For example, various institutions and organizations can meet on different layers of the protest network by means of data connection. However, every digital protest is idiosyncratic. Analyses can be an indicator for that protest space but cannot be descriptive because Twitter can take on different roles in different ecological spaces. Individually or organizationally, participation in a protest from different locations and different networks is possible. As the protest space uses mainstream media, non-governmental organizations and individual tweets, the nature of the activism undertaken changes. Segerberg and Bennett compare the Twitter activisms of two non-governmental organizations and observe differences resulting from the use of data connections in the protest spaces. While one of them has a structure that allows for the use of individual information sources such as personal acquaintanceship, the other has an organization which makes the movement shallow by emphasizing institutionalism with the use of the same address, the same names. Due to Twitter’s structure, the protest space can also be expanded by applications of hyperlinks, hashtags and retweeting (Segerberg and Bennett, 2011: 203). In fact, this may cause an uncontrolled expansion, a chaotic bulimia. People can form the gate-keeping process of the motivating information sources. While one movement reflects an organization-centered protest space, the other charts out a lasting, crowd-sourcing and autonomous path. While the first one develops a strategy which motivates users with encouraging Twitter messages throughout the coalition that organizes the movement, the other emphasizes freedom with personal networks. Another element is the change of the organizational dynamics during activism. The data of one stream, which is monitored, constitutes a specific layer of the network. When we analyze the quality of the activism, whether a stream is a long-term organization or a short-term support becomes more of an issue with the expansion of

networks and their interaction with one another. The active use of the network by the groups during the protest can lead the movement to be identified through different hashtags. Segerberg and Bennett's study indicates that each protest space created on Twitter has its own dynamics and that Twitter can claim a different role in the ecology of each protest, therefore it is not possible to make a generalization. Twitter takes on the leading role when it turns into a social network-centered communication with the guidance of a social movement while it may take different supportive roles as the networked public expands according to needs and habits.

## **TWO DIFFERENT FACES: THE NETWORK OF THE CITIZEN,**

### **THE NETWORK OF THE POWER**

At a conference in 1994, Al Gore, Vice President of the United States, described the optimistic rationale for the call to create a 'global information infrastructure' as 'promote the functioning of democracy by greatly enhancing the participation of citizens in decision making' (Hoffmann, Kornweitz, 2011:7). According to Diamond, information and communication technologies provide the citizens with the opportunities to report news, point out wrongdoing, express opinions, mobilize protests, monitor elections, observe government actions, deepen participation and expand the area of freedom (Christensen, 2011:237). Protestors use social networking media such as Twitter, Flickr, Youtube and Facebook in order to organize protests, respond to government propaganda and provide information for global news media (Christensen, 2011: 243). The Twitter revolution in the aftermath of the elections in 2009 in Iran was followed by a series of uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East in 2011. In these uprisings the role of social media was significantly emphasized. It especially enabled the people who live under repressive regimes to share their agenda of human rights violations with the global news media. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden closely follows these developments in the Arab countries. Christensen, who examined the works of the ministry, scrutinized the process of a project which aims to support the efforts of people who demand democracy under the oppressive regimes. Bildt's (Minister of Foreign Affairs) meetings with the web activists and social media experts in Cairo took place due to the fact that the role of social media in these changes is seen as vital. Thus, he decided to support the use of digital media on an international scale as well as projects increasing access to Internet-based media. Emphasizing that the Internet is a powerful tool for democracy, change and freedom, Bildt expresses that new technologies in media make governments more transparent and encourage citizens to take a more active role. However, he also states that technology alone cannot realize freedom of expression but access to technology is needed as a catalyst for human rights (Christensen, 2011:244). However, these optimistic perspectives give way to critical thinking due to the attempts of the power to monitor and scrutinize the digital agora.

In her study on the implementation of cyber activism on social networking media, Afife İdil Akin refers to Morris and Zalewski's study which divides the use of the Internet and communication technologies into four classes. The first is the proliferation

of groups, the participation of members and the coordination of the activities of the movement; the second is to provide media content to groups who may be deprived of mainstream media content; the third is to create a virtual public space where participants can practice democracy; and lastly, the hacktivism movement which uses Internet technologies to manipulate or prevent them and even crash the system for political purposes (Akin, 2011:40).

The belief that social media is a new path for the development and expansion of democracy results from the excitement that each medium generates. Social networks carry messages which reflect that ‘another world is possible’, call in the global and local axis and raise awareness by giving an opportunity for quick and effective interaction among communities. Social networks enable the unrepresented to take part, spread their own agenda and proliferate by means of networks in a short time span. It helps them reach their political aims by overcoming geographical barriers and creating virtual public spaces. They are the media to which the opponent, the invisible, the unrepresented, the oppressed, the victim and those who have something to say, have relative access.

The online petition campaign, ‘I Apologize to the Armenians’ carried out in 2008, paves the way for the emergence of a new language in the Turkey-Armenia relation. Akin claims that this campaign was effective in the development of an individual and new language outside the genocide debates. She states that both Armenian and Turkish bloggers use the language of ‘pain’ and ‘empathy’ in their discussions on the events in 1915 and this has a repercussion on the contemporary relationship between Armenia and Turkey on a much larger scale (Akin, 2011:45). The Internet has played a facilitating role in the dissemination of and participation in this language. Online notifications and the messages of bloggers change the way in which a taboo subject is discussed (Akin, 2011:45). Thus, in his interviews with two activists of the ‘I Apologize to the Armenians’ campaign, Cengiz Alğan remarks that ‘raising awareness’ and ‘breaking taboos’ were the main purposes of the online petition campaign. The ‘Say Stop to Racism and Nationalism’ movement which deals with the ‘visibility’ of the campaign on the street stresses the importance of mobilization on the streets in addition to cyber activism. Şensever remarks that the examples in the world have created a vision in terms of collective action in Turkey and emphasizes the importance of the human dimension in cyber-activism: ‘It is not about whether technology is good or bad, but what is important is how we use it.’ (Şensever, personal interview, September 19, 2008). Durde states that they achieved their goal by making the events of 1915 debatable in the public space and that bringing this issue forth to the political and public spheres is a significant success. In fact, they attribute the high rate of participation in the commemoration activities on 24 April to this raised awareness. Despite the very deep hostility against Armenians in Turkish society, they consider making this subject ‘speakable’ a success. Even if it is a bit ambitious to express substantial success, they emphasize the symbolic value of the initiative. Şensever states: “In Turkey where nationalism is ‘exalted,’ for the first time a group has emerged to campaign against racism and nationalism in an institutional sense.” (Şensever and Alğan, personal interview, July 30, 2010).

On the other hand, the transformation of networks into surveillance networks due to increasing social media pressure by the authoritarian regimes and the witch-hunt launched by them justifies those who consider the cries of the Twitter-Facebook revolution to be utopian. Despite the unlimited glorification of the mass media in modernization theory, it was realized that states are not as passive and incapable in the face of the unlimitedness of technology as we have previously assumed. It is essential to investigate how this medium is used by the state. A new phase of communication activities and campaign organization has started with the Internet being involved in social movements. Filtering contents through Internet service providers, cooperating with Google on screening out search results related to banned topics, seizing website domain names, blocking websites on the basis of court orders and slowing down Internet connections are the precautions and sanctions used by states against political threats (Akin, 2011:42-43).

The Internet is considered a positive tool for the development of civil society in democratized societies, especially with regards to the channels it provides for freedom of expression. However, the Internet is also used as a monitoring tool. The notion of the 'panopticon' defined by Bentham in the 19th century and developed by Foucault can be adapted to the Internet age. China where contents and pictures are blocked and an Internet police-force has been established, North Korea, Myanmar and Iraq where the use of the Internet is illegalized constitute the main examples for this notion. The long lasting ban on YouTube in Turkey was lifted on October 30, 2010 and over 9000 websites were banned by the state (Akin, 2011:44).

### **THE CAT - MOUSE GAME IN SOCIAL MEDIA**

During the progress in which at first Facebook and then Twitter appeared, some observations were made regarding the effects of social platforms on transforming social life. Such that, authoritarian rulers who aimed at preventing protest movements resorted to a variety of censorship practices from slowing down the Internet to shutting down Internet service providers. After the Arab uprisings in North African and Middle Eastern countries, networks such as Twitter, Facebook, Youtube, blogs, mobile communications etc. started being defined as 'revolutionizing' media. The unique role of the social media in the formation of a large-scale domino effect in those geographical areas is scrutinized. Even though some groups think that the 'revolutionary effect' of social media is exaggerated, the message traffic in the social networking media raised an awareness in world public opinion. In fact, the messages sent to the social networking media were considered newsworthy during the crisis period and contributed to the formation of world public opinion. The reason why the new media team at the Al-Jazeera Television created a table mapping out the Twitter traffic in 5 countries was because they wanted to take the Twitter stream into account as a news source (Aljazeera, 2011). As a matter of fact, this stream sometimes results in extraordinary congestion. For example, after the resignation of Hosni Mubarak, Egyptian Secretary of State, the number of tweets increased hundredfold and the top 23 videos almost reached 5.5. million views (Çildan vd., 2012:7).

Although the Twitter performance of the dissidents in the Iranian elections affected the power relations, Morozov draws attention to the fact that these communication technologies are suppressed. The Berkman Center (Harvard University) prepared a report on the contribution of the effective use of social media in the transformation of a country. In their report they pointed out that policy-makers and academics overrated the effect of the Internet (Christensen, 2011:248). In addition, when the political economy of social networking media is taken into account, profit-centered approaches stand out apart from the demands for democracy. The system takes advantage of the popularity of the new medium it has commodified. J. Jones states that the stocks of Goldman Sachs and JP Morgan, that are the two largest shareholders of Facebook, increased from \$50 billion to \$75 billion during the first 3 months of 2011 (at the time of the North African uprisings) (Christensen, 2011:249). After these developments in the Arab world, Saudi Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal who also has shares in companies such as Apple, Time Warner, Citi Group, made \$300 million worth of investment in Twitter (Eyidilli, 2011).

In addition, sceptical writers such as Morozov and Gladwell, point to the low rates of Internet access in the areas where the uprisings broke out and argue that above social media, many socio-economic factors played a role in the uprisings. In addition, as historical facts reveal it is people who carry out revolutions not technology, they claim that it is necessary to approach the effect of social media in a more restrained manner. According to the Social Media Report in the Arab world, the penetration ratio of Facebook is 22.49 % in Tunisia while it is 7.66 % in Egypt. The penetration of Twitter in Tunisia is 0.34 % while it is 0.15 % in Egypt. According to these statistics, it is clear that a large part of the population is not able to connect to social networking media (Sabadello, 2011:2).

The communication infrastructure held by the government allows it to monitor, direct, slow down or completely shut down the Internet. In addition to censorship since the first day of the uprising in Tunisia, Youtube, Wikileaks, human rights websites and activist blogs were censored during the 2011 uprisings. What is more, the government committed a virtual plunder by stealing the Facebook account passwords of citizens and interfering with the contents. Egypt, on the other hand, chose to block the access to the Internet entirely. Eric Schmidt, Google's Executive Chairman, states that the democracy movements in the Arab world may cause the governments to impose heavier restrictions on the internet access (Ntvmsnbc, 2011). Nevertheless, Hani Morsi, an Egyptian blogger, believes that digital activism is a catalyst for social transformation. The blogger who took an active position in the '6 April Movement' and 'The Green Movement' in Iran made the following statement: 'activist movements which relied substantially on social media, namely Facebook and Twitter, to publicize their views, mobilize citizens, and also crucially to organize their activities.' (Khoury, 2011:82). Morsi emphasizes that the use of social networking media did not start due to the Arab uprisings. He states that social networking media was an instrument, both in physical and virtual environments, for the opponents to raise their voices on 25 January 2011 which he defines as a 'boiling point.' Digital activists are educated, (high) middle class, tech-savvy youngsters who move their anti-government struggle from the



physical environment to the virtual one. Even though, Morsi expresses that these individuals do not represent the majority of Egypt, he has an optimistic approach in his statement: 'this minority speaks for all of Egypt' (Khoury, 2011:83). Another blogger underlines that social networking media is an effective tool for the formation of networks:

Tools are just tools and without us, humans being social, sharing, listening and creating new information, then they are just tools. The motivation for the revolutions was political, social and economic not because we have Facebook and Twitter... These tools did help bring mainstream media attention to the issues and this helped dramatically as more and more people became involved and push the revolutions to the tipping point." (Khoury, 2011:84).

Bloggers who struggle in this region are made to pay a price. According to the December 2010 data of the 'Social Media in the Arab World' report, the numbers of bloggers who have been threatened, arrested and released by the regimes are 31 in Egypt, 23 in Tunisia, 16 in Syria, 5 in Lebanon and 6 in Saudi Arabia (Ghannam, 2011: 25-30).

Digital restrictions were not only imposed during the protest or uprising periods. Mutlu Binark expresses his concern about the filtering by the Information and Communication Technologies Authority which came into force due to the protests: 'It should be noted that the pattern of the mind behind these procedures and principles does not see its own citizens as individuals; being able to act on their behalf, it only sees its absolute authority and the righteousness of this absolute authority.' (Jurnal.net, 2011). Twitter also yields to this censoring mentality in time. In fact, Twitter's statement that it would censor some tweets caused protests in social media. In the company's statement made on its blog, it is announced that in the event of users sending tweets that are against the laws of their countries, they will be deleted from the system (VOA, 2012). Governments have started using the Internet for a witchhunt against the opponents. Although the performance of the opponents on Twitter during the Iranian elections makes an impression, Morozov emphasizes that these communication technologies are turning into pressure tools. Jon Leyne, BBC's Teheran correspondent, who draws attention to the ongoing virtual war between the power and the opposition emphasizes in his analysis on Iran that activism by means of social media knows no borders. Leyne who in his article exemplifies the spread of Hamid Dabashi's videos in Iran by means of the Internet makes a mention of the compelling campaign carried out in the virtual environment. Although it is clear that 19.000 Twitter users in Iran do not represent the total population of 80 million, the fact that it is used effectively by activist groups was enough to be considered a threat by the regime. However he also adds that the 'Revolutionary Guards' are in the preparation of a virtual army to suppress this environment (Hürriyet, 2010). As a matter of fact, Amnesty International has reported that Iranians who expressed their opinions via social networks during and after the elections were thrown into prison and tortured (Hoffmann ve Kornweitz, 2011:9). In fact, As a protection against this oppression, two American programmers have developed a programme called 'Haystack' that allows

users to defeat the censorship and surf the web anonymously. However, the software was withdrawn as it was not considered sufficiently secure and NGOs fighting for a free Internet have warned users about it (Çehreli, 2010).

Social networks can become the surveillance tool of the power. The Syrian government has adopted this practice originated in Iran and have started chasing down dissidents through social networking media. Hence, the reason behind the Syrian government's decision to allow access to Facebook, which was previously blocked, is a tactic used to locate the dissidents (Sabadello, 2011:5). Therefore, Morozov states that social media is rather more functional for the supporters of authoritarian regimes than the oppositional movements. However, the supportive contribution of the West causes alternative communication channels to be created against the government's censorship. For example, a Dutch Internet service provider assists in cases of shut-down Internet access. In spite of the fact that the connection provided is slower and more expensive, it enables Egyptians to write blogs and send emails. Google, on the other hand, enables voice messages left from certain phones to be transferred to Twitter using special software via its 'speaktweet2' service. They explain the reason behind this assistance as helping the Egyptians to make their voices heard 'in these difficult times' (Sabadello, 2011:8).

The political power uses social networks for its own political project as well as the dissidents. While China, famous for its censorship policies, blocks the access to millions of websites every year, micro-blogging services grow bigger. The great interest in local versions of social networking media sometimes makes surveillance difficult (Sabah, 2011). Previously in China, home product social networking media such as Sina Weibo and Renren (akin to Twitter and Facebook, respectively) were subjected to censorship due to anti-government content.

In this case, lack of widespread Internet access and the low number of activists among the ones who have access to the Internet pose a problem with regards to representation. For example, according to the results of 'Information Technologies Household Usage Research' carried out in April 2011 in Turkey, 42.9 % of the households in Turkey have access to the Internet (TÜİK, 2012). The main question is "How do people who have access to the Internet use it?" Content production-oriented active usage habits are not much sought after. For example, in Ipsos KGM's 'Internet Usage Habits' report (2011), it is stated that the least favorable activity with 18 % is 'to create a blog for oneself and write in one's blog.' On the other hand, 80% of Internet users visit social networking sites. The most visited websites are Google, Facebook and Youtube. Twitter ranks 24th with 9.5 %. Among the websites differentiated according to demographic age groups, people between the ages of 18 and 24 are the most frequent visitors of Facebook, Youtube, izlesene, dailymotion, Twitter and eksisozluk respectively. (İpsos KGM, 2011:7) The table below presents the ratio of the social networking media people subscribe to and social networking media people regularly use in Turkey (İpsos KGM, 2011:11). Although Turkey is considered one of the advantageous countries in terms of the rate of connection to social networking media, when looking at the Socialbreakers data, the most visited social

networking media are the ones which contain popular subjects (fans, sports, games) and entertainment contents.

**Table 1:** Social Networking Media Subscribed and Usage Rate

	Üye Olunan Sosyal Ağlar	Düzenli Kullanılan Sosyal Ağlar
Genel	79,6	65,4
Facebook	94,4	78,3
Windows Live Spaces / MSN Spaces	23,9	14,0
Twitter	11,9	5,6
Netlog	3,7	1,2
Myspace	3,5	1,3
Badoo	2,9	0,9
Hi5	2,2	0,7
Friendfeed	1,0	0,7
Bebo	0,9	0,8
Linked-in	0,7	0,5
Last.fm	0,6	0,5
Flickr	0,6	0,6
Orkut	0,6	0,4
Foursquare	0,5	0,5
XING	0,5	0,5

**Source:** Internet Usage Habits Report İpsos KGM, 2011.

Although the revolutionary role laid upon the mass media is a frequently encountered situation in the history of communication, no medium, due to its structure, has ever been so convenient for social movements and activism. Social networking media, which allows individuals to communicate in oppositional agendas and grow by networking within the built protest ecology, has brought innovations to the organizational structure and the language of activism. These networks, that can form cooperations beyond borders, are able to bring local issues onto the global platform.

The way in which social networks are used by activists emphasizes the human factor which determines how technology is used. Social networks are sometimes used for notification purposes and sometimes for protest purposes. In general, the purpose of raising awareness rather than revolution is stressed in campaigns carried out and massified on the Internet. Each protest space has its own characteristics. The struggle for rights carried out by means of digital activism is sometimes able to find an alternative way despite the fact that it faces strong reactions from the regimes. Therefore, in addition to the censorship policy, the aim of the witch-hunt governments start in the virtual environment is to be more deterrent to digital activism. In addition, the censorship systems internally developed by Google and Twitter lend assistance to the power. Moreover, the fact that social activism carried out through social networking media in Iran and the Arab countries has a narrow-scoped representation, point to the reality of a digital gap. The ownership structure which profits from the popular use of social networking media indicates that activism has also become commodified.

The fact that social networks mediate a revolution and contain revolutionary powers does not mean that they carry out a revolution on their own. Technology changes the ways in which the opposition is made but the proliferation of activism seems possible only if policies are detached from the censorship mentality and are implemented through the catalization of human rights and only if user habits are politicized.

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