Social media: Instigating factor or appropriated tool?

Assessing the level of agency ascribed to the use of social media for the organization and coordination of the 25th January Revolution in Egypt

Master thesis

Author: Ardan Kockelkoren
Student number: S4159519
University: Radboud University Nijmegen
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Supervisors

dr. H.W. Bomert

and

dr. G.M. Millar

<u>Abstract</u>

This research addresses the perceived importance of the use of social media for the organization of the 25th of January, 2011, revolution in Egypt. Individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews and face-to-face collected written surveys were the main research methods used to acquire the research data.

This research shows that there is a relationship between the use of social media and the way in which the revolution has unfolded in Egypt. Social media is perceived to have made the revolutionary process unfold in a faster pace and the initial organization and coordination trough the social media platforms have made the revolution a leaderless revolution.

Social media played a significant role but it should not be seen as an instigating factor, however. The role that the social media platforms played, must be seen in a wider framework of interdependent processes and factors that are also perceived as important to the unfolding of the revolutionary process by the Egyptian people.

Significant differences have been found between different population groups in how important they perceive the use of social media for the organization of the revolution. Egyptians with an university degree, who have an internet connection at home and who have a Facebook account, find the use of social media significantly more important for the organization of the revolution in Egypt than others.

The people using social media perceive the use of social media as more important because they were more aware of how the use of these platforms contributed to the revolution. In addition, those people who didn't use social media often perceive the use of social media as less important because they didn't need the platforms to communicate and organize.

The agency of the revolution lies with the Egyptian people, who transformed the social media platforms, that are designed for slacktivistic activities, into a tool used by the activists for political purposes.

The news organizations represented the revolution in Egypt as a 'Facebook revolution' because these organizations often retrieved their own information from social media, because it was catchy, because it was an easy story to transfer to the audience and because it overshadows the Western historical role in supporting the oppressive regime.

Samenvatting

Dit onderzoek richt zich op de vraag hoe belangrijk het gebruik van sociale media ervaren wordt voor het organiseren van de Egyptische revolutie van 2011. Om de benodigde data te verzamelen voor dit onderzoek zijn semigestructureerde diepte-interviews gedaan. Ook zijn er enquêtes verzameld.

Dit onderzoek toont aan dat er een verband bestaan tussen het gebruik van sociale media en de manier waarop de revolutie in Egypte zich heeft voltrokken. Het gebruik van sociale media heeft ervoor gezorgd dat de revolutie zich sneller heeft voltrokken. Door gebruik te maken van sociale media voor de organisatie en coördinatie wordt de revolutie gezien als een revolutie zonder leider.

De sociale media speelden een significante rol, maar sociale media moeten niet gezien worden als een initiërende factor. De rol van sociale media in de revolutie moet gezien worden in een breder raamwerk van onderling afhankelijk processen en factoren die als belangrijk ervaren worden door de Egyptenaren voor het verloop van de revolutie.

Er zijn significante verschillen aangetoond tussen verschillende bevolkingsgroepen, in het belang dat zij toeschrijven aan het gebruik van sociale media voor de organisatie van de revolutie. Egyptenaren met een universitair diploma, die thuis internettoegang hebben en die een Facebook-account hebben, schatten het belang van het gebruik van sociale media hoger in dan anderen.

De mensen die sociale media gebruiken schatten het belang van sociale media hoger in, omdat zij zich bewuster zijn van de manier waarop het gebruik van sociale media heeft bijgedragen aan de organisatie van de revolutie. Bovendien ervaren mensen die geen sociale media gebruiken het gebruik ervan als minder belangrijk, omdat zij zelf deze manier van communiceren niet nodig hadden om met elkaar te kunnen communiceren en zich te organiseren.

Het organiserend vermogen voor de revolutie ligt bij de Egyptenaren, die de sociale mediaplatformen, die zijn ontworpen voor vrijetijdsbesteding, naar hun hand hebben gezet en hebben gebruikt voor politieke doeleinden.

De nieuwsorganisaties representeerden de revolutie in Egypte als een 'Facebook revolutie', omdat deze organisaties sociale media als een bron gebruikten, omdat het interessant en boeiend klinkt, omdat dit verhaal makkelijk over te brengen was naar het publiek en omdat men hierdoor niet hoeft stil te staan bij de rol van het Westen in het steunen van Mubarak's regime.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Egypt became a republic in 1952 when the pro-British monarchy was overthrown (Saikal, 2011). It has since then been ruled by presidents with military backgrounds, who relied on the armed forces as their ultimate power base (Karawan 2011:44). Muhammad Hosni Sayyid Mubarak was the last in row of these presidents and has ruled over Egypt for three decades. During his years in power Mubarak has strengthened the authoritarian system of the "bureaucratic security governance", instead of providing a better and gentler political system (Saikal, 2011). The government didn't provide the basic services and seemed to be indifferent to widespread unemployment and poverty. Tens of millions of Egyptians felt alienated because of the government's inability to provide prosperity. This feeling was exacerbated by the "growing conspicuous consumption among a business elite connected to Mubarak's son Gamal" (Anderson, 2011:4). An Emergency Law was enforced since 1981, which restricted many basic rights and made it possible to prosecute civilians before military tribunals (Human Rights Watch, 2011). Ordinary Egyptians were tired of the lack of the most basic services, of the pervasive corruption and the lack of opportunities (Khalil, 2011).

In December 2010 and January 2011, groups of young activists led by the 'We are all Khaled Said' group and the '6th of April movement', issued a call on social media and websites for a 'Day of rage' for the 25th of January (Khalil, 2011). In Cairo and Alexandria 30,000 people showed up for the organized marches (Tudoroiu, 2011). Three days later, on January 28, hundreds of thousands of Egyptians demonstrated against the regime. In more than a dozen places clashes took place between protesters and the riot police, leaving scores dead and thousands wounded (Tudoroiu, 2011). More and more people were triggered by the violence and the upheaval to join the protests. On February 1, the Tahrir Square became overcrowded by almost half a million people. In Alexandria a 100,000 people showed up to protest (Tudoroiu, 2011). Mubarak decided to make concessions because of the protests and declared that he would not run in the next elections and that he would oversee an orderly transition (Financial Times, February 1, 2011, as quoted in Tudoriou, 2011). This wasn't enough for the protestors. The army refused to shoot at the protestors and on February 11, 2011, the president decided to step down (Hellyer, 2011).

After the resignation of president Hosni Mubarak, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) assumed power (Karawan 2011). The authoritarian regime fell under the combined pressure of democratic and Islamic opponents.

1.2 Problem description

The relationship between the Egyptian protests and the use of new media technologies was soon noted, particularly in the early days of the protests. 'Facebook revolution', 'Twitter revolution', 'digital revolution' and 'electronic revolution', are terms that have been used to describe the 2011 Egyptian revolution (Hamamsy, 2011:454). Also within Egypt people were talking about the importance of social media. A joke was circulating in Egypt after the resignation of President Mubarak which epitomizes the believe in the influence of social media:

Hosni Mubarak, Anwar Sadat, and Gamal Abdel Nasser are having tea in the afterlife. Mubarak asks Nasser, "How did you end up here?". "Poison," Nasser answers. Mubarak then turns to Sadat. "What about you?," he asks. "An assassin's bullet," Sadat says. Sadat and Nasser then turn to Mubarak, "And you?". To which Mubarak replies: "Facebook."

Although the joke maybe amusing, more critical voices also soon entered the playing field. On February 5, 2011, even before Mubarak stepped down, *De Volkskrant*, a renowned Dutch newspaper, published an article titled "De Twitterrevolutie is een illusie" ("The Twitter revolution is an illusion"). John B. Alterman, chair in Global Security and Geostrategy and the director of the Middle East Program for the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), soon published an article titled "The Revolution Will Not Be Tweeted" (2011), in which he criticizes the enthusiasm with which newspapers and other authors are representing the 'Facebook revolution' narrative.

No consensus has been reached yet on the importance of the use of social media for the organization of the revolution in Egypt. Opinions about the importance of social media still differ within Egypt and outside Egypt, in both newspapers and in the scientific domain. There is thus a need for more understanding of what role social media has played as it comes to the organization and coordination of the 25th of January Revolution in Egypt. The next paragraph will elaborate on the goals of this research.

1.3 Research objectives

This research project aims to provide knowledge, insight and information that contribute to understanding the role of social media in the Egyptian revolution. Therefore a set of research objectives has been formulated. First, this research aims to determine in what ways social media contributed to the organization and coordination of the protests in Egypt. It is thus important to identify how these platforms were used, by who, and with what goals.

Secondly, by solely focusing on the use of social media its contribution can only be understood as either important or unimportant. To establish its relative importance the goal of this research is to place the role and the impact of the use of social media platforms in a wider framework of processes and factors that have contributed to the revolutionary process.

There are differences, however, in the perceived importance of social media, as stated in the previous problem description section. The third objective of this research, therefore, is to determine if there are differences in opinion in Egyptian society on the importance of the use of social media and if so, how these differences can be explained. What processes and factors can be identified that are responsible for the differences in the perceived importance of these platforms?

To study these research objectives, a set of research questions has been formulated which will be presented in the next paragraph.

1.4 Research questions

To contribute to existing research on the use of social media and to study the research objectives formulated in the previous paragraph, this research will investigate the following main research question:

- What do people in Egypt think was the influence of social media on the Egyptian revolution of January 2011?

Before answering this main research question, a set of sub-questions will be answered, each in its own chapter. The answers and conclusions to the sub-questions will shed light on the main research question, giving a better understanding of the context of the Egyptian revolution and the influence of social media in the revolution. The following sub-questions will be answered in this research:

1. How did social media affect the revolutionary process in Egypt?
2. What do people in Cairo think were other contributing factors to the January 2011 revolution and how do they rate the importance of these factors compared to the influence of the social media?
3. Are there differences between different population groups in their opinion about the agency of social media?
4. What explanations can be given for the coexisting of different narratives about the importance of the use of social media for the organization of the revolution?

The social and scientific relevance of these questions and this research project in general will be explained in the next paragraph.

1.5 Research relevance

With the communication globalization of the past decennium, we have seen a boom of the use of social media in the connected part of the world. Some of the social media platforms, such as Facebook, now have more active members than most individual countries (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2002). The protest movements of today are utilizing these new media technologies like never before. The civil unrest across the Middle East took the world by surprise, possibly due to digital activism (Filiu, 2011). The social relevance of this research project becomes clear when one looks at the importance the media but also other sources ascribe to the use of social media. A travel guide on Egypt by a known Dutch firm, *the ANWB*, labeled a paragraph in the history section, "De Facebookrevolutie" ("The Facebook Revolution") (ANWB, 2011). Social media and new media technology are given a lot of credit and are hyped as promoting political change in countries with repressive regimes (Alterman, 2011).

Media Cloud is an organization that examines what media sources cover which stories, what language different media outlets use in combination with different stories, and how stories spread from one media outlet to another (Kerkhof, 2011). A word count of the words most used in the 25 most popular media channels of the United States during the first week of the Egyptian protests, shows that the words 'Facebook', 'Twitter' and 'internet' were used 1,186 times (Kerkhof, 2011). The importance the media ascribes to the use of social media in the Libyan, Tunisian, and Egyptian Uprisings shows the currency of this research project. These events raise an important question of how political activism is changing and in what manner social media assisted these movements. Therefore, it is vital to study and understand the role and the possible impact of the new social media on revolutionary change.

Because of the represented importance of social media some scientists state that today's revolutions require digital tools as these tools facilitate mass organizing, coordination, encourage demonstrations and the mobilization of groups, bypassing the traditional state control of the media (Morozov, 2011). While in some countries the revolutionary movements, during the Arab Spring, have managed to overthrow their governments, in other instances, such as in Syria, the old regime is still in power. It is therefore important to understand to what extent the use of social media can empower citizens and to what extent the regimes can benefit from blocking and monitoring these platforms as well. Studying the use of social media helps to understand the organizational process needed to create political change under repressive authoritarian governments. In addition, examining the use of social media can offer insights in how governments may possibly re-strategize

domestic and foreign policies depending on whether or not the new social media threatens their rule.

Although news articles and research papers have been published on the use of social media in the Egyptian revolution over the past two years, the full extent of the implications of the use of social media in revolutionary movements is somewhat lagging behind, because of the rapid development and the fast pace of technological change. Most of the published scientific publications have focused on 'how' social media influenced the revolutionary process in Egypt and on why the use of social media has changed the way revolutions and protests take place. The Tahrir Data Project is the largest and best-known data-set on the use of social media in Egypt ("The Tahrir Data Project", 2013). The research used a snowball sampling technique among activists and people who participated in the protests. The survey "asked participants about their use (of social media) during the protest, how they used these media platforms, which media they found most useful, reliable and informative, and how censorship affected their media use" ("The Tahrir Data Project", 2013). Although the conclusions based on this data set, such as published by Wilson & Dunn (2011) in "Digital Media in the Egyptian Revolution: Descriptive Analysis from the Tahrir Data Set" and by Tufekci (2011) in "From Tehran to Tahrir: Social Media and Dynamics of Collective Action under Authoritarian Regimes," are very interesting and contribute to an understanding of the use of social media within the Egyptian revolution, they mainly provide an understanding of in what way social media has been used.

Instead of researching in what way social media influenced the revolution, this project places social media in a wider historical context and in a broader structure of interdependent processes in Egyptian society. Was the use of social media in the Egyptian revolution of such an importance compared to other factors and processes that it is justifiable to name the country's political uprising after the name of a social networking site? It seems relevant to examine how important the Egyptian people found the use of social media compared to other relevant factors and processes. In this way, this project tries to accomplish the task of contributing to existing research about the place new technologies take in the arrangement and empowerment of groups within society.

1.6 Scope and limitation

Cairo has been chosen as the location of this study, because Cairo is the capital and also the largest city in the country. Alexandria, the second largest city, has a little more than half the number of inhabitants Cairo has. The protests have been the most intense in Cairo, where on February 1, 2011, an estimated one million people were demonstrating, while in Alexandria 'only' a 100,000 people had

shown up (Tudoroiu, 2011:380). Cairo is the city where the government is seated at which the protesters were aiming their discontent. 'The Mugamma', one of the largest government office buildings, is located at the Tahrir Square in Cairo, giving the place a symbolic significance as the center of the revolution. The place that has received the most attention in the media and in scientific articles is surely the Tahrir Square (Alterman, 2011; Kerkhof, 2012; Tudoroiu, 2011), located in the center of Cairo.

A time-domain has also been chosen to limit the collection of data. This research focuses on the societal relevant factors for the revolution from a decade before the revolution until the moment Mubarak stepped down. Limiting the scope of this research to the moment Mubarak stepped down, provides this research with more rich in-depth data on the process and relevant tendencies for the organization and coordination of the protest, instead of on the political turmoil that came after the revolution.

1.7 Thesis outline

This paragraph will elaborate on the structure of this thesis. After the introduction, the theoretical framework will introduce the main concepts and theories used in this research. Chapter 3 deals with the methods used to acquire the research data. Chapter 4 elaborates on the unfolding of the protests to give an understanding of the processes during the revolutionary days. Chapter 5 will answer the question how the use of social media influenced the revolution. Chapter 6 puts the use of social media in a wider framework of interdependent processes and factors that were important in the revolution. Statistical tests show that different population groups in Egypt perceive the importance of social media differently, which is the topic of Chapter 7. Chapter 8 elaborates on the explanations that can be given for the differences in opinion about the level of agency that must be ascribed to the use of social media. Chapter 9 presents the conclusion to the main research question. Chapter 10 discusses the results from this research and formulates new future research topics. Chapter 11 provides some insights into the Egyptian society after the revolution. After this Chapter comes the references section and the appendix.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Introduction

The main concepts and theories that are used in the research are introduced in the theoretical framework. The first section discusses the main concepts of media, new media, digital media and social media. A theoretical overview follows on the emergence of new media technologies and the different views on how the emergence of these new media technologies affect societies. The last section of this chapter deals with the implications of these different ways of thinking about media technologies when analysing the Egyptian revolution of 2011.

2.2 Media concepts

According to social science scholars, the changes that have been taking place in the field of media and public communications in the late 20th and early 21st century have had a huge impact on human communication, as significant as the introduction of television (MacNamara, 2011). These changes affect political communication, public relations, advertising, journalism and media institutions, but also individual social and cultural capital (MacNamara, 2011).

To understand these processes in society, the terms used in this field must be understood more properly as there is a tangled web of terminology in relation to media. Just the term 'media' has various interpretations. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary (2013) a medium is "something in a middle position or a means of effecting or conveying something" (Merriam-Webster dictionary, 2013). The term 'the media' though, is often used to refer to television, radio, magazines and newspapers (Couldy, 2003, in: MacNamara, 2011). Nevertheless, many media scholars argue that media are more than this.

For this research the following definition of media has been used: "Socially realized structures of communication, where structures include both technological forms and their associated protocols, and where communication is a cultural practice, a ritualized collocation of different people on the same mental map, sharing or engaged with particular anthologies of representation" (Gitelman, 2008:7, as quoted in: MacNamara, 2011:29). This definition by Lisa Gitelman has been used in this research, as it is a widely used definition in media research (MacNamara, 2011) and because it is a comprehensive definition of the term. The definition shows that the term media has as much to do with the cultural practices that form around media as with the technologies themselves.

For the new forms of communicating which emerged in the late 20th and early 21st century the terms new media, digital media and social media are often used in substitution of each other, while they have

very different meanings. First, the term 'new media' will be looked at.

According to Lievrouw & Livingstone (2002), scientists are often quick to emphasize the newness and the change that every new form of communication technology will bring to society. Digital media is often mixed with the words new media, but to what extent is digital media still new? "Digital media technologies are now so pervasive in our work, our home lives, and the myriad everyday interactions we have with each other as well as with social institutions, that they are ceasing to be new in any meaningful sense of the term" (Flew, 2008:2, as quoted in: MacNamara, 2011:19). Although Facebook and YouTube were only established in 2004 and 2005 respectively, online chat has celebrated its 30th anniversary and blogs have existed for 15 years (MacNamara, 2011:20). These internet media are hardly new. Illustrating the relative and time-bound nature of the term 'new media', Gitelman points out that "All media were once new" (Gitelman, 2007:1, as quoted in: MacNamara, 2011:19).

The term 'digital media' then can best be explained with comparing the word 'digital' with the word 'press'. A document can either be digitally released or press released. The word digital media thus places emphasis on the method of production (MacNamara, 201:18).

The last term often used as a substitute for digital media or new media is the term 'social media'. Social media and social networks are ambiguous terms as well. The term 'social' suggests that the networks or media are mainly used for socializing, leisure activities and entertainment (MacNamara, 2011:28). It is thus the type of interaction that is emphasized with the word 'social'. The term 'social media' will be mostly used in this research. According to some, it were the social media platforms that have been used, in a political way instead of social way, which helped citizens to politically organize (Papacharissi, 2011:118).

The next paragraph deals with the influence these media platforms have on societies.

2.3 Influence on societies

The emphasis of many studies on new media is often on the diversity of the messages and on the interconnected social and technical networks (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2002). The change from an orderly landscape characterized by mass society into an emerging society of dynamic relations through networks is often noted (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2002). Heinrich (2011) states in his *Network Journalism: Journalistic Practice in Interactive Spheres,* that our information societies have witnessed the emergence of a new communication model, no longer based on the idea of the mass but on one of the network. He states that "A 'network' character of

communication is taking shape based on a 'network' structure in which decentralization and nonlinearity are the key parameters defining the communication flows at the beginning of the twenty-first century" (Heinrich, 2011:2). The communication model of our contemporary society is shaped by the globalization of communication, together with the networked interconnection of mass and interpersonal media, in what Manuel Castells (2011) describes as self-mass communication.

MacNamara (2011) states that these new ways of communicating allow for "increasingly widespread connectivity trough open networks that allow people formerly confined to audiences to become producers as well as consumers resulting in creativity, diversity and plurality in content, and facilitating interactivity including two-way human-to-human interaction, collaboration with others to pool and share ideas and intellectual property and engage in co-creativity, community building, and communication trough conversation and dialogue between the interaction of people" (MacNamara, 2011:28). The user isn't just receiving information but becomes a transmitter of information as well. Ordinary citizens are becoming key players in the knowledge networks which increasingly define both social power and economic productivity (Papacharissi, 2011:118).

The meaning of cultures and societies are produced and reproduced by the people using these media systems (Jensen, 2010:84). Howard (2011) also underlines the influence of the media on society. He states that media have an impact on almost all domains of social life. "The digital media have transformed whole cultural industries and even the way we compose our identity" (Howard, 2011:67).

Shirky also emphasizes the importance of new ways of communicating. In his *Here comes everybody* (2008) and *Cognitive Surplus* (2010) as well as in his article "The Political Power of Social Media" (2011), he argues that social media are new tools which enable new forms of group formation. According to Shirky (2008), communication becomes faster and the new tools make our lives easier by increasing the speed of group action as more and more people adopt these social media tools. These tools make group-forming much easier than before, creating an explosion of new groups and new kinds of groups (Shirky, 2008). Shirky (2008) states that new efficient ways of coordinating a group of people have been created by the lowered transaction costs of information.

Manuel Castells already predicted in his 2009 book *Communication Power* that social media would take a crucial role in future public protests (Castells 2009, as quoted in: Kerkhof 2012:20). Arquila & Ronfeldt (2001) also emphasize the role of the network in future protests and propose the theory of 'the Netwar' in their book *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime, and Militancy*. The 'Netwar theory' describes a new spectrum of conflict that is

emerging in the wake of the information revolution. "The network appears to be the next major form of organization - long after tribes, hierarchies and markets - to come into its own to redefine societies, and in so doing, the nature of conflict and cooperation" (Arquila & Ronfeldt 2011:311).

According to others, however, there are many other factors that shape society. Dahlgren (2009:3) claims that it would be foolish to lapse into media-centrism and reduce everything simply to the workings of the media. MacNamara (2010) also finds such a way of interpreting media technology misleadingly reductionist. He refers to Elizabeth Einstein (1983) who claimed that the printing press led to the Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation, to exemplify the extreme technological determinist viewpoint some researchers have taken in the past.

Marshall McLuhan's theories are also often mentioned in research about new media developments. McLuhan (1962) suggested in an argumentation about the change that new technologies bring, that new technology forms such as the printing press, influence the way people represent reality. With every new medium or new way of communicating the importance is emphasized, proposing a new era in which people will represent reality differently than before (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2002).

MacNamara (2010) thinks such theories about new media forms reduce the range of possible influences to a single alleged cause. "Social change usually involves a complex web of forces and counter-forces" (MacNamara, 2010:96). Morozov, in his *The Net Delusion* (2011), also attacks the idea that the use of social media and the spread of information will automatically translate into more collective action. Morozov (2011) points to the fact that with these new ways of communicating, repressive regimes are also given new tools to monitor and repress its populations trough the new media platforms, posing serious risks for activists. He also criticizes the discourse voiced by the optimistic authors of the many new media publications. Morozov (2011) states that it is not likely that "the people who, oppressed by years of authoritarian rule, will inevitably rebel, mobilizing themselves through text messages, Facebook, Twitter, and whatever tool comes along next year" (Morozov, 2011:xiii).

Furthermore, some argue that a strong relationship between strong and courageous people and a particular strict organization is a necessity to organize protest and certainly for a perilous protest under an authoritarian regime (Kerkhof, 2012:20). The people on the social media platforms often use the platforms for leisure activities and entertainment purposes such as sharing pictures and 'liking' pages (MacNamara, 2011:22). The term 'slacktivism', or activism for slackers, is often mentioned in this context (Kerkhof, 2012:20). Morozov (2011) states that slacktivism is a way of

activism that has no political impact while it gives the user a good feeling. It creates the illusion of having a meaningful impact, while the user only clicks a button on a screen. The connections between people who encounter each other on social media often aren't strong enough to provoke people to take high-stakes action (Kerkhof, 2011:21). "While we are still struggling to understand the relevance of virtual ties for real ties, we haven't even begun to grapple with the ways in which virtual ties can provoke people to take high-stakes action, if they can do so at all, and surely taking to the streets against a repressive authoritarian regime is a high-stakes gambit" (Alterman, 2011:105).

So, while many authors emphasize the importance of social media and new ways of communicating to society (Papacharissi, 2011; Jensen, 2010) and the way in which protests, wars and revolutions will take place (Castells, 2011; Arquila & Ronfeldt, 2002), others think that too much is reduced to the workings of media (Dalhgren, 2009) and question whether it is inevitable that social media makes people rebel by mobilizing themselves through these platforms (Morozov, 2011). While some put emphasis on how the new technological infrastructure of social media platforms change the behavior of people and the structure of society, others emphasize that the design and the use of social media networks is influenced by the way in which these platforms are appropriated by societies (Dijk, 1999:142). These two different viewpoints about the use of new media are to be seen as two ends of a spectrum. MacNamara (2010) sees a social constructivist view, which deprives technology of any agency, as a counter to crude reductionist technological determinism. Social constructivism and McLuhan's technological determinism are on both ends of the spectrum (MacNamara, 2010:96). Sometimes technologies frame human behavior and other times humans appropriate technology for their own purposes.

This theoretical framework is used because, when it is applied to the Egyptian case, it shows the base of why people perceive the use of social media either as an instigating factor or as an appropriated tool. The difference between the two ends of the explained domain are expressed in the level of agency that followers ascribe to the use of social media in the emergence and organization of the protests in Egypt. This will be more fully explained in the next paragraph.

2.4 Implications for the Egyptian case

Soon after President Mubarak had stepped down, a debate started whether social media instigated Egypt's revolution of 2011 or, on the other hand, if they were simply used within it by the protesters. Followers of the first theory think that Twitter and Facebook had become engines of political change that upended decades of Arab authoritarianism (Alterman, 2011). Social networks are

framed by some as constituting the major power behind the protests, instigating the Egyptian Revolution of January 2011 (Papacharissi, 2011:118). They put emphasis on the fact that Facebook was a place to exchange ideas and to express personal discontent (Verma, 2011) and claim that the social networks were the primary factor that enhanced the ability of activists to channel popular anger via user generated content (Suarez, 2011:31). Through these networks public discontent would thus have been transformed and changed into protest movements (Kerkhof, 2012:20). According to Filiu (2011:56), these platforms were crucial in nurturing a community feeling of shared grief and aspirations and helped many in the audience to become activists, stimulating them to protest on the streets.

Although the view that social media instigated the revolution in Egypt has many followers, some think this narrative is a technological determinist view of the situation which takes the agency away from the Egyptian people (Alterman, 2011).

According to Alterman (2011) the role that the use of social media played in starting and fueling the Egyptian revolution of 2011 has been overemphasized by international press reporting (Alterman, 2011:105). He states that this take on the organization of the revolution was almost immediately contested by research by more sober analysts and he questions its value in explaining the emergence of the protests (Alterman, 2011). Alterman (2011) thinks that the emergence of social media and the Egyptian revolution are two simultaneous developments. Hamamsy (2011) shares this view and states: "Though publicized online, demonstrations and revolutions do not take place in cyberspace, are not populated by bots, and the blood of martyrs spilled is not virtual" (Hamamsy, 2011:455).

The fact that activists often used new tools such as Facebook, does not mean that this is the most important factor in the emergence and progress of the protests. Kerkhof (2012) questions other authors' claims regarding the causal connection between social media and mass protests. According to him, Facebook and Twitter are just places revolutionaries go (Kerkhof, 2012:22). The causality between these two events is not yet proven and is only suggested by journalists in the media (Kerkhof, 2012:22). Scientists who subscribe to this vision think that the claim that social media instigated the revolution in Egypt is not based on scientific research or proven by facts. This narrative would be a more social constructionist view.

The next Chapter deals with the appropriated methods to distinguish what take on the level of agency ascribed to the use of social media is most accurate according to the Egyptian citizens.

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This Chapter elaborates on the data collection methods. First, the decision to use a mixed methods strategy is explained. After this paragraph, light is shed on the collection of the individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews and the face-to-face collected written surveys. The last three sections of this Chapter deal with the data analysis methods, the strategies used to answer the research questions, and a reflection on the used methodology.

3.2 Mixed methods

This research combines data acquired through secondary literature and through primary data collection methods. For the primary data collection, this research appropriated both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Many researchers see themselves either as quantitative or as qualitative researchers. This limits researchers in their potential to build holistic understandings (O'Leary, 2010:105). O'Leary (2010:104) thinks it is "much more useful to see the terms quantitative and qualitative as simply adjectives for types of data and their corresponding modes of analysis". More and more qualitative researchers accept the power of numbers and recognize that they can be capitalized on, even given the underlying assumptions of the qualitative tradition.

One of the research designs that stems from this tradition is the ethnographic study that embeds a small community survey (O'Leary, 2010:129). Such research is also sometimes called question driven research (O'Leary, 2011:129). This position involves putting questions before paradigm and premises neither the quantitative nor the qualitative tradition. It simply asks what strategies are most likely to get the credible data needed to answer the research questions and sees value in adopting whatever array of strategies necessary to accomplish the task, regardless of paradigm (O'Leary, 2010:129).

The goal is to see the events the way the people in Cairo do, and grasp the meanings they use to understand and make sense of their world (O'Leary, 2011:115). The research questions are answered by evaluating the event as it is experienced by the people living in Cairo. In this research I was interested in their experiences, behavior, opinions, ideas and perceptions, but also in the bare facts, such as age, education and area of residence (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010:207). Individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews and face-to-face collected written surveys were therefore the research methods used to acquire the data necessary to answer the research questions (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010:221).

3.3 Interviews

To identify respondents for the in-depth interviews, most of the interviewees were identified using handpicked sampling by sending open interview invitations and directly approaching the interviewees (O'Leary, 2010:170). The interviewees were sampled with the goal to get more grip on the local situation and to acquire more information about the subject at hand. According to O'Leary (2010): "Key informants can be called upon by researchers to build their own contextual knowledge" (O'Leary, 2010:171). The interviewees which were approached first, were people working at the local Universities: The American University in Cairo and the German University in Cairo. Other interviewees have been sampled because of their high status on social media, because of their involvement with grass-roots activists groups or because of their knowledge of Egyptian politics or the use of social media in the Egyptian society. The so-called snowball sampling method was used to identify new possible interview subjects (O'Leary, 2010:170).

Once an initial respondent was approached, he or she was asked to identify others who met the research criteria (O'Leary, 2010:170). Nevertheless, this way of sampling didn't always provide useful new respondents as some of these new possible respondents were unwilling to cooperate or didn't have the background knowledge or experience to contribute to this research. A complete listing of all the interview respondents is added in the appendix. Four of the sixteen interviewees have a non-Egyptian background. These respondents were chosen because of their knowledge, background and experience in the Egyptian revolution. Their presence in the data could create some bias. Nevertheless, this bias seems negligible as these respondents have shown great understanding of the local situation and their views didn't deviate from the other interviewees. Some background information on the interview respondents is provided in the appendix, to give an idea why these respondents were useful to this research.

The interviews took the form of individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Compared to the surveys, these interviews were characterized by a less pre-structured design and an open but formal style of questioning. A question list was made up as a guideline, but the researcher freely interacted with the interviewees after the interviewees had been given the time to give their own interpretation of the questions (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010:221). The interview question list is added in the appendix. The interviews were taken at a place which seemed convenient for the interviewee. In this way they were in control of the process. This could be their office but also a local café where they felt free to talk. All the interviews have been recorded and notes were taken as well.

3.4 Survey

In addition to the interview data a survey was taken as a data collection method. "Surveys can generate standardized, quantifiable, empirical data, enables you to show statistical significance, and allows you to mathematically establish reliability, validity and generalizability" (O'Leary, 2010:113). A sample strategy was needed in order to be able to draw statistically significant conclusions about the population of Cairo (O'Leary, 2010:113). Although random assignment may not always be possible in field situations (O'Leary, 2010:109), it has to be tried to acquire a sample that is as close as possible to this theoretical optimum. When working with quantitative data, the basic rule of thumb is to attempt to get a sample that is as large as possible, given time and expense constraints (O'Leary, 2010:164). The larger the sample size, the more likely it is to be representative and generalizable.

With the boundaries of time and money for this research, there had to be some tradeoff between the collection of rich, in-depth qualitative data, acquired through the interviews, and the level of statistical analysis possible because of the sample size of the survey (O'Leary, 2010:165). Although a larger sample size was originally aimed for, in the end 75 questionnaires have been collected. This is not a large enough sample size to do more complex tests. But, according to O'Leary (2010:164), a minimum of about thirty respondents is required for the most basic statistical analysis. This will be more fully elaborated upon in the reflection paragraph of this chapter.

Survey respondents have been sampled using a so-called standard multi-stage geographical cluster sampling procedure. In each household chosen through this sampling procedure one adult has been interviewed. If a particular chosen household was unoccupied, the first household on the left has been included in the sample.

There were some difficulties when trying to identify specific addresses to collect the questionnaires from, as there is no official list of neighborhoods or streets in Cairo. In addition, only the east side of the Nile is officially called Cairo. The West side area is called Giza, which is an independent governorate. Some neighborhoods on the Northern edge of Cairo are also formally placed in another governorate called Qaliubeiah.

In order to make geographical clusters, a map has been used from which the area within the ring road was cut-out. The ring road was chosen as a limiting factor because there is no other clear boundary of the greater Cairo district. The section within the ring road was divided into smaller sections. These sections were cut out and labeled on the back. The sections were then picked randomly one by one. In the middle of every selected section, a point was made. From

this point the first crossroads South-West of the point was picked and from this crossroads the street that is moving nearest to North to North-East was identified. From the selected street every fourth building was sampled and if this building was an apartment building, the apartment with the lowest number on the second floor was selected. From every section between seven and fifteen questionnaires were taken.

The questionnaires were filled in, in a face-to-face meeting with the respondents. The survey had the format of a pre-structured questionnaire with closed questions and pre-formulated answers (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010:221). This strategy has been chosen because of the possible language barrier between the researcher and the respondents. The questionnaires were translated into 'Egyptian Modern Arabic'. This was done with the help from the colleagues from the internship organization where the researcher was employed during his time in Cairo. A translator was also necessary when collecting the questionnaires, as Egyptians are not used to filling in questionnaires about political topics. The questionnaire used to collect the data is added to the appendix.

3.5 Data analyses

The collected data were analyzed using special analyzing software, as managing the collected data is an essential part of any research and almost impossible without analyzing the primary data in an appropriate analyzing program (O'Leary, 2010:258).

The in-depth face to face interviews have been recorded with audio equipment and fully transcribed to text files. The researcher was responsible for dealing with the research material and the identity of the respondents appropriately (O'Leary, 2010:97). All the local data were thus deleted as soon as it was saved electronically and they were was put online. In this way the researcher wasn't always carrying all the research data around.

The program Atlas.TI has been used to analyze the primary qualitative data. The interviews have been imported in the program and all the interviews have been tagged based on the criteria of the researcher for further analysis. Atlas.TI helped to explore the phenomena hidden in the data and offered the tools to manage, extract, compare, explore, and reassemble the meaningful pieces from the dataset.

The questionnaires were numbered and the area of collection was written down. The exact addresses of the respondents were never noted, however. The data from the questionnaires was entered electronically as soon as possible and the physical forms were destroyed. In this way the identity of the respondents was protected and the data were protected to loss. The questionnaires have been

entered in the statistical analyses program IBM SPSS Statistics for the testing of the data for particular relations between the variables.

3.6 Research questions answering strategy

This research combines quantitative and qualitative research methods to acquire the data necessary for answering the sub-questions. Using these two methods opens up the chance to compare the results from the different research methods but some questions are also easier to answer using one of the two research methods. Both data collection methods are often used independently and achieve perfect scientific results. The first two sub-questions are mainly answered using the data from the in-depth interviews, while the third sub-question is mainly answered using the data from the questionnaires. Because of the political environment, which will be further explained in the reflection paragraph, not as many questionnaires have been acquired as aimed for. More questionnaires would have allowed to do more advanced testing. The third sub-question and the fourth sub-question, which partly follows up on the third question, would have benefitted from statistical tests which require a higher number of respondents.

3.7 Reflection

The language barriers between the researcher and the interviewees was a point of concern. As mentioned in the survey section, a translator was necessary to translate the questionnaires and to help to conduct the questionnaires at the people's homes. The researcher used colleagues from the internship organization to do the translation. Being bilingual did not guarantee the necessary skills to do the translation for this research (O'Leary, 2010:201), but they were working in related fields and corrected each other to find the best translation. The translators translated the questionnaire forms in advance and helped to explain the purpose and context of the questionnaire to the respondents, when in the field.

When looking for neighborhoods to collect the questionnaires from, parts of Cairo which were seen as too dangerous for foreigners to work in were excluded. The researcher assumed that Egyptians felt free to speak openly about political issues after the revolution, an assumption partly based on the conclusions of a report of TNS-Nipo (2011). This research concludes that the majority of the Egyptians is highly interested in the political situation of the country after the stepping down of Mubarak and the position of Egypt related to contemporary international politics (TNS-Nipo, 2011).

During the time the data collection was conducted, between September and December 2012, political tensions increased in the country. In September 2012 the Tahrir Square was free for traffic, but in

October 2012 the Square was re-occupied by activists. People were upset with the Muslim Brotherhoods' intentions regarding the constitution. Commercials were broadcasted on the television with the message that it is dangerous for Egyptians to talk to foreigners about political affairs because everyone could be a secret foreign agent. Especially with the increased protests at that time people were not welcoming foreigners asking political sensitive questions.

Every research is bound to time constraints and funding. Because of the local circumstances many possible interviewees were not willing to meet as there were important processes in the country that needed their attention. Furthermore, because of the increase in political tensions and protests in Cairo, the willingness to fill in the questionnaires was lower than expected. Taking questionnaires door to door is less common in Egypt and many people felt that their privacy was infringed. During the data collection the researcher was often asked or even forced to leave an apartment building. Because of the limited time frame and in coordination with the supervisor it was decided to spend more effort in conducting the semi-structured in-depth interviews than in collecting the questionnaires. 75 questionnaires have nevertheless been acquired from different neighborhoods in Cairo.

The next Chapter will elaborate on the revolutionary process in the weeks before Mubarak stepped down, which set the stage for the discussion on the use of social media during the revolution.

4. Setting the stage: The 25th of January Revolution

The protests that led to the stepping down of Mubarak in Egypt is often referred to as the 25th of January Revolution. According to Mikkawi (interview, 2012), who was reporting for Canadian news organizations during the revolution, the Tunisian revolution was gaining a lot of attention. There was a protest planned for January 25, 2011, on a Facebook page against the brutality used by the police (Mikkawi, interview, 2012). Most of the people taking part in the first day of protesting knew about the protest through Facebook and social media (Filiu, 2011). The majority was educated, young and politically active (Khalil, 2011). People were hoping for change, but most Egyptians didn't expect the protests planned that day to be the start of a revolution.

On the morning of the 25th, people were coming together at various places such as at the main squares of Mohandiseen and Shubra and other areas in Cairo (Hussain, 2011). Schmid (interview, 2012), a film maker and lecturer at the German University in Cairo in the Faculty of Media Design, was among one of these groups which marched to the Tahrir Square, trying to enter the square from different angles (Schmid, interview, 2012). Padberg (interview, 2012), foreign correspondent for the Dutch *Trouw* newspaper during the revolution, was at the square that day. According to Padberg (interview, 2012), the number of protesters initially reaching the square that day was relatively low. There was a small group of approximately two hundred persons who were getting severely beaten by the police. The police used teargas in an attempt to remove the protesters from the Tahrir Square as Schmid (interview, 2012) recalls:

"All hell broke loose on the square. They just showered us with tear gas. They absolutely showered the place. I have never been in a demonstration where the gas was that strong." (Schmid, interview, 2012)

The protests quickly escalated because of the aggressive response of the riot police (Padberg, interview 2012). Some of the protesters fought back, as people were more confident than before because of what was happening in Tunisia. The demonstrations triggered a wave of violence. The level of force used that day angered the population. Their plan was to sing songs to advocate freedom and many didn't anticipate that the police would use this level of violence. Bakr (interview, 2012), political science professor at the American University in Cairo and assistant to the Minister of International Cooperation, claims that the poor handling of the protest that day was the reason more people showed up later on than would have had otherwise.

After the initial struggle that day, the group reorganized and reached huge numbers. There is no clear understanding of the exact

number of protesters attending the demonstration on January 25. Montasser (interview, 2012), the director of visual production for The Egypt Media Development Program, estimates it at 50,000 to 60,000, Schmid (interview, 2012) estimates about 40,000 to 50,000 and the Dutch newspaper *NRC Handelsblad* stated that day that tens of thousands of people gathered on the Tahrir Square (Dool, 2011).

After the 25th, the protests became larger and larger day by day. According to Gaber (interview, 2012), active member of Mosireen, a non-profit media organization born out of the explosion of citizen media and cultural activism in Egypt during the revolution, the events of the 25th made people realize for the first time that their presence in the streets and a rebelliousness of this sort was possible.

Many in Egypt think, however, that the actual revolution took place on January 28 (Alterman, 2011). On this day, labeled the 'Friday of Rage', hordes of people took part in the marches after the Friday prayer. Friday is an official day off and people were joining from every class (Gerbaudo, 2011). People had heard from others what had been happening the days before (Padberg, interview, 2012). In the morning it turned out that the regime had blocked the internet and mobile phone traffic (Hamamsy, 2011) and the Muslim Brotherhood, which first ordered their members not to attend the first protests, joined this day as well (Amin, 2011). People started demanding the stepping down of Mubarak and singing and screaming chants about the president. El-Guindy (interview, 2012), activist with a large active base on Twitter with 70,000 thousand followers, claimed that on the 25th groups were protesting for the first time, but that the 28th was the day of no return.

The 28th was a rough day. There were huge numbers of people, many took to the streets for the first time in their lives (Gerbaudo, 2011). People had nothing to lose and were motivated to fight for the cause (Schmid, interview, 2012). The protesters seemed determined to break down the regime. The people forced the riot police to move their lines as they moved trough. The police wasn't very well equipped but it used teargas, live shots and birdshots in an attempt to disperse the marches (Al-Jazeera, 2013). It became a battle for Tahrir Square as people took side streets and came back. A very well-known battle which was broadcasted live by Al-Jazeera was taking place at the Qasr el-Nil Bridge, which leads to Tahrir Square (Al-Jazeera, 2013). According to Montasser (interview, 2012), on the 28th half a million people attended the protests and almost a hundred thousand were at the Qasr el-Nil bridge:

"We were in front of the two lions at the end of the bridge. So we said, let's go. There were a 100,000 (persons). They (the police) were retreating and shooting, retreating and shooting. When I reached the fifth row, I saw the person in front of me getting shot

with birdshot. There was teargas all the time. (…) I saw people jumping in the Nile." (Montasser, interview, 2012)

Eskandar (interview, 2012), an Egyptian journalist and blogger based in Cairo, saw that there were huge battles and that the police had to give way. At the end of the day the police retreated and the people occupied Tahrir Square. At this point the military rolled in with vehicles and armored personnel.

Egypt has been ruled by the military for decades. Presidents Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak all had military backgrounds. Every Egyptian family has some members who are working for the army (Karawan, 2011). The army was and still is very powerful. The military assets, comprising of factories, land and businesses amount to millions of Egyptian pounds (Droz-Vincent, 2009, in: Joya, 2011). The army was hailed when they arrived. The people thought that the army would intervene on their behalf against the police and against Mubarak, but the army made no attempt to either stand by the people or the police (Karawan, 2011). The military didn't want to fight unarmed civilians and only monitored the situation and put up posts around Tahrir Square and in the surrounding area (Schmid, interview, 2012). The army refrained from intervening but the fights with the police went on in the days after the 28th.

During the night of the 28th to the 29th, in attempt to make people go back to their neighborhoods, the government released thugs and prisoners from the prisons who went through the neighborhoods and shopping streets to steal whatever they could (Eskandar, interview, 2012; Schmid, interview, 2012; Montasser, interview, 2012). Many police stations were burned down and the police officers who were still active, were fighting the protesters and weren't able to protect the property of the people. Therefore, people were setting up neighborhood patrol groups to protect themselves and their property. Montasser (interview, 2012) recalls going out every night:

"The first week after the 28th, till the 2nd or 3rd, we were out every night with people from the neighborhood. We made neighborhood protection teams. Each five or six (persons) did a building block. We inspected all the cars and people. Checking people's ID's and cars. We slept in the morning, then many went to Tahrir during the day. At night we all met downstairs." (Montasser, interview, 2012)

There were more marches taking place between January 28 and February 11, the day Mubarak stepped down, but their significance was mainly that it was a continuation of the situation. Millions of Egyptians were occupying Tahrir Square and the streets surrounding the square (Joya, 2011; Tudoroiu, 2011:380) and fights were taking place with the riot police. A lot of Tahrir tourism also began to take place, when it was less busy on the square. Dorpmuller (interview, 2012), an assistant professor for the Netherlands-Flemish Institute in

Cairo in Arabic and Islamic studies, noted that during certain times of the day, fathers would take their family to have a look and to take some pictures of their kids with the tanks. People attending weddings went there to take a picture of the bride and groom together on Tahrir Square in front of a tank.

Mubarak, in attempt to defuse the protests and regain order, made speeches which were broadcasted on the square; he announced concessions and gave in to some of the demands of the people. The demands had changed though. Once Tahrir Square was occupied, the protesters felt there was no turning back (Gerbaudo, 2011). The protests had reached huge numbers and the army had proven not to use its capabilities against unarmed civilians (Karawan, 2011). The people on the square now demanded nothing less than Mubarak to step down from power and to have free democratic elections (Lim, 2012). On February 10, a march was planned to Mubarak's presidential palace. This could have led to a direct confrontation between the army and the protesters. On that day the military command made a statement for the people not to march to the palace and wait for further announcements. On February 11, Mubarak resigned under pressure from the military command in order to avoid more violence taking place (Hellyer, 2011). If the regime had reacted differently during the first initial days of the protests and if the police had not used this extensive level of force, Mubarak might still be in power, according to many Egyptians (Montasser, interview, 2012; Eskandar, interview, 2012).

The next Chapter will address the first sub-question of this research.

5. The influence of social media

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will look for an answer to the question how social media have affected the revolutionary process in Egypt. First, the increase of computer and social media usage will be addressed. The implications of the increase will be the subject of the next paragraph. The Facebook page dedicated to Khaled Said has been an important platform for people to share their anger. During the revolution the social media aroused people to join the protests and also news channels used the information stream of the messages in their reports. These topics will be addressed in the last two paragraphs, after which an answer will be given to the central question of this chapter.

5.2 IT revolution

Egypt has been going through an extraordinary IT revolution since the 1990s. Kelly & Cook (2012) state in the report *Freedom on the Net 2011* by the Freedom House that "The Egyptian government has aggressively and successfully sought to expand access to the internet as an engine of economic growth" (Kelly & Cook, 2012:24). Major multinational investors were attracted by investing in the information technology sector. Egypt is seen as one of the emerging powers in information technology.

In October 1999 the Ministry of Telecommunications and Information (MCIT) became the dedicated authority in the telecom sector (Hassanin, 2003). The mandate of the MCIT was to develop an information society in Egypt through the development and improvement of the telecommunications infrastructure (Hassanin, 2003). Ahmed Nazif, who was the Minister of Communications and Information Technology before he was appointed prime minister in 2004, launched a program in support of personal computer usage among the population and making the internet more popular (Mikkawi, interview, 2012).

It is difficult to provide exact numbers on the connectivity of the Egyptians and the use of electronic media. No comprehensive data collection has taken place on the use of television, mobile phone and new media during the Mubarak government. Nevertheless, there are some sources which provide numbers on the use of electronic media in Egypt. According to Hassanin (2003) there were only 400,000 Internet users, representing 0.6–0.7 percent of the population by the end of 2001 (Hassanin, 2003). This number increased to twenty million Egyptians who had access to the internet in 2009, according to the CIA World Factbook (Central Intelligence Agency, 2013). From the people who had access to a personal computer, only 0.0001% had a twitter account and used it before the revolution (Wilson & Dunn, 2011:1250). Twitter was not widely used and only a very small

minority of the Egyptians had access to it. Nevertheless, by January 2011, 4.5 million Egyptians had a Facebook account. This is 6 percent of the total population (Wilson & Dunn, 2011:1251).

These new media platforms were used by the Egyptians to communicate about the revolution and organize themselves for protests. In this research people rated the importance of Facebook, Twitter and Blogging for the organization of the revolution in a questionnaire. The question was how important they thought that these ways of communicating were for the organization of the protests. The importance of the different ways of communicating for the organization of the revolution, as perceived by the people in the questionnaires, have been filled in on a 5 point Likert scale, ranging from 'Very Unimportant' to 'Very Important'. The results for the perceived importance of social media are shown in Figure 1.
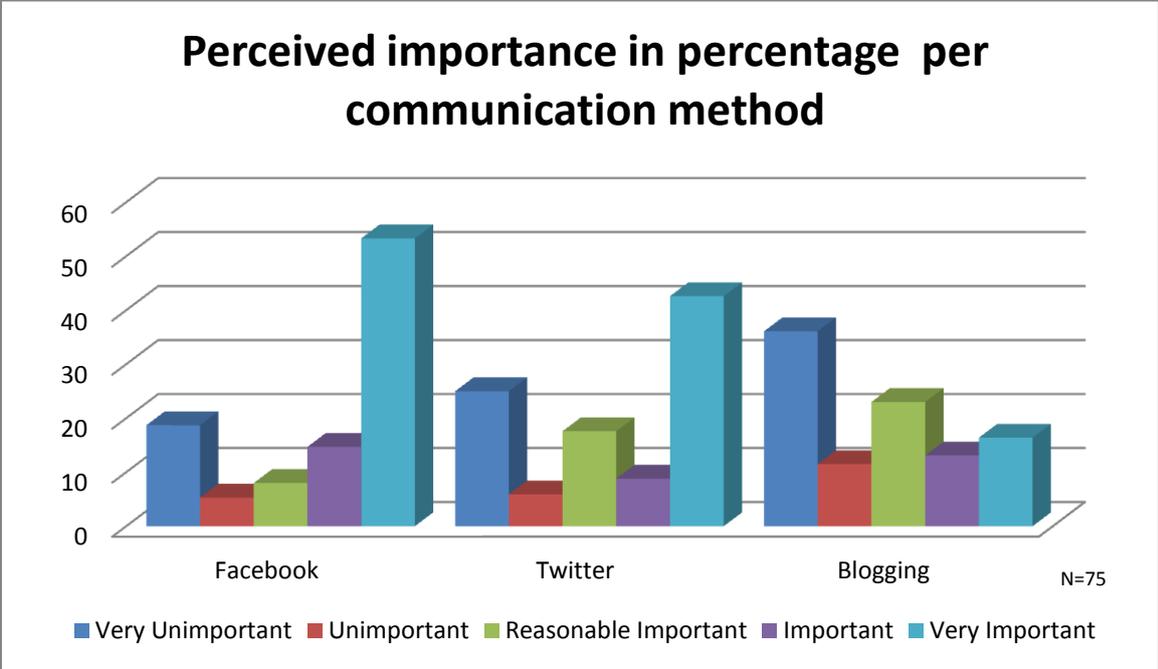
Figure 1: Perceived importance of social media

When looking at the graph, one can see that the 'Very Important' category is by far the largest for the perceived importance of Facebook. Twitter is seen as somewhat less important, though still 40% of the respondents find Twitter 'Very Important' for the organization of the revolution. Blogging, however, is not seen as important. Approximately a third of the respondents finds Blogging even 'Very Unimportant' for the organization of the revolution. As a further point of illustration: in all the interviews taken together, Facebook was mentioned 273 times, Twitter was mentioned 60 times and Blogging was only mentioned 12 times. The revolution has also often been labeled as a 'Facebook revolution', not a 'Blogging Revolution'. Nevertheless, social media in general is seen as important, taking into account that more than half of the respondents find both Facebook and Twitter, 'Important' to 'Very

Important' communication methods for the organization of the revolution.

In the following paragraphs a more in-depth account will be given on what roles social media have taken in the Egyptian society both before and during the revolution.

5.3 Impact of IT on society

Although the government was investing in the ICT sector for economic purposes, it didn't fully acknowledge the impact of the ICT penetration. In the process the authorities had to leave the internet relatively open and accessible in order to develop the ICT sector and to hold up the image of a relatively free and liberal country to its foreign partners (Padberg, interview, 2012; Kelly & Cook, 2012). In 2007, for example, the Administrative Judicial Court rejected the request to ban 51 websites, including those of several human rights organizations, emphasising the support for freedom on the internet (Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, 2008).

With the advent of the social media platforms, Facebook and Twitter were mainly considered as games for the kids (Bakr, interview, 2012). When political activists started to use these platforms, the security sector became aware of what social media and other forms of new media communication could do. According to Kelly & Cook (2012), Egypt came in a downward trajectory regarding internet freedom. The government used the Egyptian Emergency Law to repress Internet activism, by employing 'low tech' methods (Kelly & Cook, 2012). The police was following, intimidating and harassing activists who were using the social media platforms, but the police was not aware of what was happening on these new platforms (Kelly & Cook, 2011).

Social media contributed to exposing the abusive nature of the regime among a greater audience (Kelly & Cook, 2011). Not only the malfunctioning of the state as it came to handling national disasters, but also the small daily incidents happening on the street were exposed (Bakr, interview, 2012). By showing videos of the abuse, the people were shown what they otherwise wouldn't have seen (Eskandar, interview, 2012). The policemen on the street were becoming more abusive, although the abuse had always been on the streets (Bradley, 2011). The social media and NGO's that use social media, and civil society using YouTube, made the abuse known to larger audiences. This new audience was often either unaware or in denial of the severity of the abuse and corruption (Bakr, interview, 2012). It was an eye opener for the elite and the Western media. The working class Egyptians, who were experiencing the abuses, didn't have a large presence on the social media platform (Wilson & Dunn, 2011). But they didn't need to see the videos and pictures because they were experiencing the abuses shown in them on a daily basis.

The middle and upper classes, however, never experienced incidents with the police on the streets and never encountered the corruption themselves. The upper classes in Egypt live in a bubble and only have contact with others in their own group. They have their own meeting places which are segregated from the rest of society. Many in Cairo have never been to the downtown areas and stay in the gated communities, expensive restaurants and coffee shops (Padberg, interview, 2012).

Because many people now had a phone with a camera and ways of publishing their photos and videos (Wilson & Dunn, 2011), the regime couldn't deny the abuse on the streets anymore. Padberg (interview, 2012) describes that denying the problems was the traditional way of acting against any accusations. With the use of these new technologies civil society was coming up with the evidence of the abuse itself. So, although the abuse was there before as well, publishing it and making it available to anyone, had the effect that people couldn't ignore it anymore (Padberg, interview, 2012). The international media, all levels of society and the regime had to act to the images because no one could deny the existence of the abuse any longer (Filiu, 2011:56). The next paragraph is covering an abuse case that shook society.

5.4 Khaled Said: The case that shook society

Khaled Said is a name almost everyone in Egypt knows the story about. Khaled Said ran a small business and was a shy, soft-spoken 28 year old man (Verma, 2011). He had found a video online that showed Egyptian police officers dividing drug money and posted it on his blog (De Jong, 2010). He was dragged out of an Internet café close to his house onto the streets by two officers from a local police station (Verma, 2011). The brother of Khaled Said secretly took pictures of the dead and mutilated body of his brother and spread these. The gruesome photographs started circulating on the internet. Mr. Said was found with missing teeth, a ripped lower lip, a broken jaw and with his head smashed against a marble staircase in the lobby of the building next door to the internet café (Verma, 2011).

Police officers often approached activists and many young people identify themselves with Said as victims of police brutality (Human Rights Watch, 2011). Many Egyptian people see the Ministry of Interior as an unfixable and un-reformable apparatus. There is almost nobody in Egypt that doesn't have a story to motivate them or to be angry with the police. This is a central motivating force for the majority of the Egyptian youth (Gaber, interview, 2012).

When Wael Ghonim heard about the killing of Khaled Said, it touched him. Wael, a 29 year old Google executive, was based in Dubai, as head of Google marketing for the Arab world (Filiu, 2011). He was politically engaged and had set up a creative website for the National Association for Change, a grassroots political organization which will be more fully explained in the next chapter (Filiu, 2011). When Wael Ghonim heard about Khaled Said, he created a Facebook page as a memorial and called it 'Kullena Khaled Said' ('We Are All Khaled Said'). In an interview with Fresh Air he says the following:

"Looking at Khaled's photo after his death, basically, I just felt that we are all Khaled Said. It wasn't just a brand name. It was a feeling. We were all of these young Egyptians who could die, and no one (would be) held accountable. So at the time, I thought, 'I have to do something.' And I believed that bringing Khaled's case to the public would be helpful." (Ghonim, 2012)

Wael build the page to expose the police brutality and to call for accountability for the death of Khaled Said. The page engaged Facebook users and became a platform for people who were able to afford a personal computer and who were politically active to share ideas and thoughts (Hamamsy, 2011). Many users were posting videos and photos of police brutality. Social media acted as a way for individual citizens to find information about protest efforts and police harassments (Keif, 2012). Shaleen (interview, 2012), founder and chief editor of the GUC Insider, an independent management newspaper, recalls staying up one night to have a political discussion with someone:

"We used to send ideas on the Khaled Said Facebook page. You can easy spread the word. That day I was having a discussion on Facebook with somebody who said: 'You guys are just against the country and you are going the ruin it. You are bringing chaos.' I spend a night on Facebook trying to explain to someone how I felt." (Shaleen, interview, 2012)

Wael Ghonim started placing statistics on the page, taking polls and taking the opinion of people talking about activism (Ghonim, 2012). He was working anonymously because he didn't want to be known. Facebook and other social media weren't used before in such a way by activists. Elmahdawy (interview, 2012), an active political activist, who worked as a journalist for *El-Badil*, the first independent newspaper in Egypt which was closed before the revolution, explains the newness:

"I was an activist before the revolution. We were arranging protests and marches. It was very difficult and we were with few in number. Even using the phone wasn't safe. Sometimes the police let us do our protests and leave, but when you acceded the lines you would get

arrested. We didn't actually use Facebook to make events before the revolution but with the beginning of the Khaled Said page, Facebook started to be used massively." (Elmahdawy, interview, 2012*)*

The Facebook page received 300,000 'likes' in the first half year. Because of the large number of 'likes,' the page reached a large audience and the page gained public awareness (Kerkhof, 2012). Almost half a million people had joined the group by the time the protests began on January 25 (Gerbaudo, 2011). On the streets people knew about the page and discussed its contents. People started to talk about the group in talk shows on television. In the streets people called Wael Ghonim 'The Admin'. The name was even written in Arabic letters as tags on walls (Shaleen, interview, 2012).

Rural people who didn't have access to the internet and Facebook heard about its existence through these connections. Amin (interview, 2012), cartoonist for a big state newspaper, stated that Facebook played an important role by calling people for the first time to go the streets. Khaled Said became the symbol for the fight against an illegitimate regime whose violence was targeting innocent civilians (Filiu, 2011). According to Maher (interview, 2012), co-founder of *The Midan Masr* newspaper, people on the Khaled Said page were organizing various protests and activities, such as silent protests in Alexandria. The best known event organized on the page is the protest planned for 'Police Day' on January 25. The next paragraph discusses the use of social media during that day.

5.5 Coordination and reorganization during January 25

There was a high awareness of the planned protests on the 25th through the spreading of the word on Facebook (Keif, 2012). It seems clear that the coordination and publication of videos, pictures and other material on the internet had an impact. Gerbaudo (2012) states that on the first day 70-80 per cent of the protesters were middle and upper class people who were organized using social media. Although Twitter wasn't very much used before the revolution (Mikkawi, interview, 2012), and was less popular than Facebook, as shown in Figure 1, many started using Twitter during the first few days of the protests (Eskandar, interview, 2012). Activists used Twitter to spread the situation on the streets (Lim, 2012). People were moving around in groups fighting the police and in most groups there was at least one person connected to Twitter. Schmid (interview, 2012) noticed that this can be seen as an amplifier:

"People posted something on Twitter and you would reach a hundred people at the same time to let them know that in a particular place something was going on. Then you would have masses of people moving in within an hour. That helped a lot." (Schmid, interview, 2012)

The connections between the activists through the social media networks were not hierarchical. There was no top-down approach of leaders who were coordinating the process. The 'Netwar theory' by Arquilla & Ronfelds (2002) gives an explanation for this way of organizing. Arquilla & Ronfelds (2002) noticed the same combination of social networks, advanced communication techniques and non-hierarchical organization structures in different kinds of conflicts and protests. They came up with a doctrine on the swarming of people, which is the behaviour of networks of small, dispersed, mobile units who strike from all directions, by means of a sustainable pulsing of force closing in to a central position (Arquilla & Ronfelds, 2002).

In Cairo the protestors were highly flexible during the fights on the streets. When one group of people would be swept away by teargas, another would take their place (Montasser, interview, 2012). The organic, autonomous organization of the people on the streets proved self-regulating as explained by Gerbaudo (2012). It would have been difficult for a leader to coordinate the fights in the chaos, but that wasn't necessary. Once a person knew about the marches, the chants and the tactics, people made their own decisions on the appropriate tactics to reach Tahrir Square (Mikkawi, interview, 2012).

The spreading of what was happening on social media also motivated many to join and reach the high number of people protesting that day. Two personal stories are shown below, showing how social media informed them about the circumstances that day and motivated them to join the protests as well.

"On the day of the revolution, the 25th of January, I had a conference. At first I thought this would be just a demonstration as before, with some fifty people demonstrating. At the beginning of the day and during the day of the 25th, people were already uploading videos on YouTube about what was happening. So when I saw these videos, I decided that I had to leave the conference and go to the protest as well. I convinced everyone at the conference to come with me to Tahrir Square." (Elmahdawy, interview, 2012)

"I was at home at first on the 25th, my parents locked me in. I heard about the protest and what was happening through Twitter. I had to make up a lie. I deliberately broke the router and told my parents I needed to work on my exam for the next day. I went out during the day but went in during the night." (Shaleen, interview, 2012)

Stories, photos and videos reached other activists and citizens but they also reached news agencies. This process is the topic of the next paragraph.

5.6 Citizen journalism

The internet has changed the way journalism gets done, altering the process of gathering, production, storage, editing, and distribution of news (Dahlgren, 2009). The pictures and videos uploaded by the protesters in the streets weren't always of a very high quality but they were a source of information, not only for other activists but also for media companies (Dorpmuller, interview, 2012). The mainstream local media privileged news constructed from the perspective of those in positions of authority (Atton, 2002). So the Egyptian people needed their own media in order to be able to reach a larger audience and to compete with the state media and corporate media, which had their own agendas (Gaber, interview, 2012).

In *Media and Political Engagement: Citizens, Communication and Democracy*, Dahlgren (2011) explains the process in which the historical story-telling role of journalism is being complemented by large flows of socially relevant electronic information between people and organizations outside of mainstream journalism. This form of engagement of average citizens with the production of news is called 'citizen journalism' (Dahlgren, 2009). During the Egyptian revolution, Al-Jazeera was asking people to send in their tapes and pictures for their daily news broadcastings (Tufecki & Wilson, 2012). The TV crews of the large media organizations were filming Tahrir Square, but what was happening in the streets around it was filmed by ordinary people (Dorpmuller, interview, 2012). "While Al Jazeera cannot have a journalist in every trouble spot, the increasing numbers of smart-phone wielding citizens who have developed both the reflex and the ability to document politically important moments ensure that there will be at least some coverage, regardless of the logistics of the situation" (Tufecki & Wilson, 2012:367).

The people recognized that the revolution needs the media to tell its story. Mosireen, a non-profit media collective born out of the explosion of citizen media and cultural activism, build up a media tent on Tahrir Square after January 28 as a central point where people could hand in their pictures and videos (Gaber, interview, 2012). The revolution was thus documented, filmed and produced by the people who participated in it.

5.7 Conclusion

This Chapter gives an answer to the question of how social media have affected the revolutionary process in Egypt. In the years before the revolution, videos and pictures spread through social media started to confront the middle and upper classes in Egypt with the corruption and the police abuse. This was an eye opener to them, as they were either unaware or in denial of the severity of the abuses and the extent of the corruption. Social media created the opportunity for the higher middle and upper classes to have a speaking platform, to channel their anger, to organize and to correct the traditional media trough their own messages and news spread on social media.

Two things can be concluded about the influence of social media on the revolution. The first is that it is seen as a catalyst that made the events unfold faster and better organized than if people would not have been able to use its communicating platform to organize. The interviewees explained that a medium that was built to share lifestyle experiences, has been appropriated by them for political ends to exchange political opinions. Social media opened up a channel to people who would otherwise never communicate with each other. Egypt has a layered society in which people from different socio-economic classes don't meet or interact. Social media created a virtual world, where people with an interest in politics could meet to discuss the political malfunctioning, corruption and grievances the Egyptians were experiencing.

Egyptians were empowered with this new tool to discuss topics and organize events on the streets. The protests of January 25, 2011, which was the start of a protest wave that grew in size and numbers and created a momentum that led Mubarak to decide to step down, was set up using social media. The interviewees believe that the revolution would have happened anyway, however, but it would have taken longer for society to get organized. So, social media was a catalyst that made the revolution happen faster than if this tool had been unavailable to the activists.

The second influence of social media on the revolution is that it made it a 'leaderless revolution'. Historically, revolutions are always led by a strong leader that dictates the direction of the new political order. Social media channeled the public anger and grievances into a common goal without one leader in command. Through the leaderlessness of the organization of the protests, people were non-hierarchical organized, allowing them to have a greater force by swarming through all the streets towards Tahrir Square.

Wael Ghonim is sometimes seen as the leader of the revolution, as he was later exposed as the administrator of the 'We're all Khaled Said' page. He never intended to be a political leader, however, or even to participate in the political spectrum of the country. He used his expertise and appropriated the tools he knew best to motivate people to fight for political change. Neither during nor after the revolution he has assumed the role of a leader. People fought for a cause that brought them together, instead of for a leader.

6 Social media in a wider framework

6.1 Introduction

This Chapter is dedicated to answering the question if there were other contributing factors to the start of the protests of January 2011 and how the importance of these factors should be compared to the influence of social media. To understand the influence of social media on the Egyptian revolution of 2011, one has to understand the interdependent processes that were taking place before and during the revolution. Social media played an important role in the organization of the first protests, but its role has to be seen in the wider picture of converging collective anger and grievances, other organization methods and other factors.

The structure of this chapter, categorizing the processes and factors important in the Egyptian society into four categories, is based on the information acquired through the primary data. There are other ways of grouping these factors and processes as well, but this way seemed most appropriate for the structure of this chapter. Each of these factors will be discussed separately. The four recognized categories are:

- Public discontent
- Grassroots activism
- Connectivity, organization and coordination
- Attaining hope and overcoming fear

After elaborating upon these factors, a conclusion will be drawn and the role of social media will be placed in the wider structure of this framework.

6.2 Public discontent

6.2.1 Introduction

The first part of this chapter is dedicated to the rising discontent among the Egyptian citizens. During the last decade of Mubarak's regime the Gross Domestic Product was increasing, but the inequality rose because of inflation and an unequal distribution of wealth. Corruption also was an important problem which became an inherent factor when doing business. These problems were increasing on a backdrop of human rights abuses under the Emergency Law and police brutality. The living conditions of the average Egyptian thus became worse, while the economy was growing and a small elite was enriching itself.

6.2.2 Economic inequality

In absolute terms the Egyptian economy was doing very well in the years before the Egyptian revolution. Noha Bakr (2012) deals in her

book with the economic circumstances in Egypt and concludes that the Egyptian revolution took place in a context in which the economy was growing. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) had increased since the beginning of the 21st century. Also, Egypt's exports had tripled in value over the last years before the revolution (Bakr, 2012). Figure 2 shows that both the GDP and the GDP per capita had increased on a yearly basis.
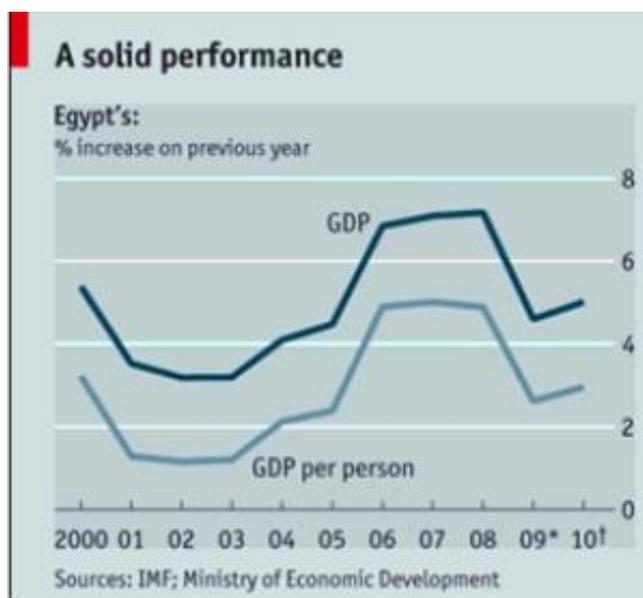

Figure 2: Economic growth

While the government regarded economic growth as a precondition to social development, poverty reduction is not achieved by economic growth alone (Kheir-El-Din & El-Laithy, 2006). The Gross Domestic Product had increased, but there had not been an improvement in the income distribution; the personal expenditures of the lower classes have decreased instead of increased (Kheir-El-Din & El-Laithy, 2006). Tomatoes, for example, became an unaffordable luxury to many, given the general inflation rate of 10 per cent in 2010 but with an inflation rate for food prices of almost twice that amount (Alterman, 2011).

The poorer classes constitute a majority of the population in Egypt. According to Osman (2008), in a report for the Egyptian Ministry of Economic Development, at least twenty percent of Egyptian citizens live below the poverty line as a consequence of the economic policies of the Mubarak regime in the decade before the revolution (Osman, 2008). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) pressured the Egyptian government in the early 1990s to privatize the state-owned companies and to reduce the safety net provided by the state. The state had to cut back on its investments in the health sector and in education (Fadel, 2011). As a result of these IMF implementations, 20 per cent of the Egyptians were living on less than two dollars per day (Fadel, 2011). The unemployment rate was a staggering 25 per cent and young Egyptians often had to wait for years for a job after

finishing their education (Alterman, 2011). Maher (interview, 2012), director of an independent newspaper, stated:

"The huge amount of poverty was very important. People didn't have work. They didn't have anything to do in their lives. So they just hung around in coffee shops. They didn't have the money to live their lives. So people looked for other ways to get money. They had nothing to do." (Maher, interview, 2012)

Many scholars have noted that in Egypt over the past twenty years the ability of the poor to satisfy their basic needs has been in decline (Fadel, 2011). According to Bakr (interview, 2012), there wasn't a proper welfare system to support the poor anymore. Many people in Egypt lacked the basic needs (Maher, interview, 2012). In the absence of support from the government, the country's citizens face huge challenges such as finding affordable housing, access to transportation and clean drinking water (Bank Information Center, 2013). A report on the impact of the World Bank's policy on Egypt concludes that a small minority is well served, while the shortages continue in municipal services and housing for the average Egyptian (Bank Information Center, 2013). Eskandar (interview, 2012) describes the situation as follows:

"We were in a unsustainable situation. By the economic measures taken by the Mubarak regime people became poor. And I mean, so poor that they don't have access to basic needs and basic rights. The people weren't getting richer, people were getting poorer. It was unsustainable." (Eskandar, interview, 2012)

Benefits of the economic growth during the Mubarak era generally went almost exclusively to those sectors of Egypt that were already relatively well-off (Bank Information Center, 2013). The accumulated wealth among the elite began to attract public attention. The stories of the enrichment of the elite were widespread among the masses. The most important "manifestation of obscenity of wealth", in the words of Hassan (2011), was that of the Mubarak family. The source of capital in Egypt came mainly from the seizure of state funds. With a lack of regulation of both public and private sector businesses, these practices provided great opportunities to achieve great wealth in a short period of time (Hassan, 2011). This has led to increased anger and frustration among the poor Egyptians, as Bakr (interview, 2012) explains:

"They were fed up with the gap between the rich and the poor. If you look at the golf courses, it looks like every Egyptian is a golfer – while they are surrounded by slums. So, the gap between the rich and the poor people became bigger. The rich were agonized because they feel the poor cannot accept them anymore and the poor were angry because they were deprived." (Bakr, interview, 2012)

In addition to anger arising from the economic inequality, Egypt also had to deal with rising levels of corruption.

6.2.3 Corruption

Corruption is another fundamental problem in Egypt, contributing to high levels of poverty and unemployment. Corruption reaches all areas of Egyptian life, ranging from the social field to the economic domain (Chatham House, 2012). As an example of the effect of the corruption, Bassem (interview, 2012), co-founder of a grassroots group with a Salafi background called Salafyo Costa, relates the story of two Egyptian bank employees:

"You can see two persons working at a bank, one of which earns more than a billion pounds per month, the other person 200 pounds. Both are humans. Both are Egyptians." (Bassem, interview, 2012)

Hassan (2011) frames Egypt in the model of the famous Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal on the so-called 'soft state'. "The term soft state is understood to comprise all the various types of social undisciplined which manifest themselves by: deficiencies in legislation and in particular law observance and enforcement, a widespread disobedience by public officials on various levels to rules and directives handed down to them, and often their collusion with powerful persons and groups of persons whose conduct they regulate" (Myrdall 1970, as quoted in: Fabella, 2000). The fact that Egypt has a 'soft state' government is related with its underdevelopment and the poverty in the country (Hassan, 2011). People do not behave according to laws, because in a soft state these laws are not respected by the people. When the elites or the privileged break a law, they have the money to protect themselves, but the impoverished protectors of the law have to receive bribes to turn a blind eye. Permits and licenses are for sale in such a state. Corruption thus prevails everywhere. It is a circle in which the softness is increased through the spread of corruption, while the soft state encourages it (Hassan, 2011).

According to a report on the corruption in Egypt by Puddephatt (2012), between 2000 and 2008 the costs of corruption reached 57.2 billion US Dollars, approximately 6 billion US Dollars a year (Puddephatt, 2012). Corruption, crime and tax evasion were the most important factors, according to the report. The report uses the term 'wasta', Arabic for 'mediation' or 'influence', which is essential for doing business in Egypt. The informal sector is estimated to account for between 40 to 70 per cent of Egypt's economy (Puddephatt, 2012), and people have to pay bribes instead of taxes to the government to carry out their work (Chatham House, 2012). Paying bribes has become a necessary way of operating in the Egyptian economy. Negm (interview, 2012), visiting professor in

international law at the American University of Cairo and on sabbatical from the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, comes with a telling example:

"As a lawyer, if you want to look into a file of a certain case, you have to pay a certain price to the administrative people, otherwise you won't see the file. This became the custom. Because the government didn't pay enough money to their employees, the corruption became institutionalized. You, as a lawyer, need to do your work, so you will have to pay the corrupt official money, whether it is legal or illegal, if it was against your principles or not. Otherwise you wouldn't have any clients. At the same time the government wasn't doing anything to confront it, because they were paying their officials not enough money. People couldn't live of their official wage." (Negm, interview, 2012)

On the backdrop of this corrupt climate of doing business, the people who were trying to make an honest living were repressed and abused by the police and the security forces under Mubarak's rule.

6.2.4 Repression and abuse

Egyptian citizens were not allowed to express their discontent or protests against the economic and social inequality in the country. Egypt scored low on criteria and standards for political rights and since the early 1990s the country was placed in the 'not free category' in the so-called Freedom House standard (Freedom House, 2011, in: Tudoroiu, 2011). In addition, many basic rights have been restricted and it was made possible to prosecute civilians before military tribunals through the implementation of the Emergency Law since 1981 (Human Rights Watch, 2011). With the Emergency Law, the Ministry of the Interior is also given the power to suspend basic rights of the Egyptian citizens by detaining people without charges and prohibiting demonstrations (Human Rights Watch, 2011). Schmid (interview, 2012) explained the functioning of the security state as follows:

"There are hundreds of thousands of stories of people who were deported or of people who were arrested, just an hour after they had been talking to some foreigner. It was an absolute police state, just as in Tunisia. You had thousands of informants all over the place. Obviously, it is very difficult for the people here to help you understand why the people were that desperate to change things, because it's just unimaginable under which state they were living." (Schmid, interview, 2012)

There is almost nobody in Egypt who doesn't have a story to motivate them or to be angry with the police (Gaber, interview, 2012). The national police were widely reviled because they represented, in essence, a nationwide protection racket (Anderson, 2011). In 2007

Aida Seif al-Dawla, a psychologist who founded and runs the Nadim Center for the Psychological Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence in Cairo, stated that police abuse had gone through the roof (Murphy, 2007). Gasser Abdel Razek, the director of regional relations for Human Rights Watch, also notes the increase of police abuse. "Fifteen years ago, we used to say that this or that police station is bad, …, today, I can't name a single police station that's good" (Murphy, 2007). Family members of suspects are regularly taken hostage until the suspects turn themselves in and intimidation keeps order on the streets (Bradley, 2011). Montasser (interview, 2012) recalls being randomly arrested:

"The police brutality was humiliating to the maximum. I am from the middle-upper class. I remember, I stayed the whole night in a police station in Nuweiba just because my name matched. My name is Ahmed Montasser. This is a very common name. My name just matched a guy's name who had a seven-year sentence. They didn't care. They just put me in the police station. I was coming back from Nuweiba to Cairo. They locked me up for a whole night and didn't do anything. They said the officer is sleeping and we don't want to wake him up. They just left me in a police station. But they treated many people very bad. Sometimes they beat people up. You often heard about rape incidents that happened." (Montasser, interview, 2012)

Few of those arrested ever escaped brutality, as torture was such a common technique applied in Egypt's system of detention (Human Rights Watch, 2011). According to Moorehead (2005), Egypt is now one of the countries in the world with the highest level of torture victims. Shaleen (interview, 2012) confirms the wide use of torture in his country:

"People were often tortured by the police. At some point you would find that at least within every five people sitting, there would be someone who has a direct relationship with someone who was tortured. It was beyond the point that it could be fixed internally." (Shaleen, interview, 2012)

Techniques of torture ranged from "beatings with various implements during the first few hours and days of detention, most often to the head, neck, genitals and ears, so that eardrums are often ruptured, to suspension with heavy weights tied to the feet or hands, to electric shocks to the fingers, tongue, ears and genitals" (Moorehead 2005:34). In an interview by the The Nadim Center for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence with an ex-detainee, the ex-detainee describes the treatments used against a fellow prisoner: "He stayed a long time upstairs, up to four hours at a time. He was tortured by electricity as well as beatings, he told us. He didn't even have to tell us though, you could tell by his condition. We saw the burn marks from the electrocution. He was nearly comatose when they carried him (into the cell). His face was

extremely swollen and bruised. He was shaking. There were burn marks on his hand and elbows, and the feet and toes." (Human Rights Watch, 2011)

The victims of torture are not given any effective remedy and there was no progress to stop the abuses from happening. Impunity prevailed in Egypt when it came to ill-treatment and torture (Human Rights Watch, 2011). Policemen in Egypt are untouchable, from street cops to agents of the State Security Agency (Hendawi, 2011). Those who committed the abuses had no fear to be held accountable for their actions. The result was that deliberate torture was common when interrogating citizens and political dissidents (Human Rights Watch, 2011). Although she emphasizes that it was a combination of many factors, Bakr (interview, 2012) thinks that the human rights abuses and the extremely abusive way of dealing with citizens was one of the major factors leading to public discontent since it angered many Egyptians.

The next section of this Chapter will deal with the grassroots activism that was emerging because of the increase of public discontent in society.

6.3 Grassroots activism

6.3.1 Introduction

This section of the Chapter is devoted to the grassroots activism taking place on the ground. In the years before the revolution, more and more protests were taking place and the average Egyptian became interested and motivated in the political affairs in his/her country. The Kefaya movement is the movement that is mentioned by many as the first movement that triggered Egyptians to think about the political situation in their country. Massive labor protests took place against the closing down of large clothing factories in the Nile Delta. As a reaction to these protests, the so-called 6th of April group was formed which started organizing protests in the cities among the educated youth as well. These topics will be dealt with in this section of the Chapter.

6.3.2 Kefaya: The first protest movement

The Kefaya movement was the first organized movement on the streets that was calling for change (Montasser, interview, 2012). Negm (interview, 2012), Bakr (interview, 2012) and Montasser (interview, 2012) called this movement very important, as it was the first social movement organizing social protest. Kefaya means 'enough' in English. Kefaya was the main slogan of the Egyptian Movement for Change, which became the unofficial name for the movement (Lim, 2012). The movement began in 2003-2004 and started to fill a gap of non-participation of the Egyptians in politics.

A catalyst of the organization's growth were the circumstances surrounding the 2005 elections. The movement opposed the re-election of Mubarak as president for a fifth term. The movement also opposed the possibility of Gamal, Mubarak's son, to take over power (Oweidat, et al., 2008). The issues related to the authoritarian rule of the country were something that had rarely been a rallying point for ordinary citizens before. But people were frustrated about the idea that the son of Mubarak was to take over power. This feeling was exacerbated by the "growing conspicuous consumption among a business elite connected to Mubarak's son Gamal" (Anderson, 2011:4). Bakr (interview, 2012), explains that the Egyptians were made to feel like a herd of cattle by the plans of Gamal Mubarak to take over power over the nation from his father:

"One of the reasons that the people revolted was the fact that the people rejected that they would be inherited as a herd of cattle. You do not inherit nations. Everything was ready and it was planned for Mubarak Junior to take over power." (Bakr, interview, 2012)

One of the reasons for the success of the Kefaya movement, as the first large movement that was calling for change, was that it had a clear and simple message (Oweidat et al., 2008). The name Kefaya or 'Enough', explains the main goal of the movement, for Mubarak to step down and have a newly elected leader. The name also made it easy to recognize and understand the organization. Secondly, the movement didn't use any extremist methods, uniting different groups of all social backgrounds (Oweidat et al., 2008). The peaceful demonstrations were something not often seen in the Middle East. An example of a new method of demonstrating used by this movement is given by Bakr (interview, 2012):

"Kefaya was using a very unique way of protesting. For instance, in the demonstrations the girls would look in the eyes of the soldier and would say: 'I'm like your sister, would you like someone to abuse your sister? Can you imagine your sister being abused now? Someone is taking of your sisters clothes now.' They were using psychological elements, which was something new." (Bakr, interview, 2012)

To the regret of the Kefaya movement, Mubarak won the national elections in September 2005. Kefaya, nevertheless, continued its activities and broadened its demands (Oweidat et al., 2008). One of the main points of the movement remained targeting Gamal Mubarak, but it also actively opposed the Emergency Law. Kefaya has broken down the aversion of the population to protest. The movement has inspired other movements in Egypt. Ayman (2007, in: Odeital et al., 2008) relates the labor protests taking place mostly in El-Mahalla El-Kubra, which will be the topic of the next paragraph, to Kefaya's successes. She names Kefaya the heart of the reform

movements and the seed of the protests that had been a taboo in previous years (Ayman 2007, in: Odeital et al., 2008).

6.3.3 The labor strikes of El-Mahalla El-Kubra

The second important protests movement mentioned in this section of the Chapter is the labor protest of El-Mahalla El-Kubra textile factories. Smet (2012) names the strikes of the textile workers of the Ghazl al-Mahalla Misr Spinning and Weaving Company in the Nile delta City of Mahalla El-Kubra the turning point in the socio-genesis and emancipation struggle of the working classes in Egypt (Smet, 2012).

With 27,000 employees and a thousand acres of land, the Ghazl al-Mahalla factory was the largest factory in the Middle East (Beinin, 2012). The industry had been targeted for reform, because the industry had been in crisis since the 1970s as a consequence of the competition from South-East Asia (Beinin, 2012). The government under prime minister Ahmed Nazif intensified the privatization and liberalization processes and made new efforts to privatize the textile industry since 2004 (Smet, 2012). Many of the people working in the manufacturing plants had worked there for twenty to thirty years. Although the average monthly income for a factory worker ranged from 250 to 600 Egyptian Pounds, equal to 40 to 100 Dollars, which is below the poverty line (Beinin, 2012), the workers stayed in the sector because they thought that their loyalty to the industry and the owners of the factories would entitle them to a certain job security. With the planned takeovers and privatizations, the people working in the sector feared that the new investors taking over the plants wouldn't give them the same job security and the same benefits or that they were facing replacement by a younger generation of factory workers who would undoubtedly receive lower wages than them (Beinin & el-Hamalawy, 2007). These fears led to an unprecedented wave of labor protests.

The labor protests started in the textile industry in late 2004, but spread to other industries as well. Income security played a big role in the rise of public discontent, according to Gaber (interview, 2012). The state regime was privatizing companies, selling state enterprises, firing workers and putting workers on temporary contracts (Fadel, 2011). A culmination of this process took place in 2006 and 2007, leading to waves of protests. These labor protests were the start of a new movement, which will be discussed in the next paragraph.

6.3.4 The 6th of April Movement

On April 6, 2008, leftist workers and activists called for a new strike at the factories (Schemm, 2008). Some political groups, intellectuals and bloggers seized the event and tried to turn it

into a general strike. The regime and the riot police were well prepared for the circumstances. In reaction to the protests in and around Cairo, the government send riot police to occupy the main streets and squares, intimidating anyone who would come near them (Schemm, 2008). In Mahalla hundreds of riot police forces showed up at a planned sit-in which was then cancelled. Disgruntled workers protested in the town square instead and used violence against the riot police. Egyptian security officials said two thousand protesters were arrested for damaging property, burning tires in the streets and storming the city hall (Schemm, 2008). The protest on April 6 is seen as a failed undertaking because people were called out for strikes without coordinating and organizing a program for the event day (Smet, 2012).

Ahmed Maher was one of the political activists who tried to motivate people to join the general strikes. He continued his efforts and named his movement after the event date, 'The 6th of April' (Montasser, interview, 2012). The movement was using social media and blogs, but also mobile phones and word of mouth to prepare and organize protests. The group wasn't particularly politically leftwing or rightwing, it was mainly focused on rights struggles and the freedom of speech (Schmid, interview, 2012).

The significant aspect about this movement was that it was the first movement that bridged the middle class intellectuals and activists, living in the large cities focusing on broad systematic changes, and the working class people, mostly living in the industrial cities in the Nile Delta, who focused on economic and often quite local demands (Smet, 2012). "The twin pillars of the revolution," as Smet (2012) calls them, sometimes interacted but often followed their own goals as well. The civil-democratically focused middle classes often approached the working classes in a 'colonizing' way, and the workers were often suspicious of the others' intentions (Smet, 2012). The 6th of April group has remained active over the years and activists were training themselves and organizing events. Mikkawi (interview, 2012) describes their activities as follows:

"They were training since 2006. Going on to the streets, getting beat-up, taking the water cannons, the tear gas, going into jail." (Mikkawi, interview, 2012)

The group was also trying to come up with new protest techniques (Bakr, interview, 2012; Dorpmuller, interview, 2012; Montasser, interview, 2012). Members of the group went to Serbia and New York, for example, to learn strategies for nonviolent revolutions and techniques to confront harassment and government surveillance (Hassan, 2011). One of the techniques they learned and implemented in the revolution was the use of walking marches (Gerbaudo, 2012). This is a strategy to organize the protest in a way that people would meet in a number of different places to march together to a

central point. This strategy will be more fully explained in the next section of this Chapter, which deals with the connectivity, organization and coordination in Egypt.

6.4 Connectivity, organization and coordination

6.4.1 Introduction

As has been elaborated upon in the previous Chapter, social media played an important role in connecting Egyptians and it helped to organize and coordinate the protests. Other ways of communicating and connecting each other, however, are very important in Egyptian society as well. This section first covers the importance of the different ways of communicating within Egyptian society. After this, the role of the television broadcastings, traditional networks and the role of the Muslim Brotherhood will be discussed.

6.4.2 Connectivity

The previous Chapter dealt with the importance of the use of new media tools such as internet, Facebook and Twitter. Other ways of communicating have proven to be important for the organization of the protests as well, however. Most of the people in Egypt have access to television and many people have cell phones. Alterman (2011) estimates that 95 percent of the Egyptians have access to local television channels and 70 percent have access to satellite television channels. The number of mobile phones that have internet access is increasing as well (Tufecki & Wilson, 2012). Tufecki & Wilson (2012) also state that mobile phone penetration in 2010 grew by 24 per cent to the point that 80 per cent of the Egyptian population nowadays has a mobile phone. As explained in the previous Chapter, the computer for every citizen program increased the number of personal computers at home, but there were still relatively few personal computers. Only the upper and middle classes were able to afford such a commodity.

In the questionnaire used for this research people were asked to rate the importance of different media for the organization of the revolution of 2011. Figure 3 shows the results of the answers to this question.
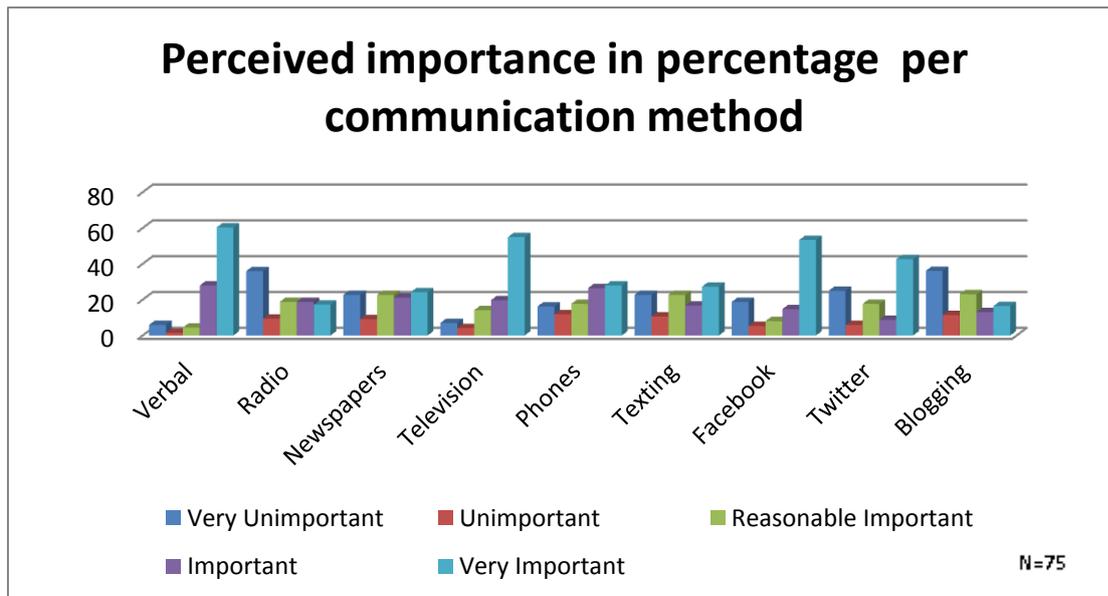
Figure 3: Perceived importance of media platforms

The results indicate that Blogging is not regarded as important for the organization of the revolution, but Twitter and Facebook are perceived by many as very important. Nevertheless, television and word of mouth are perceived as even more important than Facebook and Twitter. In the interviews, television and word of mouth have also been rated as the most important factors contributing to the organization of the protests. The people who did use new media technology weren't replacing the 'old technologies'.

According to Khamis (2008), there is a clear model of coexistence of traditional types of communication, such as interpersonal and oral communications, next to new types of media, such as internet websites and social media. The next paragraphs will elaborate more fully on the coexistence of these different forms of communication and the importance of these ways of getting informed, starting with the importance of television broadcasting, followed by the importance of traditional networks.

6.4.3 Television

Television has played an important role informing the Egyptians about the revolution in Tunisia and about the revolution in their own country (Alterman, 2011). The transfer of the Tunisian revolution happened mainly through international television channels such as Al-Jazeera (Rinke & Roder, 2011). Also during the revolution, many Egyptians were following what was happening in their country through the international satellite channels, as many perceived the Egyptian state channels as unreliable (Pintak, 2011).

6.4.4 Transference of the Tunisian Revolution

On December 17, 2011, a vegetable cart owner from Sidi Bouzid, a town south of the capital of Tunisia, set himself on fire because he

couldn't stand paying the fines to the corrupt police anymore (Schiller, 2010). This sparked a surge of protests in Tunisia. Within four weeks the presidency of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali ended on January 14, 2011 (Schiller, 2010). This was eleven days before the planned protest organized on the Khaled Said page against the violence used by the police in Egypt.

Newspapers, television and social media were discussing what was happening in Tunisia and were showing pictures of the protests (Pintak, 2011). Most Egyptians were actively following what was happening in Tunisia these weeks, as they clearly felt the parallels between the situation in Tunisia before the protests and the situation in their own country at that moment (Feuilherade, 2011). Social media played an important role, but not the main one, in transferring what was happening in Tunisia to the Egyptian people (Gerbaudo, 2011).

For a part of the population television in addition to local ties is the main way of getting informed about things happening outside their own neighbourhood (Wilson & Dunn, 2011). Rinke & Roder (2011) also emphasize the importance of the television in the Egyptian society stating that it is "a highly popular medium in the Egyptian public sphere" (Rinke & Roder, 2011:1279). Often people don't have a television set at home, given their low income. But everyone in society goes to the local café and watches television together. The males are drinking coffee or tea together, while watching television (Schmid, interview, 2012). Rinke & Roder (2011) state that "Al-Jazeera played a key role in the popular spreading of the uprisings" (Rinke & Roder, 2011:1280). People therefore didn't need internet access to know Ben Ali had escaped (Maher, interview, 2012). Everyone in Egypt was watching television and following the process in Tunisia step by step.

The television didn't only transfer the Tunisian revolution to Egypt but it also informed the Egyptians about the circumstances in their country during the revolution.

6.4.5 Television during the revolution

During the days between January 25 and the day Mubarak stepped down, different television channels used various approaches dealing with the situation. The state television had its own agenda (Pintak, 2011). Shahira Amin, the former anchor and deputy head of the state channel ETV (Egyptian TeleVision), states: "We were given press releases from the ministry of interior right from the first day and we were told to say exactly as we were told" (Amin, in: Pintak, 2011:27) Many Egyptians felt they tried to misinform their audience:

"They were deceiving the people and they were trying to put everyone against the people who were protesting at Tahrir." (Bassem, interview, 2012)

According to El-Guindy (interview, 2012), the Egyptian channels were promoting the narrative on the first days that the protestors were a group of people who were trying to destroy the country. This corresponds with the research of Rink & Roder (2011), who state that "From the beginning of the protests, the privately owned channels demonized the demonstrators in the streets as Westernized and drug addicted youths" (Rinke & Roder, 2011:1280). Later, after the first week of the revolution, the Egyptian channels changed their focus to the pro-Mubarak demonstrations and covered less about what was happening at Tahrir Square (Montasser, interview, 2012).

There were talk shows covering topics about what progress the country had made under Mubarak's rule, putting him in a positive light. There were channels that had a camera on Tahrir Square but filming it from the Egyptian museum, showing only a small part of the square, giving the impression that the demonstrations weren't that large (Dorpmuller, interview, 2012). Other channels were showing Tahrir Square without people and empty bridges connecting the area to the rest of the city. According to Pintak (2011), watching ETV was like watching an alternative reality. "On January 28, Al Jazeera showed a split screen with live images of a police vehicle on fire outside the gates of ETV as protestors clashed with police. This, next to ETV's own live signal showing a calming panoramic shot of the city" (Pintak, 2011:27).

People felt there was something wrong with the government controlled channels (El-Bahrawi & Bassem, interview, 2012), and the anger about the Egyptian national TV was very high (Dorpmuller, interview, 2012). So, people shifted to private and international channels that were exposing what was happening and saw two stories at the same time (Pintak, 2011). They had to decide what story to go for (Dorpmuller, interview, 2012). The international news organizations were trying to cover the story in Egypt from the start (Pintak, 2011).

Before the revolution, Al-Jazeera opened a window for the whole Arab population (El-Nawaway & Iskandar, 2002). The first international media broadcasting in Egypt was by CNN (Negm, interview, 2012). It was opening a different window to the world, different from the view presented by the news channels owned and controlled by the government. Bit by bit, more international news broadcasting channels came to the Arab world. But they were only serving a part of the elite population. Only the elite was able to understand the foreign languages, like French, German and English. Al-Jazeera was

the first Arab spoken transnational news channel (El-Nawaway & Iskandar, 2002). This opened a new window. It made the people see that things could be arranged differently in their country (Negm, interview, 2012).

After what was happening in Tunisia, Al-Jazeera and other international news agencies were quick to react to the new story (Alterman, 2011). Al-Jazeera started to refer to Egypt's demonstrations as a revolution already on January 28, just three days into the protests. Through its words and images, Al-Jazeera and many of the other stations validated the protests as revolutionary when they were still in their early days (Alterman, 2011:11). Although Al-Jazeera Arab has a strong Muslim Brotherhood bias, during the revolution it was used as a source of information by many. Al-Jazeera was covering the process in Egypt intensively and their coverage was very accessible (Eskandar, interview, 2012). Rink & Roder (2011) state that "the continuous airing of state propaganda via the national channels, made Al Jazeera become the most important information source inside Egypt for those several days" (Rinke & Roder, 2011:1281). Schmid (interview, 2012) confirms the importance of Al-Jazeera and other international news reporting during the protests, especially at the time the communications infrastructure was cut off (which will be discussed later on in this chapter), as he explains:

"When we stopped protesting, we went to drink something and we watched Al-Jazeera covering the place. There was also national TV, which was spreading lies to make believe that Israel and other foreigners were behind the protests. The TV was a very important tool." (Schmid, interview, 2012)

As shown in Figure 3, there were two ways of communicating that were perceived as more important than the use of Facebook and Twitter. The importance of television has been discussed in the previous section, the importance of traditional networks and word of mouth is covered in the next section.

6.4.6 Traditional networks on the ground

According to Montasser (interview, 2012) and Padberg (interview, 2012) most of the activists protesting on the 25th were connected through Facebook and knew about the events through social media. After the first few days, more and more people from other classes and layers of society joined the protests (Gerbaudo, 2012). From the 28th onward, there were people on Tahrir Square from every part of the country (Gerbaudo, 2002).

The majority of the people who live in the suburbs of Cairo didn't have access to a computer or to social media (Wilson & Dunn, 2011).

They were informed in other ways than the social media users (El-Guindy, interview, 2012). What is most important in Egypt are the social ties on the streets and the chats people have with each other when travelling to work or to the market. Face to face meeting is the most important way of getting informed about what is happening in the country (El-Guindy, interview, 2012) and local community contact is more effective in spreading information for the average Egyptian than electronic media (El-Bahrawi & Bassem, interview, 2012). This also became clear from Figure 3.

Another non-digital method used to inform people about the planned protests was by spreading a leaflet. A week before January 25, a leaflet was made which had been circulating among activist groups and people organizing demonstrations (Black, 2011). Activists from the 6th of April Movement printed 20,000 leaflets anonymously and spread them through Cairo during the days before the revolution (Lim, 2012). The leaflet provided tactical information about how to meet and organize, what songs and slogans to use and what the demands to the government would be (Gaber, interview, 2012).

Instead of announcing that everybody should go to Tahrir Square, the leaflet stated that people needed to start at the nearest street and bring people they knew down from their neighborhood streets (Lim, 2012). The police was going to be waiting on all the large streets and squares. The plan was for the people to stay in their neighborhood streets until the numbers were enough to confront the police (Gaber, interview, 2012). By circulating through smaller streets, by picking up people on more secure routes, even if there would be a low show up rate, a small number of organized people could potentially bring large marches down to the central destination, Tahrir Square. These tactics were used both on the 25th and the 28th of January (Gerbaudo, 2012). People were coming out of their local mosques, meeting up for marches, connecting and looking for ways to march to Tahrir Square. Because of this approach, people had a chance to see the protests, which wouldn't have happened if people would only have met at Tahrir Square. It made the protesters visible and it made them tangible for people who weren't politically active in a way that hadn't happened before (Gaber, interview, 2012).

Another item mentioned on the leaflets, were the chants and the slogans which were to be used (Black, 2011). According to Shaleen (interview, 2012) there were seven to eight chants printed on the leaflet. This created unity among the protesters and made it more difficult for the regime to label the protests as a particular religious, labor or intellectual protest, making it a society-wide protest instead.

The final item addressed in the leaflets were the demands to the government (Black, 2011). The most important items on the list of

demands were the following. The first demand of the people was the resignation of the Minister of the Interior, as he was held responsible for the police force. The second thing the people demanded was the abolishment of the Emergency Law. People also wanted parliament to be dissolved because Mubarak's party held 99% of the seats. Mikkawi (interview, 2012) states that the people were aiming high, but initially the resignation of Mubarak was not on the list of demands of the people.

People who heard from friends or relatives what was happening or that had read the leaflet, spread the information to others. People were discussing the political affairs with their friends, asking what others thought about it (Maher, interview, 2012). These traditional networks are much more important in Egypt than in many individualised Western countries. On the first days of the protests people with a relatively low socio-economic status didn't go to the protests because they had to work for a day by day salary and they were struggling to provide for their families (Gerbaudo, 2011). People from these lower socio-economic classes would be heavily beaten by the police, much more so than the (upper) middle classes who were the main actors protesting and who were the ones organizing the first few days (Gerbaudo, 2011). But when it became clear that the protests would become larger and tensions increased, these people joined in as well.

Another important way of organizing is through the mosque. The mosque is still an important meeting point where people are meeting each other five times per day for the daily prayers. The mosque is also used as a social meeting point where people are often having discussions (Pargeter, 2013). January 28, 2011, was a Friday, which is a day off for religious Muslims. The Friday prayer is the most important prayer of the week, so almost everyone went to the mosque for the noon prayer that day. Deprived of mobile phone connections (which will be more fully explained shortly), everyone was discussing what was happening (Padberg, interview, 2012). The coordination of the marches on the 28th was happening trough the traditional networks in the mosques (Gerbaudo, 2012).

Taxi drivers have also been used to spread the word about the protests. What is happening in other neighborhoods within Cairo is often spread through taxi drivers (Lim, 2012). Taxi drivers are often not well connected to social media, but they drive from one neighborhood to the next, spreading information from local stands and from the clients they are driving (Montasser, interview, 2012). Taxi drivers are a very heterogeneous group in Cairo. There are about 80,000 taxi drivers in Cairo, who are often doing this job in addition to another job during the day or in the evenings (Davies, 2011). Every taxi driver has a different background. They can be teachers who don't earn enough money through teaching in public

schools or unemployed university graduates. These often very talkative drivers played a vital role in spreading the information their customers were telling them and in transferring messages from one neighborhood to another (Davies, 2011). The 6th of April group was well-aware of the possible capacities of taxi drivers to spread information. From January 15 onwards, members of the 6th of April group called friends talking loudly about the planned protests:

"Every time I was in a cab, I would call Ahmed on my cell phone and talk loudly about planning a big protest in Tahrir Square for January 25th, because I knew that they couldn't stop themselves talking about what they'd overheard. Eventually, on January 23rd, a cabbie asked if I'd heard about this big demonstration that was happening in two days." (MIT TVTech, 2011, as quoted in: Lim, 2012)

After a few days everyone in Egypt knew that huge protests were happening in Cairo and other large cities and that new marches were planned for the 28th (Montasser, interview, 2012). When these other groups in society heard through traditional networks and word of mouth what was happening in the downtown area of Cairo, they joined in (Gerbaudo, 2012).

6.4.7 Communications outage

Mubarak's regime has also contributed to the more traditional forms of organizing. When the protests became bigger and bigger day by day after the 25th, the regime tried to defuse the 'Friday of Rage', planned for January 28, by shutting down the access to the internet (Rinke & Roder, 2011).

In *BB = BlackBerry or Big Brother: Digital media and the Egyptian revolution*, Hamamsy (2011) elaborates on three goals he thinks the Egyptian government had with shutting down the internet. The first goal was to keep people close to their homes to protect their property. The government had released thugs from the prisons, which went rioting trough the cities and with the absence of the police the government thought shutting down all means of communication would make people stay at home. Secondly, by blocking the communication channels, the government wanted to conceal the atrocities and the crimes committed to unarmed civilians in the streets. Thirdly, by making it more difficult to communicate, the international media would be less able to cover what was happening on the ground. This would give the government more time to deal with the protesters before the government would receive the condemnation from other leaders (Hamamsy, 2011). The government never issued any statement about blocking the internet during the communications blackout.

The blocking of the internet by the regime is often used as an example of the importance of the use of social media for the revolution (Keif, 2011; Diaz, 2011). But in fact, the most important day of the revolution unfolded without the possibility of using Facebook or Twitter to coordinate the process. The disruption of the flow of communication encouraged traditional mobilization tactics. It made it impossible to act as a passive spectator and only spread activist comments online (Morozov, 2011). People who were active online were triggered to come out of their safe environment and join the marches on the streets.

In publications on the revolution often only the internet shutdown is mentioned, for example in Glanz & Markof (2011), but the mobile phone blackout was more important on the ground than the impossibility to reach social media (Rinke & Roder, 2011). People who were not yet politicized and people who weren't planning to go to Tahrir Square that day, noticed that their mobile phones weren't working anymore, which made them feel deprived of their rights and fuelled public discontent. This motivated many people to join the marches, starting often from central squares and large mosques to go to Tahrir Square (Bakr, interview, 2012). In the course of the day of January 28, the chaos became bigger and more and more people went looking for relatives or friends who couldn't be reached anymore. People who would have stayed at home, became part of the protesting crowd, as Elmahdawy (interview, 2012) explains:

"When you can't reach someone, you will go and look for him or her. All the people went to the Tahrir Square to look for each other. Even if you didn't want to go, you had to go to see what was happening to your friends. Even my family and other friends came to Tahrir. It increased the number of protesters and not decreased them or made them go back home." (Elmahdawy, interview, 2012)

The government didn't have control over the internet and phone infrastructure itself, so it had to force the four largest Internet Service Providers (ISP's) to block their connections. As a response to the communications blackout, large protests were aimed at Vodafone and other companies responsible for blocking the internet and phone connections (Hamamsy, 2011). On February 3, Vodafone stated in a reaction that it was forced by the government to shut down its servers based on the country's emergency laws (Hamamsy, 2011). But the outrage over the companies continued, forcing them to take more assertive action. On February 5, the pressure seemed to have paid off as full internet connections, mobile phone connections, and message services were restored in the country (Hamamsy, 2011).

The communication outage was an important factor that increased the number of people attending the protests. Another factor that

increased the number of people attending the protests was the
decision of the Muslim Brotherhood to take part in the protests.

6.4.8 Muslim Brotherhood involvement

The traditional networks of the Muslim Brotherhood were important
for the coordination of the protests. The Muslim Brotherhood was the
largest and most established opposition movement in the country
(Pargeter, 2013). Officially, the Muslim Brotherhood was not
involved in the revolution. In an analysis of the rise of the Muslim
Brotherhood, Pargeter (2013) claims that the Muslim Brotherhood was
reluctant to become involved because: "They did not want to risk
taking any action that might see it lose the gains it had made over
the past decades and it feared that the regime would retaliate hard
and that it would be the main loser for the whole episode"
(Pargeter, 2013:214). During the days before January 28, there were,
however, some people connected to the Muslim Brotherhood taking part
in the protests. These were mainly the young followers who were
connected to social media and went to the protests independently
(Elmahdawy, interview, 2012; Pargeter, 2011). After the first few
days the Muslim Brotherhood decided to march along in the protests
and help with the organization and coordination (Pargeter, 2013).

El-Guindy (interview, 2012) stated that the Muslim Brotherhood had
its own organizing system, but they blended in, in the protesters,
and they didn't want to be distinguished before Mubarak stepped
down. The members of the Muslim Brotherhood that were attending,
were ordered to shave themselves, not to sing any religious chants,
not to show the Muslim Brotherhood flag, or behave in any way that
could show their background (Pargeter, 2013). By not showing their
identity as an organized group, they empowered the collective
identity of the Egyptian people. The regime couldn't label the
protests as religious fundamentalism or as a coup by the Muslim
Brotherhood (Eskandar, interview, 2012). According to Pargeter
(2013), the Muslim Brotherhood was already wrongly accused by the
government to have been behind the organization of the first
protests and it didn't want to give the regime the ammunition to
discredit the revolutionary process.

When the Muslim Brotherhood became involved, it appeared to be well
organized. When their members became active on January 28, the
communication technologies where disconnected already and the power
of the Muslim Brotherhood was based on its community ties and
personal networks (Pargeter, 2013). Padberg (interview, 2012)
noticed that Muslim Brotherhood members were operating in teams.
Although they tried to cover their identity as Muslim Brotherhood
followers, there were members fighting the police on the front line.
On the 28th, the Tahrir Square became occupied by the protesters and
the Muslim Brotherhood set up fences at the entrance roads to the

square with check points where people entering the square were checked for weapons (Maher, interview, 2012). Pargeter (2013) concludes about the performance of the Muslim Brotherhood that they were the best group in Egypt to do the coordination and that the Brotherhood was in its element. Though this was mostly done behind the scenes (Pargeter, 2013).

Nevertheless, many Egyptians, both Muslim Brotherhood followers as well as non-members, were risking their lives on the streets fighting the security forces. The courage that the people have shown during the revolution is the topic of the next section of this Chapter.

6.5 Attaining hope and overcoming fear

6.5.1 Introduction

For the revolution to take place, people had to attain hope for a better future and show the courage to overthrow the repressive government and deal with the security forces that were sent to confront them, as Mubarak was not giving up his power easily. In the years before the revolution a process had taken place in which the Egyptian mentality changed, as it came to letting their voices heard. Before 2011 there were hardly any capable leaders to take over the role of President Mubarak. But the arrival of ElBaradei, who set up the National Association for Change, gave people hope for a better future and a country without President Mubarak (Kausch, 2010). Seeing the Tunisian revolution unfold in a country that had the same kind of regime as the one Egypt, gave the Egyptians the feeling that they could change their future as well (Spindel, 2011). The Egyptians went to the streets and showed the courage and fighting spirit to endure the battles with the security forces. They risked their lives and didn't give up, which led Mubarak to decide to step down after weeks of making their voices heard.

6.5.2 Overcoming fear

The average citizen in Egypt was used to the political situation of the country and was mostly focused on earning money and providing food for their families. Getting involved in politics or with things that had nothing to do with one's personal environment was seen as interfering with someone else's affairs. Mikkawi (interview, 2012) grew up in international schools and came to Egypt in the 1980s. He felt society was very closed and narrow-minded. People only minded what was happening to their personal environment and that of their friends and relatives.

"When you ask someone why he throws his garbage on the floor, he tells it's none of your business. This was the problem." (Mikkawi, interview, 2012)

People were minding their family and it was rare to see people either active in their community or politically active. People were living under government repression and most Egyptians were too afraid to make themselves heard, because of the state security apparatus. Things were changing in society, however. In the years before the revolution this fear was broken and it became more common for ordinary people, but also for labour union leaders and people working for governmental offices, to go to demonstrations illegally. This signified a shift in the Egyptian mentality. People started to organize demonstrations in order to bring their problems to the attention of the government, in an attempt to improve their lives. It was a brave undertaking to step up and let your voice be heard. Padberg (interview, 2012) recalls that between 2005 and 2010 just a hundred people or so would show up for organized protests. Montasser (interview, 2012) thought that society was boiling, as he called it. Bassem (interview, 2012) explains this mind set:

"People were fed up with was happening in Egypt because of the poverty, the corruption in the government bodies, being unable to have access to education, the lack of access to clean water and lots of other things. The police was brutally beating the people. We just needed someone to initiate this inside them." (Bassem, interview, 2012)

ElBaradei was the first political actor that made people see that change was possible. This will be explained in the next paragraph.

6.5.3 ElBaradei's National Association for Change

ElBaradei became a symbol of the possible alternative to the continuation of the Mubarak regime (Armbrust, 2010). He was a prominent figure in the political build up in the years before the revolution, as the first opposition figure in the Egyptian political spectrum (Eskandar, interview, 2012). ElBaradei had been general director of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and has received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005. When he came back to Egypt in 2010, he set up the National Association for Change (Abaza, 2011). This was an umbrella organization of loosely connected intellectuals and other civil society leaders aimed at changing the constitution, in order to make it possible for independent candidates to run for office (Abaza, 2011).

The National Association for Change came up with seven points of democratic and institutional reforms and a petition for the compliance to international electoral standards (Kausch, 2010). The main points of this petition were: To end the state of emergency, to allow international monitors during the elections, limiting the number of presidential terms, and to make it possible to participate

as an independent candidate in the elections (Kausch, 2010). The group rapidly gained popularity among Egyptians. Shaleen (interview, 2012) signed ElBaradei's petition. But he waited for a while, as he explains:

"I waited until a couple of thousand people had signed it, before I wanted to do it. You had to put in your full name. So you could be completely pinpointed and it would be publicly available. The goal was to collect as many signatures as possible through Egypt to support the legitimacy of the demands. This petition began online, but they started to print it and take it to the streets. But you needed a print of your national ID to make the petition legitimate. I thought at some point, if there are so many people signing it they can't go after every single person signing it. You are not going to be able to arrest everyone. The arrival of ElBaradei to Egypt was a great step." (Shaleen, interview, 2012)

But ElBaradei's movement never gained the support that it needed. A few hundred intellectuals and political activists supported him, but his support didn't reach the numbers that the labor protests did in Mahalla (Kausch, 2010). The international credits ElBaradei had earned, helped him in Egypt. But no one in Egypt was allowed to come to a point of public attention that he or she could rival Mubarak (Shaleen, interview, 2012). When ElBaradei started his campaign, the entire media propaganda engine of the state turned against him (Padberg, interview, 2012). The ruling party, for example, started the offensive against ElBaradei's character by "publishing photos of his daughter in a bikini and the family drinking alcohol" (Armbrust, 2010). Anyone who would be a threat to the position of Mubarak would be threatened and blackened in the state media. This happened to famous singers, the members of the Nasser and Sadat families, and also to the prime minister, according to Shaleen (interview, 2012). ElBaradei's goals nevertheless probably weren't to override the regime's grip on power (Kausch, 2010). The campaign of ElBaradei during the 2010 elections had great meaning in increasing awareness and mobilization however, which empowered the people and opened up possibilities for a power shift in the future (Kausch, 2010).

ElBaradei's performance gave the Egyptian people hope, but the revolution in Tunisia is what truly gave the Egyptians the hope and the courage to stand up to their own regime. This will be dealt with in the next paragraph.

6.5.4 The Tunisian example

The Tunisian revolution was high on people's minds in the Middle Eastern countries (Spindel, 2011). The Tunisian revolution gave the people hope, because Tunisia had always been seen as one of the

strongest dictatorships in the region. Shaleen (interview, 2012) recalls the moment Ben Ali left Tunisia:

"People were really thrilled with what happened in Tunisia. My brother, who is a cautious person and wasn't politically active, was telling me how he was watching Al-Jazeera. When Al-Jazeera said Ben Ali had left, this was a 'wow' moment. Presidents can get down by the people. The first time I heard and saw it was on Al-Jazeera. It made it a possibility that presidents could be protested away. People started thinking about that they were not happy with their lives and that this could maybe changes if the president would go away along with the government." (Shaleen, interview, 2012)

It was a trigger for the people to see that change in their lives was possible (El-Guindy, interview, 2012). According to Padberg (interview, 2012) the headlines in the newspapers and on the satellite television channels were about what country would be next after Tunisia (Spindel, 2011). Analyses were published on the question if, and when, Egypt would follow (Padberg, interview, 2012). What happened in Tunisia gave the Egyptian people the courage to demonstrate and make themselves heard:

"People were thinking, why are they doing this and we are not. We should go and protest about our live conditions as well. People were unemployed and living in horrible situations in slums. People didn't have much to lose and that's why they went." (Negm, interview, 2012)

6.5.5 Participation in the streets

Because of the arrival of ElBaradei and the influence of the Tunisian example, people became more willing to make their voices heard. People started to set themselves on fire to show that their lives were just as bad as Mohamed Bouazizi's (the fruit salesman who ignited the Tunisian revolution by setting himself on fire) (Gaber, interview, 2012). There were ten to twelve individuals setting themselves on fire in Alexandria and in Cairo in the weeks before January 25 (Schmid, interview, 2012; Shaleen, interview, 2012). The protests needed the number of participating people protesting on Tahrir Square to exceed a certain threshold for the protests to become a revolution. If only a few protestors would have shown up, as in the years before, the security forces would have easily swept them away. Eskandar (interview, 2012) explains the importance of the street participation as follows:

"You can't have a revolution without people leaving their homes and their computers and go into the streets. For me the idea of calling the revolution a Facebook revolution, is like calling a revolution a type-writer revolution or a print-house revolution." (Eskandar, interview, 2012)

Many people have been injured and many civilians died in the protests. Egyptians from all layers of society showed huge commitment and courage. The Egyptian revolution didn't take place without its victims. People risked everything on the streets to change the situation they, their family and the country as a whole were in. When Egyptians are asked if they agree to the term 'Facebook revolution', or if they want to give the revolution another label, they answer that it is a 'people's revolution' (Maher, interview, 2012; Eskandar, interview, 2012; Montasser, interview, 2012). Elmahdawy (interview, 2012) answered the question as follows:

"It was not a Facebook or Twitter revolution, it was a people's revolution.(…) It is a revolution of the people through the use of mass protests." (Elmahdawy, interview, 2012)

The willingness of the people to organize themselves and participate actively to achieve a common cause, is one of the most important factors that changed in the years before the protests that led to the stepping down of Mubarak (Padberg, interview, 2012).

6.6 Conclusion

This Chapter has been devoted to answering the question what the people in Cairo think were other contributing factors to the January 2011 revolution, and how they rate the importance of these factors compared to the influence of the social media? To get a grip on all the interdependent processes and factors that were important for the protests to reach the number of participants that went on the streets on January 28 and to achieve the momentum required to create the level of political pressure necessary for Mubarak to step down, this Chapter has structured these processes and factors into four categories.

The processes and factors explained in this Chapter all had to be in place for the revolutionary process to unfold. If there wouldn't have been public discontent, people wouldn't have felt the need to overthrow the government as bad as they did during the revolution. The grassroots activism was a necessary factor in society for the people to become engaged in the political domain in their country. The uprising in Egypt has been built in the decade before the revolution by civil society movements. The Egyptians needed ways to communicate with each other, in order to spread messages and coordinate the revolutionary process which can often be difficult in a repressive environment. And if people wouldn't have risked their lives and shown the courage to stand up to the abusive security forces, the 25th of January would have been another 6th of April, a day that protests were planned but no significant momentum was reached.

As elaborated upon in the previous Chapter, social media was a tool that played a role in the revolution that wasn't seen before. The Egyptian people needed tools to communicate with each other and to organize themselves, to stand up to the political oppression and police brutality. This is where social media played an important role. Through the Facebook page 'We're all Khaled Said', set up anonymously by Wael Ghonim, huge numbers of Egyptians found each other. Nevertheless, seen in the wider structure of interdependent processes, social media played a limited role in only one of the four recognized categories necessary to achieve the momentum for Mubarak to step down. Social media was one of the tools appropriated by the Egyptian people to connect with each other, to organize themselves and to coordinate the revolutionary process. Other tools or communication methods have been appropriated by the Egyptian people to organize and coordinate the revolutionary process as well though.

The momentum of no turning back was reached when all communication technology networks were offline and people had to rely on the television broadcasts, the traditional networks through the mosque, the traditional network of the Muslim Brotherhood and word of mouth on the street, which were crucial for the coordinating and organizing of the marches and the infrastructure on Tahrir Square. Alterman (2011) states that the momentum had been partly reached because the Egyptians were not able to use the social media platforms. By blocking the internet, Mubarak's regime somehow, turned slacktivists into on the street activists.

Based on the interviews and questionnaires, one can conclude that the social media platforms are not perceived as the most important ways to communicate for the organization and coordination of the revolution. Once Tahrir Square was occupied by the protesters, it became the centre of attention. Coordinating and organizing the process through social media platforms became less important as people knew the Tahrir Square had become the centre of the protests.

Nevertheless, the 'Facebook revolution' narrative is well represented among the Egyptian citizens, but they also put emphasis on the importance of the problems in their country that angered them to come to the point that Mubarak had to leave and the courage and devotion of the Egyptian citizens to organize the process and set their personal lives aside for the greater goal of a free and democratic Egypt. This is something that is not covered by the 'Facebook revolution' narrative and many Egyptians feel that only focusing on the tool that has been appropriated by them as a way to connect and organize, takes the agency away of the people who were behind the revolution.

However, different groups in society can represent different narratives in different ways. How different population groups within

Egypt represent the importance of social media is the topic of the
next Chapter.

7. Different interpretations

7.1 Introduction

In this Chapter an answer will be given to the question if there are any differences between various population groups in their opinion about the agency of social media. This question will mainly be answered on the basis of the results coming from the quantitative data collection method. An introduction will be given on which questions have been asked in the questionnaires and which variables have been identified to test for the perceived importance of social media. After this, the data transformation process will be explained, as well as the used statistical tests, and the outcomes from the tests will be presented. This chapter will end with answering the sub-question.

7.2 Introducing the variables

As mentioned in previous Chapters, the importance of the different ways of communicating for the organization of the revolution as perceived by the people in the questionnaires have been filled in, in a 5 point Likert scale, ranging from 'Very Unimportant' to 'Very Important'. The three measured variables for the perceived importance of social media are again shown in Figure 4.
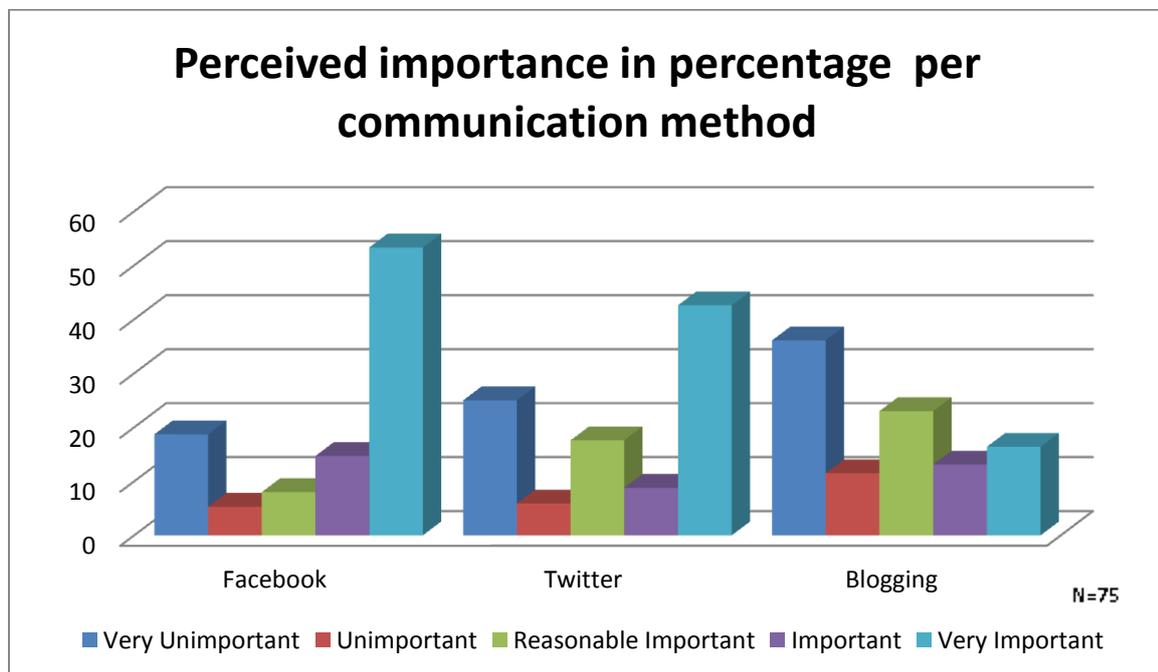

Figure 4: Perceived importance of social media

The results in the graph show that Facebook is perceived as the most important platform of the three identified social media platforms. It can also be concluded from the interviews that, of the three identified social media platforms, Facebook is seen as the most important. The perceived importance of Facebook is therefore used as

the dependent variable to find if there are differences within the Egyptian population about the perceived importance of social media for the organization of the revolution. This variable is tested for the following population statistics:

- The neighborhood the respondent is living in (Neighborhood)
- The age of the respondent (Age)
- The highest level of education completed by the respondent (Education)
- The current employment situation of the respondent (Employment)
- Availability of an internet connection at home (Internet connection)
- Availability of a Facebook account (Facebook Account)
- Participation in the protests during the 18 days between the first day of protests and the day President Mubarak stepped down (Attendance)
- Number of days a person attended the protests (Days of attendance)

The questionnaires have been collected in seven different Neighborhoods in Cairo. These places have been randomly selected, as explained in the Chapter on methodology. Figure 5 shows the number of questionnaires that have been collected from the different neighborhoods.
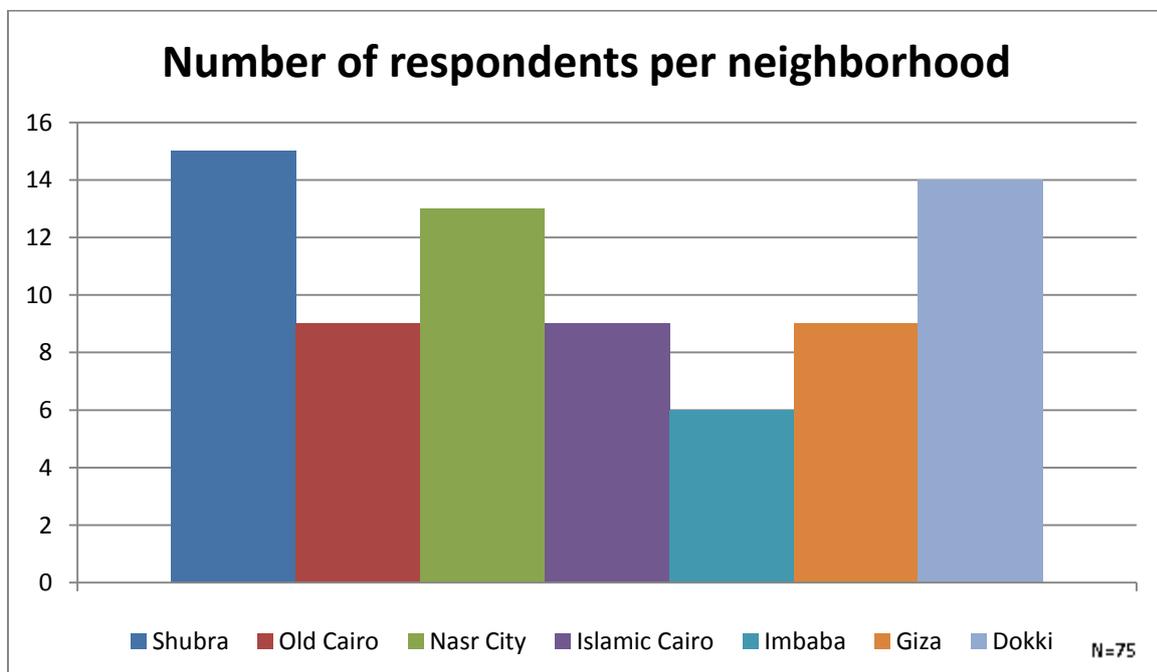

Figure 5: Number of respondents per neighborhood

The map in Figure 6 gives an overview of the neighborhoods where the questionnaires have been collected. The neighborhoods, that have been randomly selected to collect the questionnaires, are circled in the map.
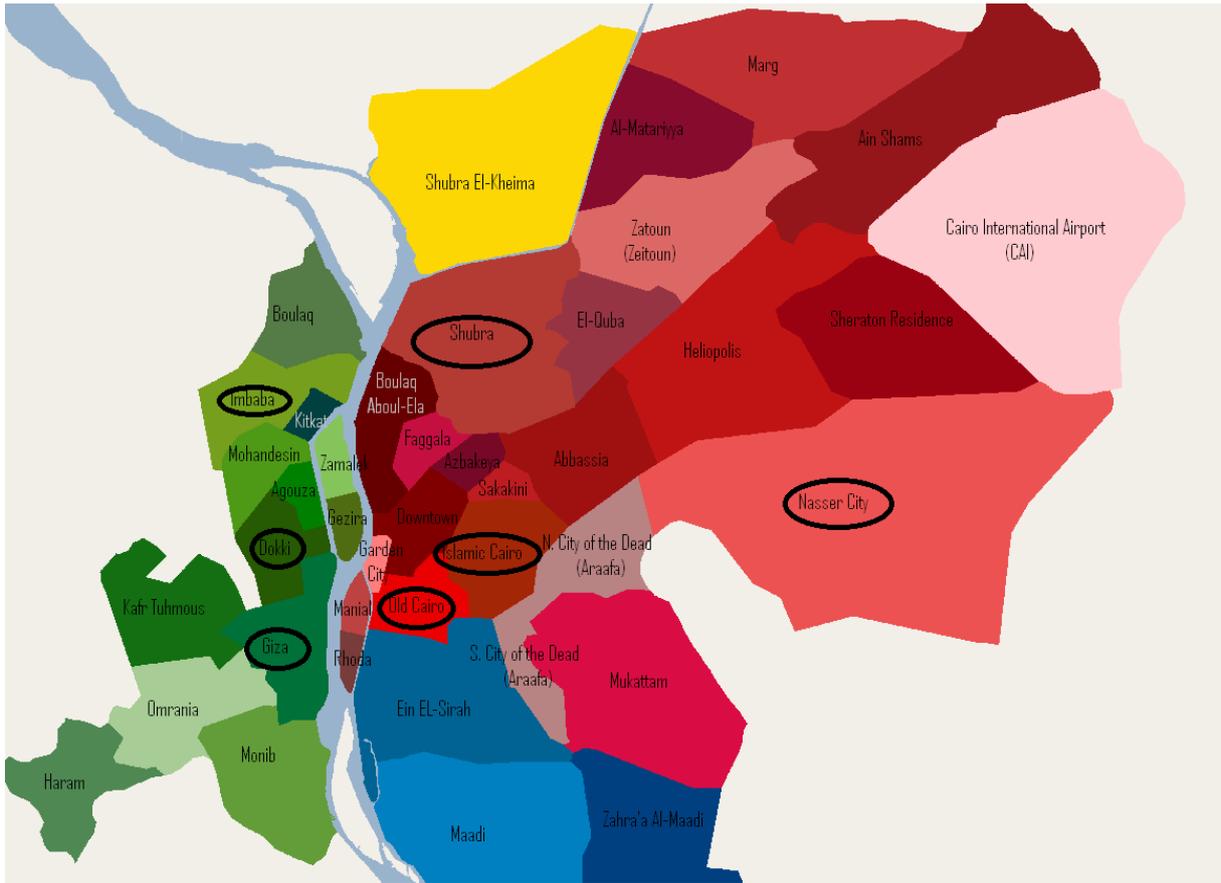
Figure 6: Map of questionnaire collection places

One of the questions in the questionnaire that the respondents had to fill in was their age. The age of the respondents ranged from 13 to 64. For the statistical tests, the respondents have been split in six age groups (see Figure 7). There seems to be a bias in the age group of '20 to 29', the implications of this will be further explained in the 'Transforming variables' section of this Chapter.
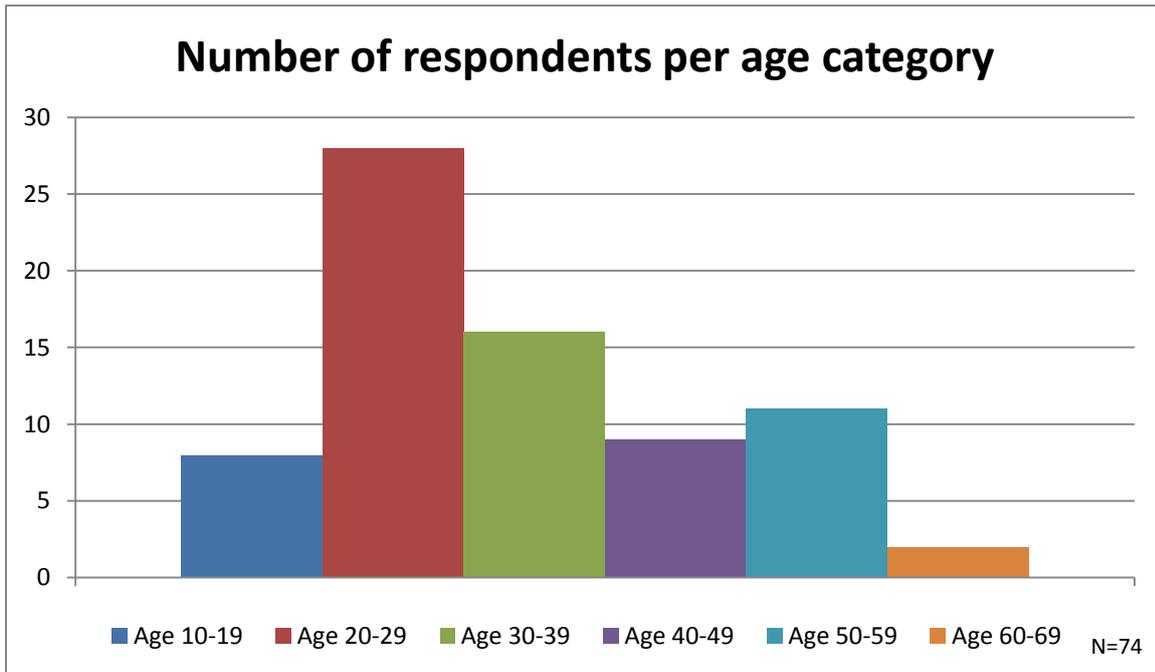
Figure 7: Age spread of the respondents

The highest level of education was also one of the questions the respondents had to give an answer to. For the highest level of education completed, the respondents could choose between 'None', 'Grade school', 'High school' and 'University'. Figure 8 gives a visual impression of the highest achieved level of education of the respondents.

Figure 8: Highest level of education achieved

Figure 8 shows a bias towards more higher educated respondents. A report from Chatham House shows that improving the education system became an important part of the modernization project of Abdel

Nasser in the 1950s (Loveluck, 2012). "Nasser offered guarantees that all university graduates would be able to find employment in the public sector, a promise that contributed to a rapid increase in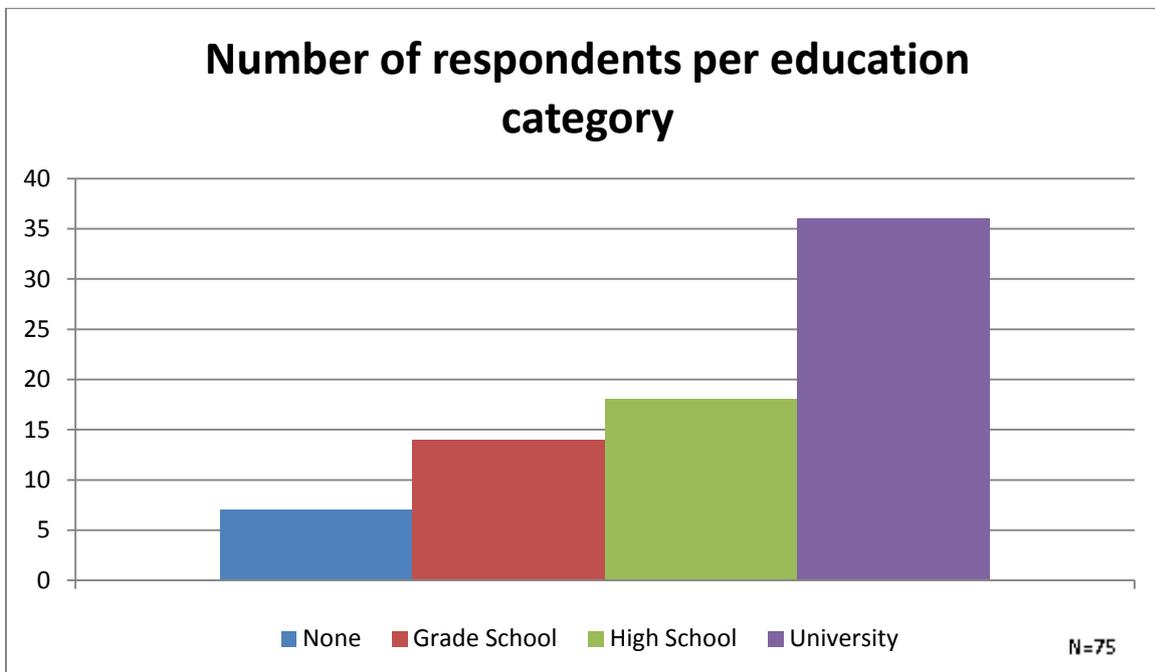 university enrolment rates in the following decades" (Loveluck, 2012). Many people who are working in low qualified jobs, therefore, still hold an university diploma. This bias can of course also partly be ascribed to the fact that more higher educated people were more willing to cooperate with this research. However, the tests based on the highest achieved education compared to the perceived importance of social media showed some interesting results, as will be discussed later on in this Chapter.

To measure the current employment situation of the respondents, the respondents had to choose between: 'In paid work (including self-employment)', 'In education', 'Unemployed', 'Permanently sick or disabled', 'Retired' or 'Looking after the home'.
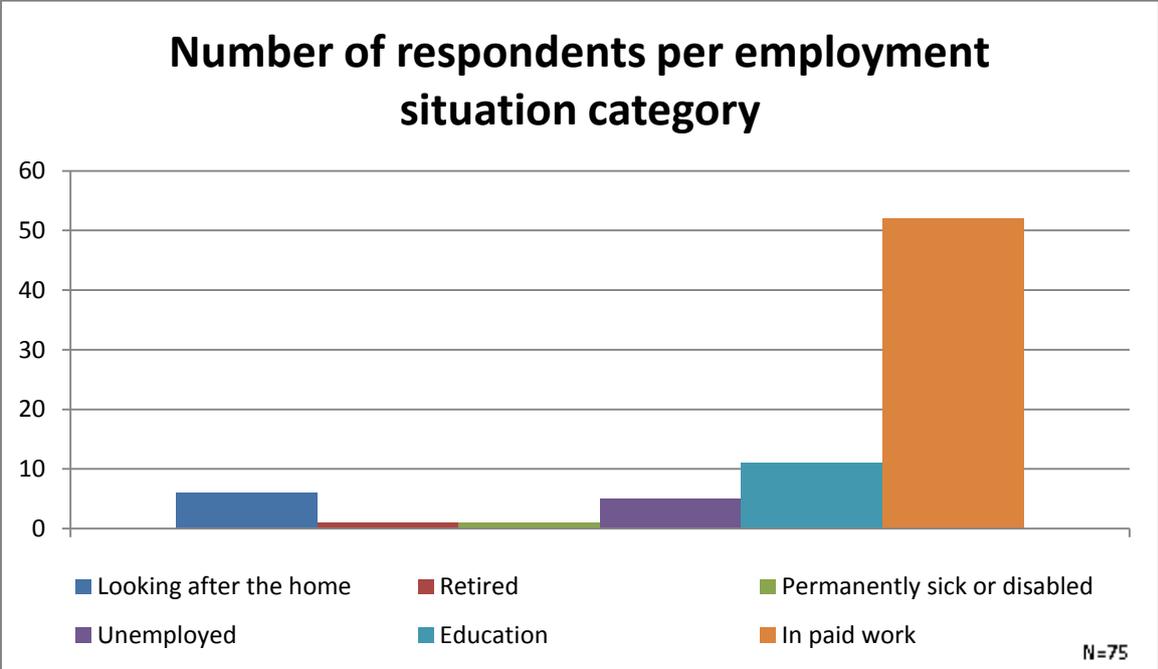
Figure 9: Employment situation

Figure 9 gives a visual impression of the employment situation of the respondents. It shows, as expected, that most of the respondents had a paid job.

The respondents were also asked to fill in whether or not they had an internet connection at home, if they had a Facebook account and if they attended the protests. These questions were answered by putting a cross in either the 'yes' or the 'no' checkbox. The results of these questions are shown in Figures 10 and 11.
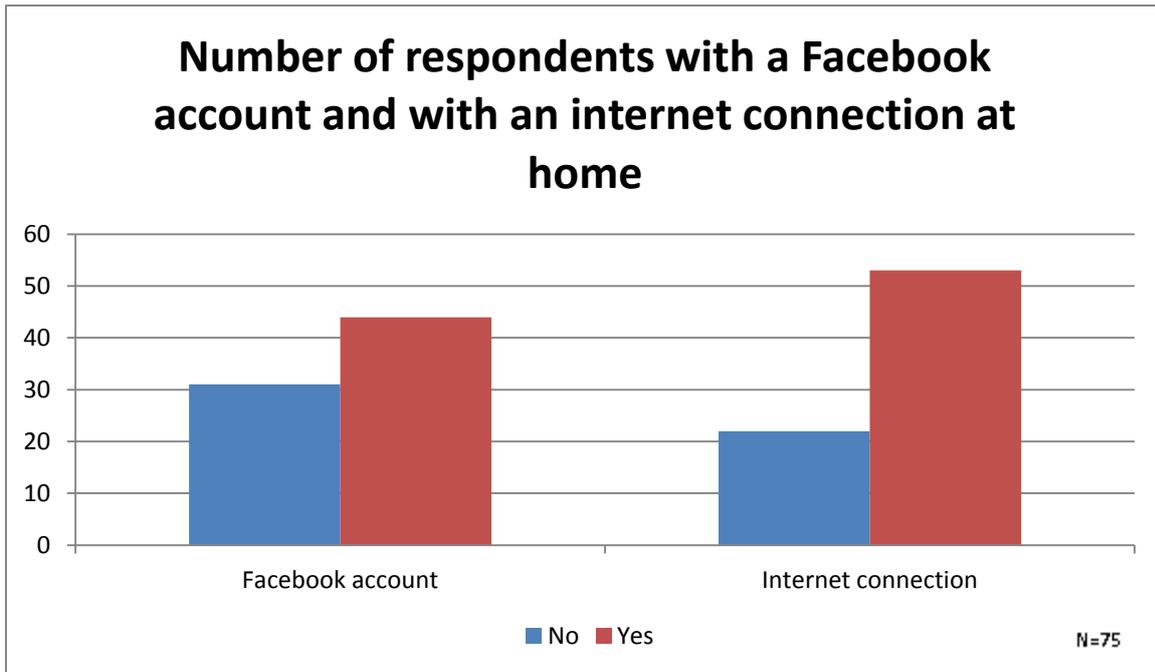
Figure 10: Facebook account and Internet connection results

The number of people that have an internet connection at home is higher than the number of people who have a Facebook account, as shown in Figure 10.

The last population statistics that have been tested for the perceived importance of Facebook, are if the people attended the protests, and the number of days the respondent had been protesting.
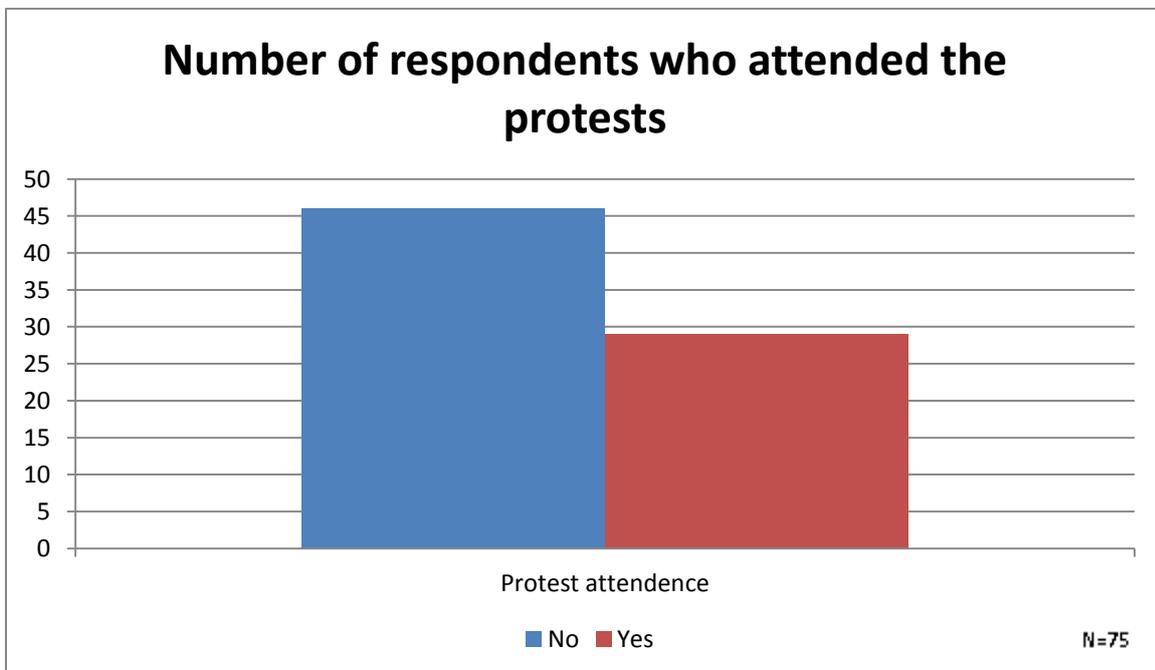
Figure 11: Protest attendance

When looking at Figure 11, it becomes clear that the majority of the Egyptians didn't attend the protests. Of those who did attend the

protests, Figure 12 gives an indication of the number of days that
they attended the protests.
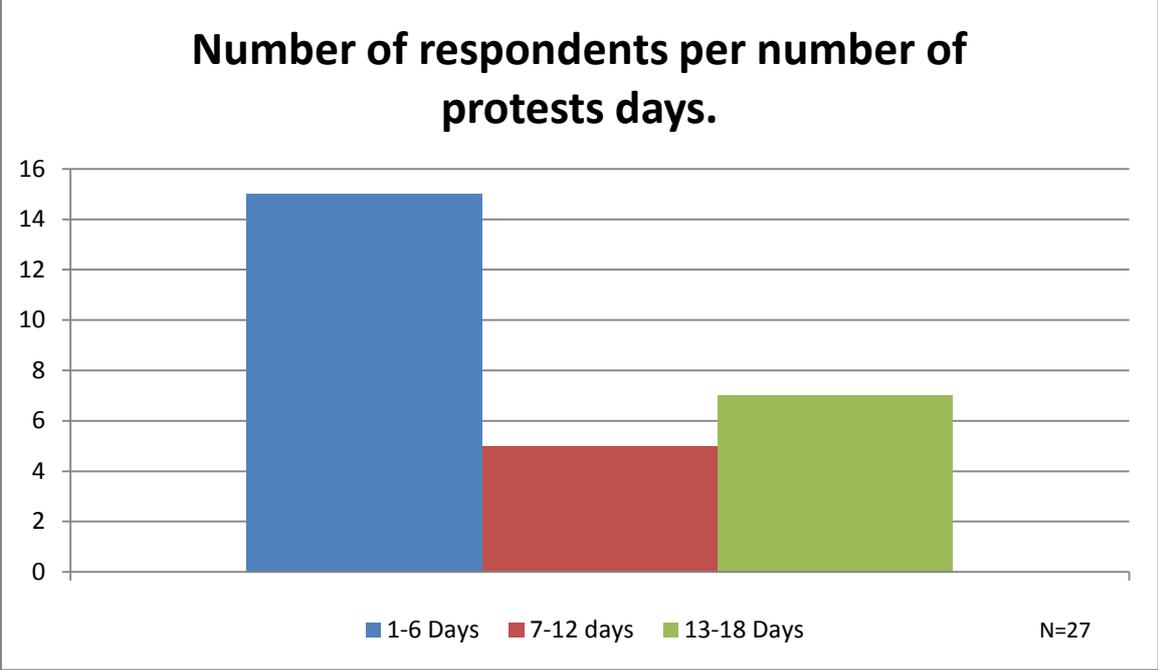
Figure 12: Number of respondents per number of protests days

The measurement of the number of respondents per number of protests
days shows a clear bias towards the lower numbers, as the majority
of the people joined the protests only for a few days; only few went
to Tahrir Square every day.

Some of the variables had to be transformed for the statistical
tests, which is the topic of the next paragraph.

7.3 Transforming the variables

Some of the variables could not be tested in their original measured
scale, because some tests require a specific variable distribution
(Norusis, 2006). The statistics on age and the number of days that a
respondent participated in the protests are ratio variables. This
makes for the possibility to make the ratio variable the dependent
variable instead of the Likert-scale variable of the importance of
Facebook. Testing the connection between these variables in this way
would allow the use of a One-Way Analysis of Variance test (Norusis,
2006). In order to use this test, the variables have to be
independent, to have a normal distribution and the variances have to
be equal (Norusis, 2006). Unfortunately, both the ratio variables
when tested for normality, based on a 95% confidence interval, using
both the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and the Shapiro-Wilk test, are
proven not to be normally distributed. Transforming the variables by
taking the logs or the square roots of the statistics didn't
contribute to make the variables pass the normality tests. For the
number of days that a person attended, it seemed logical, as most

people attended the protests for only one or two day(s). The age variable seems not to pass the normality tests, probably because elder people were less likely to discuss their political views with the researcher when collecting the questionnaires. This resulted in a bias in respondents of the age group between 20 and 30 years old. To test the perceived importance of Facebook for the age of the respondents and the number of days that the respondents participated in the protests, these variables have been transformed into categorical variables. Six age groups were made, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, and three groups were made of the number of days that people were protesting.

After transforming the variables, these variables and the other mentioned variables were tested using the statistical tests discussed in the next paragraph.

7.4 Statistical tests

All variables were, after transforming the variables, either nominal or ordinal variables. Measurement of association tests have been conducted to test for significant differences between the peoples' perceived importance of the use of Facebook based on the independent variables mentioned above (Norusis, 2006). The Chi-Square test or other measurements of association based on the Chi-Square test were not used because the outcome of the Chi-Square test depends on the sample size (Norusis, 2006). For a larger sample size, the Chi-Square statistic becomes larger as well. The Chi-Square test also doesn't tell anything about how the variables are related, whereas measurements of association designed for ordinal variables such as the Kendall's Tau-C and the Sommers'D do indicate how the variables are related (Norusis, 2006). Furthermore, as a general rule, the Chi-Square test cannot be used when more than 20 per cent of the cells in a crosstab have an expected value lower than 5, or if the minimum expected frequency of any of the cells is less than 1 (Norusis, 2006). Because of the relatively small dataset acquired through the questionnaires, the Chi-Square test has therefore been avoided.

The Labda statistic has been used for the 'Neighborhood' and 'Employment' variables, as these variables do not have a direction of the relation between the two variables because they are categorical and not ordinal. The Kendall's tau-C and the Somers'D statistics were used as an indication of the direction and significance of the relation between the other variables and the perceived importance of Facebook variable.

The H0 (null hypothesis) of these tests is that the answer that the Egyptian people give to the independent variable has no influence on their perceived influence of social media. The alternative hypothesis is that the test variables do influence the perceived

influence of social media of the people living in Egypt and that there thus is a connection between the test variable and the perceived influence of social media. When analyzing the data, a 95 per cent confidence interval was assumed, meaning that an observed significance level of below 0.05 means that there is a significant connection between the two tested variables (Norusis, 2006). The height of the test value gives an indication to the strength of the connection between the two tested variables.

7.5 Results

The results from the statistical tests are shown in the table below. All the variables in the table are tested as independent variables with the dependent variable being the perceived importance of Facebook for the organization of the revolution.

Test Variable	Used Test	Test Value	Significance
Neighborhood	Labda Facebook dependent	0.233	0.156
Age	Kendalls's tau-C	−0.077	0.397
	Somers'D Symmetric	−0.081	0.397
Education	Kendalls's tau-C	0.170	0.045
	Somers'D Facebook Dependent	0.190	0.045
Employment	Labda Facebook dependent	0.086	0.253
Internet Connection	Somers'D Facebook dependent	0.340	0.012
	Kendall's tau-C	0.282	0.012
Facebook Account	Somers'D Facebook dependent	0.441	0.000
	Kendalls's tau-C	0.427	0.000
Attendance	Somers'D Facebook dependent	−0.001	0.995
	Kendalls's tau-C	−0.001	0.995
Days of Attendance	Somers'D Facebook dependent	−0.009	0.958
	Kendalls's tau-C	−0.008	0.958

The first conclusion that can be drawn, is that this data set cannot prove any relationship, based on a significance level of 0.995, between the rating of the influence of Facebook and the question whether or not people attended the protests. That does not mean that there is no relationship, but the data acquired through the questionnaires do not show a connection. Also, when looking at the people who did attend the protests, this data set does not prove a relation between how many days people were participating in the protests and the perceived importance of Facebook. This data set also does not provide enough evidence to prove a connection between

what neighborhood people are living in and the importance the people ascribe to the use of Facebook. The outcome of the Labda measurement of association is also not significant for the employment situation, meaning that the H0 hypothesis cannot be rejected. Using this data set, no connection can be proven between the employment situation of Cairenes and their rating of the importance of the use of Facebook. Another result, that wasn't expected, is that no connection can be proven between the age and the importance of Facebook. Many authors speak of a relatively young group of social media users in Egypt (Gerbaudo, 2011; Filiu, 2011). Nevertheless, the H0 hypothesis that people of different ages in Egypt find Facebook equally important cannot be rejected based on the data from this data set.

Some of the tests did give a statistical significant result, however, meaning that there is a relation in society between the independent variable and the perceived importance of Facebook. The highest level of education completed does have a relation to the perceived importance of Facebook. With a significance level of 0.045 for both the Sommers'D and the Kendall's tau-C statistic, we can reject the H0 hypothesis that there is no connection between education and how important people perceive Facebook. The Sommers'D has a value of 0.190, meaning that there is a mild and positive relation between the level of completed education and the perceived importance of Facebook.
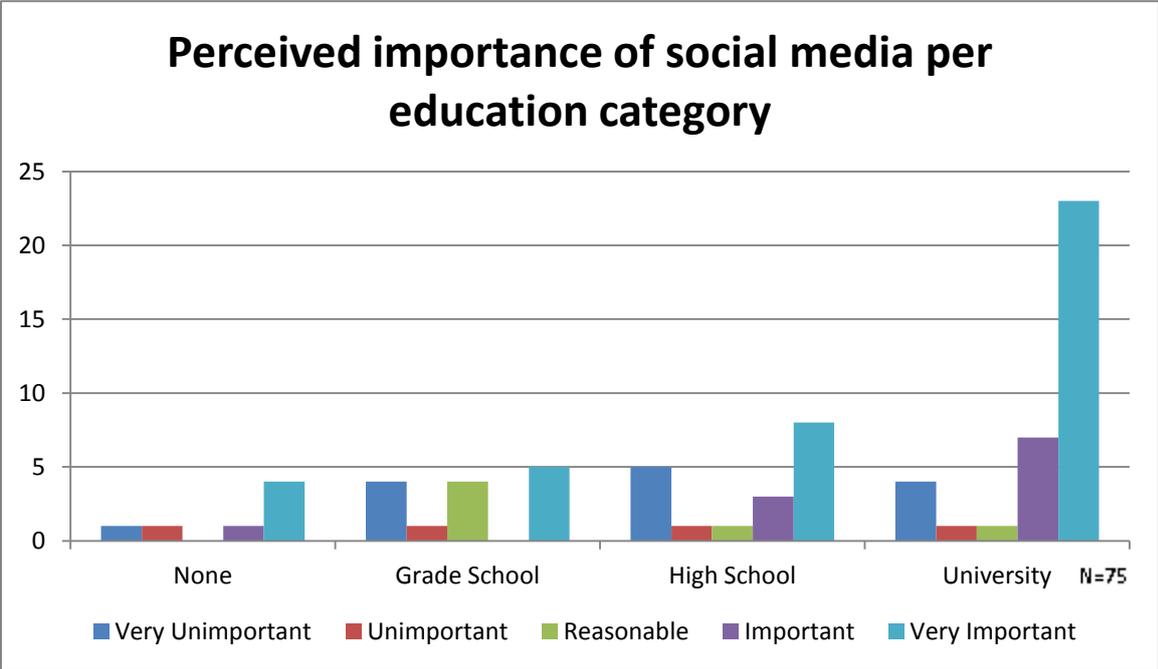

Figure 13: Highest level of education completed

When looking more closely at the connection between these variables in Figure 13, one can see that whatever education a respondent has completed, the most likely answer when asked to rate the importance of Facebook for the organization of the protests is 'Very Important'. Nevertheless, those who had a 'University' diploma found

the use of Facebook relatively much more important than those who only had a 'Grade School' diploma or a 'High School' diploma.

Statistical significant results also showed in the tests concerning the relationship between access to an internet connection at home and having a Facebook account on the one hand, and the perceived influence of Facebook on the other, with significance levels of respectively 0.000 for both the Sommers'D and the Kendall's tau-C tests for Facebook and significance levels of 0.012 for both the Sommers'D and the Kendall's tau-C tests for having internet at home. The H0 hypothesis can be rejected for these variables. There thus is a connection between the access to an internet connection at home and the perceived importance of Facebook and a connection can also be proven between access to a Facebook account and the importance of Facebook for the organization of the revolution.

Both the Somers'D test and the Kendall's tau-C test have positive test values for the connection between having internet at home and the importance of Facebook of respectively 0.340 and 0.282. This is a positive and mild to moderate relation, meaning that people in Cairo who have an internet connection at home give a higher rating to the importance of Facebook than people without an internet connection at home.

Figure 14: Internet at home

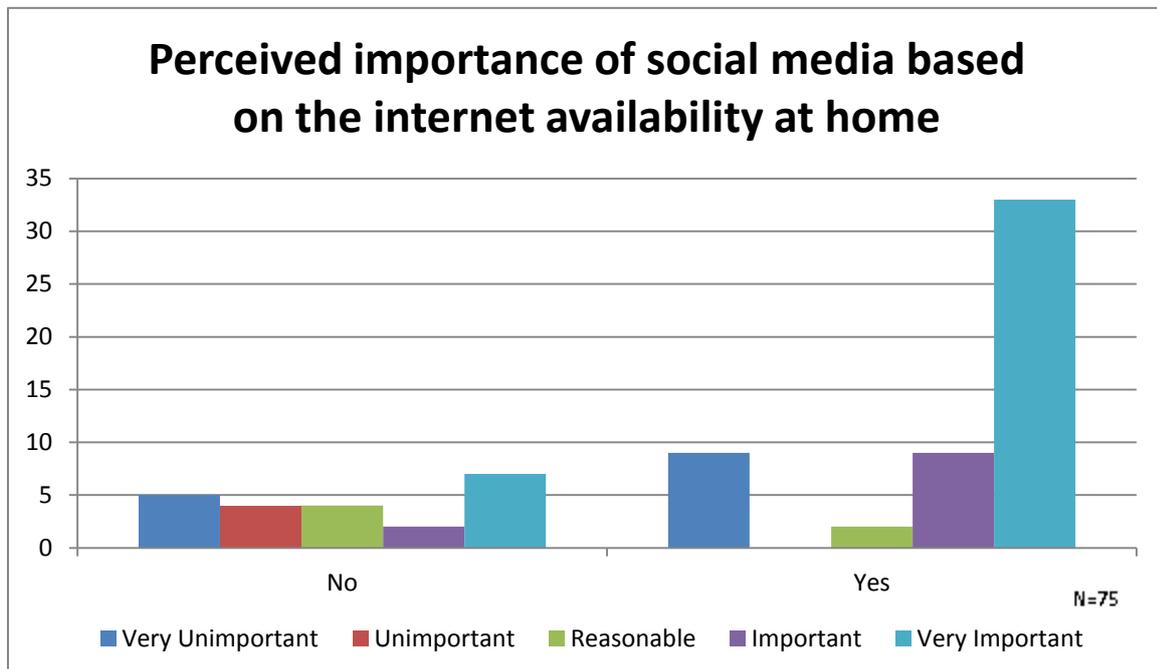This connection also becomes evident when looking at Figure 14. In the group of Egyptians that have an internet connection at home, as many found Facebook 'Very Unimportant' as the number that found it 'Important'. Nevertheless, by far the majority of the Egyptians who have an internet connection at home, found Facebook 'Very Important' for the organization of the protests. The Egyptians who didn't have

an internet connection at home, are more nuanced on the importance
of Facebook for the organization of the revolution. When the
comparison is made between those who find Facebook less than
reasonably important and those who find Facebook more that
reasonably important, the difference between those who have an
internet connection at home and who don't have an internet
connection at home becomes the most evident.

The connection between having a Facebook account and the perceived
importance of Facebook for the revolution is also positive,
according to the Somers'D and Kendall's tau-C values. With values of
respectively 0.441 and 0.427 for the Somers'D and the Kendall's tau-
C test, this relationship is moderate to strong.

Perceived importance of social media based on the availability of a Facebook account
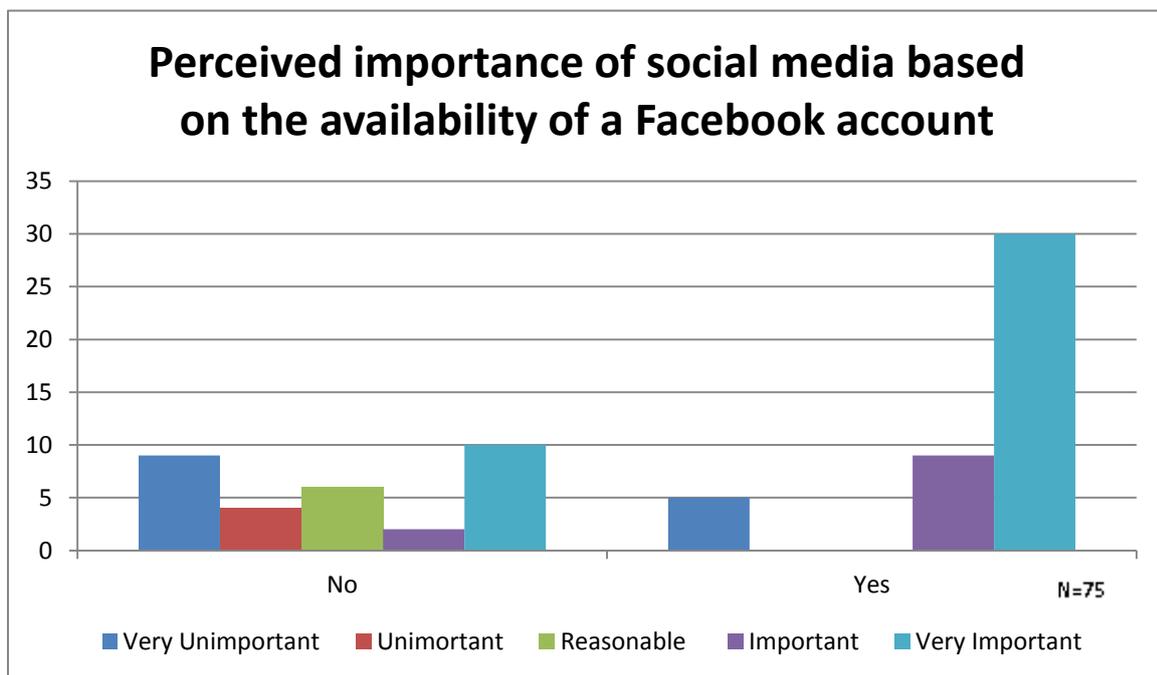
Figure 15: Facebook account

This connection also becomes clear when looking at Figure 15. One
can see that almost every respondent who had a Facebook account
thought that the influence of Facebook was either 'Important' or
'Very Important', while those who didn't have a Facebook account
were more nuanced about the importance of its use. People who have a
Facebook account themselves, thus perceive Facebook as more
important for the organization of the revolution.

7.6 Conclusion

This Chapter has been devoted to answering the question if there are
differences between different population groups in their opinion
about the agency of social media. This question has mainly been
answered by using quantitative data. Although the sample size of the
quantitative data set wasn't as large as aimed for, the statistical
tests gave some interesting results.

No differences in the opinion about the level of agency of social media have been found using this dataset based on age, neighborhood of residence, the employment position, or the level of participation in the protests. There could be a relation between these factors, however, even if such a relation cannot be proven using the data acquired in this research. A larger dataset or a different data collection method could show relations between these factors.

Even so, differences have been found between different population groups in the Egyptian society in their opinion about the agency of social media based on the level of education, the availability of an internet access at home and the availability of a Facebook account.

To some, this connection might seem obvious. Those who have experienced a higher level of education, are often better off in Egyptian society. This group of people is thus in a better position to afford a personal computer with internet access in their house and are thus more likely to use the communication platforms that the internet offers such as Facebook and other social media platforms.

One theory is that those platforms of communication and those factors and processes that one encounters in one's own personal life are perceived as more important than processes and factors that are out of one's own cognitive framework. In contrast, the social media users could have experienced that there were not so many Facebook activists and that most of the Facebook users were using the social media platforms for slacktivistic activities.

The next Chapter will look more closely at the explanations that can be given for the coexisting of these different narratives about the importance of the use of social media for the organization of the revolution.

8. Differences explained

8.1 Introduction

The use of social media has been an important factor for the organization of the revolution in Egypt, as explained in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 concluded, however, that the importance of the use of social media has to be placed in a wider framework and that, in addition, many Egyptians feel that the agency is taken away from the Egyptian people when their revolution would be labeled as just a 'Facebook revolution'. When looking at different population groups in the Egyptian society, it becomes clear that there are differences in the level of agency that people ascribe to the use of Facebook in the revolution in Egypt, as explained in the previous Chapter.

This chapter will discuss explanations that can be given for the coexisting of the different narratives about the importance of the use of social media for the organization of the revolution. This sub-question will be answered by, first, looking at how different ideas and narratives of the use of social media are grounded in Egyptian society and what explanations can be given for this. Another way of looking at this question, is by analyzing how these different narratives were produced before they became represented in Egyptian society. How are the different opinions and different narratives on the role of social media for the organization of the revolution created? These questions are difficult to answer. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to elaborate upon these questions, and to theorize how the differences in thinking about social media can be explained, without the assumption that a comprehensive answer to these questions will be found.

8.2 Expressing one's own cognitive framework

In answering the third sub-question, it became clear that there is a positive connection between the perceived importance of the use of social media and the level of education, having home internet access and having a Facebook account. People who are highly educated think that Facebook was more important than people who didn't get a university diploma. More highly educated people with a Facebook account and an internet connection at home, are thus the group of people who rate the importance of new media more highly. This finding corresponds with the results from the in-depth interviews, in the way that people who were using Facebook and social media were mainly higher educated and from higher socio-economic classes. A connection has thus been found between the level of use of social media and the importance ascribed to its use for the organization of the revolution. This is a key finding to understand the coexistence of the different narratives about the agency of social media. The people who weren't using social media, didn't need the platforms to become aware, to connect and to organize and are thus probably less

aware of how important the platforms were for the people in society who did use it.

For the group in society that was often using social media, the platforms were important for the revolution for several reasons.

The first reason is that the platforms allowed the social media users to see the problems in society which they would otherwise not have been aware of or at least to a lesser extent (Keif, 2011). Bakr (interview, 2012) stressed that the working class people on the streets were well aware of the problems, the corruption and the police abuse. The people living in the richer neighborhoods, who could afford an internet connection at home, saw the problems on the streets, which they either weren't aware of or in denial of, for the first time through these new platforms (Bakr, interview, 2012). It was an eye opener for the elite in Egypt and the Western media (Negm, interview, 2012). The more well-off groups in Egyptian society didn't experience the human rights violations on the streets and, if they did, they could buy off the perpetrators (Puddephatt, 2012).

Most of the Egyptians on the streets weren't paying attention to the videos, however, and didn't need to see the videos because they were experiencing the abuses shown on a daily basis. So, for the people who were confronted with these experiences for the first time through Facebook and other social media platforms, social media and Facebook were very important, expanding their scope to processes of which people who didn't use social media were already well aware of. The social media users thus credit the social media platforms for its transferring capacity, while those people who didn't use social media didn't need the transferring capacity of these new platforms to become aware of the problems in their country.

The second reason why social media platforms were important for the revolution for the groups in society that were often using social media, is that via communication through social media platforms on the problems in their country, they were channeling their anger together for the first time. Other authors have stated before that the social media networks were the primary factor that enhanced the ability of the higher classes to channel popular anger via user generated content (Rinke & Roder, 2011). As mentioned earlier, the richer classes in the Egyptian society mostly live in their own bubble and don't interact much on the streets. These platforms made them become aware of others in society who were angered about the circumstances in their country as well (Suarez, 2011). The pictures exposing murders and torture were posted on blogs and gross cases of police brutality were exposed (Diaz, 2011). The social media platforms were strengthening and amplifying the perceived personal grievances of the Egyptian people through the publications of

stories of other citizens (Alterman, 2011). This is something many people who weren't using social media were less aware off.

The third reason why users of the social media platform find the use of its platform important, is because the demonstrations on January 25 were organized through the Facebook page about Khaled Said (Verman, 2011). Social media was appropriated by the individuals who had an internet connection at home and who were using Facebook to organize this event. On January 25, most of the activists and protestors on the streets were the ones who were also active on social media (Amin, interview 2012); see also the answer to the second sub-question. Negm (interview, 2012) claims that the movement was started by the richer group in society who were mainly more highly educated, who had an internet connection at home and who had a Facebook account:

"The main movement started by, I would call, the richer ones. If you have a place to stay and you have a job and you're earning money to put food on the table, you are one of the richer ones in this context. Those were the ones driving the organization of the protests." (Negm, interview, 2012)

Furthermore, when answering the first sub-question, the leaderlessness of the revolution was ascribed to the pre-organizing of the events by the people on social media. The people who didn't use Facebook and who weren't using the internet in a political way, mostly came in on the 28th of January and in the days after that (Gerbaudo, 2012; Amin, interview 2012). Most of the members of the Muslim Brotherhood, for example, joined on January 28 (Pargeter, 2013). These people felt they had the agency of the revolution. The point of no return, which was the moment that the protests were seen as the start of revolution, was on January 28. This was the day that most of the non-Facebook users joined, when they heard what was happening through more traditional networks (Gerbaudo, 2013). In addition, the regime had closed all communication networks by this date, so the social media platforms became less important, especially once Tahrir Square was occupied on the evening of the 28th (Hamamsy, 2011). Tahrir Square then became the factor that attracted the people and coordination using social media was not a necessity anymore.

The people who were using social media thus felt they were the organizing actors who created the first opportunity for change, using the tools they appropriated for their purposes. They were already feeling politically active during a period of time before the 25th, sharing their discontent on social media platforms (Rinke & Roder, 2011). This could be a reason why the people who do have a Facebook account and who do have an internet connection at home, rate the importance of these factors more highly than the people who went to the streets at the point that the protests already had

reached significant numbers. The people from more lower social classes joined the protests at a point that social media was less important. In addition, they didn't have a Facebook account themselves and thus didn't experience the shared discontent and the organization of events on the platform.

Some nuance is important here. Both users and non-users of social media found the use of social media important for the organization of the revolution, as was shown in the previous Chapter. Statistical significant differences about the ascribed agency of social media have been proven between population groups, but both users and non-users emphasize its importance. Another nuance that has to be made, is that from the in-depth interviews it appears that when asked to rate the agency of the medium, they represented the medium as a tool which was appropriated by the people (Mikkawi, interview, 2012; Negm, interview, 2012; El-Guindy, interview, 2012). The interviews bring forward that these tools were very important for the organization of the revolution, but that they have to be placed in the wider structure of Egyptian society. Many people find the use of social media very important and a base for the revolution, but they rate it important because of the way the activists have used it (Mikkawi, interview, 2012). In the end, people rather want to label it as a people's revolution in which activists used the tools at hand (Gaber, interview, 2012). Most people express the importance of social media, but subsequently emphasize that labeling the revolution as a 'Facebook revolution' takes the agency away from the Egyptian citizens (Eskandar, interview, 2012; Elmahdawy, interview, 2012; El-Guindy, interview 2012).

The last section gave some explanations of why various groups perceive the importance of the use of social media for the organization of the revolution differently. The next section of this Chapter will look at how the narrative that social media was a very important factor has been produced.

8.3 The news and citizen journalism

Another way of looking at how the differences in opinion can be explained, is by analyzing how the 'Facebook revolution' narrative has been produced. The news companies that send the news bulletins worldwide, have become more and more dependent on citizens instead of journalist as it comes to acquiring information about local events (Dahlgren, 2009). Because of the social media developments over the last decades, community and citizen reporting has been growing (Wilson, 2012). During the Egyptian revolution, most of the news corporations were using the information from social media sources because of the changes towards citizen journalism (Kerkhof, 2011), broken communication links inside Egypt (Hamamsy, 2011) and because the chaotic revolutionary process didn't allow mainstream journalists to cover every event (Alterman, 2011). Alterman (2011)

states that the New York based Committee to Protect Journalists described the blogging, idea sharing, text messaging and live streaming from mobile phones of the demonstrations in Tahrir Square as a seismic shift and an example of how media channels rely on the internet and other digital tools (Alterman, 2011).

The people on the streets in Cairo were distributing their own pictures and videos, as explained in Chapter 1. According to Wilson (2012), citizen journalism could be defined as, "public citizens playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analysing, and disseminating news and information" (Wilson, 2012:2). Because the relationship between journalism, the news and citizen journalism, is often emphasised, many professional journalists have criticized this subjective information source.

They criticize citizen journalism for being too amateurish and subjective, both in quality and coverage, as Wilson (2012) explains: "By sharing the term journalism, there seems to be an in-built expectation from the mainstream that citizen journalists should be maintaining the standards and mimicking the guidelines by which professional trained journalists tell their news. In reality though, individual citizen journalists can enjoy the freedoms of telling their stories in their own ways using social media to do so – and the results can therefore be wide-ranging in efficacy, effect and form" (Wilson, 2012:2). Some stories that Egyptians were posting on social media platforms were newsworthy and meant to be published as a source of news; often, however, individuals were telling stories about their own experiences and their own lives rather than reporting stories meant to be published (Wilson, 2012).

Of course, all of the information from citizen journalists in Egypt came from Egyptians who were using social media as a tool to communicate and organize themselves. They were often reporting on their personal experiences of which the use of social media was an important factor during the revolution. People in Egypt who weren't using social media, didn't have the possibility to become citizen journalists as they did not have access to social media. News organizations from around the world, which were often using information from social media, were thus mainly informed by either social media users inside Egypt or journalists who would mostly only approach Egyptians who could speak English and were thus highly educated. The relationship between the Egyptian protests and the use of social media was, therefore, soon stressed by the traditional media, particularly in the early weeks of the protests, according to Kerkhof (2011). Both Padberg (interview, 2012) and Alterman (2011) emphasize that the 'Facebook revolution' narrative has mainly been produced by the news agencies.

There were other reasons as well, however, why the traditional media stressed the importance of the use of social media as is it a closed domain, which is easy to transfer to the audience.

8.4 Closed domain

The audience receiving the news information could easily relate to the 'Facebook revolution' narrative, as the internet and Facebook are Western inventions (Carruthers, 2011). According to Filiu (2011), the media tended to emphasize such a dimension first because it was catchy, but also because it was far easier to document than less virtual kinds of activism. Social media has spread through Western societies quickly and the news story thus fit in the cognitive framework of the audience (Padberg, interview, 2012).

The idea that social media organized a revolution, is also very romantic and many people find it intriguing. News is always produced for an audience that must be able to relate to it (Carruthers, 2011). Newspapers and press agencies publish their articles and news stories with a particular audience in mind, which has to feel comfortable and content with the information that is given (Carruthers, 2011). It makes it easier to comprehend and of course the 'Facebook revolution' narrative is based on a process that was taking place in Egypt. Social media did play an important role, a role that has to be mentioned when discussing the Egyptian revolution.

But this narrative doesn't tell the full story of what was happening in Egypt during the revolution. By representing the revolution as a social media revolution, news channels didn't need to explain the whole context of the Egyptian society. Especially in the news shows there is no time to give a comprehensive story with all the important factors of a specific case (Padberg, interview, 2012). There is no time to tell why the Egyptians wanted Mubarak to step down, which groups were organizing what, and in the meantime explain what is happening on the ground at that particular moment. The social media revolution narrative was thus easier to explain in the news bulletins, as there was no time to explain all the historical, social and organizational factors that laid the ground work for the revolutionary process.

By stressing the importance of the use of social media other important factors are also overshadowed, which can sometimes be convenient as explained in the following paragraph.

8.5 Saving face

The choice of words and images can shape the news and the audiences' perception of events (Carruthers, 2011). Once a particular discourse is chosen in the news, it is difficult to divert from it (Padberg, interview, 2012). If a foreign correspondent for a news organization

deviates from the common discourse and writes an in-depth story about a local case, he is often criticized by the audience, as Padberg experienced (interview, 2012). Deviating from the culturally accepted common discourse used in the Western news is something most journalist won't try. The discourse used in the evening news shows in the West is not open for change by a local journalist who tries to publish a well-balanced story of a local situation (Padberg, interview, 2012).

But by solely representing the social media narrative, other important factors for the revolutionary process are overshadowed. Gaber (interview, 2012) thinks that there were many Egyptians who were protesting for very legitimate reasons, which now have been overshadowed:

"By telling the social media story you could paper over the economic grievances, while a lot of the people who were involved in the protests were doing so for very acceptable liberal reasons of personal freedom and democracy.(…) What's really demanded, is social justice and a sense of a deep transformation in the economic system both locally and globally" (Gaber, interview, 2012).

When emphasizing the social media narrative, one doesn't have to speak about the problems the international pressure on the economic sector in Egypt have caused, or the fact that Mubarak's regime was supported by the Western governments (Gaber, interview, 2012). While Mubarak's security apparatus suppressed peaceful pro-social justice and democracy protests using American made weapons, successive American administrations were looking the other way (Hassan, 2011). "The failure to achieve the hoped-for economic and social progress, together with the lack of political liberties, led to the radicalization of a substantial part of the Egyptian society, including antipathy toward U.S. policies — which are widely perceived as the main source of support for oppressive regimes in the region" (Abaza, 2011). One doesn't have to mention this broader societal context of Egypt, when using a 'Facebook revolution' narrative. A tweet posted on twitter by Wael Ghonim makes this position more clear:

"@Ghonim: Dear Western Governments, You've been silent for thirty years supporting the regime that was oppressing us. Please don't get involved now #Jan25"

Gaber (interview, 2012) also thinks that the social media narrative after the revolution is often used by people who are interested in the status quo or who have a reason to not address the problems that are still affecting the country and that haven't been addressed after the revolution. The goals of the revolution were to have freedom and dignity but also a complete transformation of the security apparatus and the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Gerbaudo,

2011). This revolution was not organized to change the figure called Mubarak. The revolution was organized to change the structure of Egyptian society and increase the welfare of the average Egyptian. This process can take a long time, and some Egyptians thus think that those in power now rather express the importance of social media than the actual reasons behind the revolution (Gaber, interview, 2012).

8.6 Conclusion

This Chapter is devoted to answering the sub-question what explanations can be given for the coexisting of the different narratives about the importance of the use of social media for the organization of the revolution. Although most Egyptians think that social media played an important role, there are differences between various population groups in the Egyptian society about the agency that must be ascribed to the use of social media for the organization of the revolution in Egypt.

These differences are mostly caused by the differences in the use of these platforms by these groups. Those who have used social media to connect with each other, to share their discontent and to organize the protests, perceive the use of social media as more important than people who didn't use social media. An explanation for this is that the people using the social media platforms were more aware of its importance to channel the anger of the population and to organize the initial days of the protests, but this group also perceived it as more important because they were using these tools themselves. Egyptians who weren't using social media, often joined the protests on January 28, or even later. These people were mostly informed through traditional networks and after the 28th the social media platforms couldn't be used anymore, because of the communications black out. People who weren't using social media, therefore didn't need its platform for organizing and were less aware of the organization taking place through these platforms. The joining of the masses had a huge consequence, however. January 28 is often seen as the date that the protests were transformed into a revolutionary movement.

News organizations were important in emphasizing the importance of social media. To spread the news on what was happening in Egypt, news stations around the world often relied on the information spread on social media networks, because citizen journalism became more common, because the communication links inside Egypt were often broken, and because the chaotic revolutionary process didn't allow mainstream journalists to cover every event. Emphasising the importance of social media made it easier to document the revolution because one doesn't need to explain all the interdependent processes and factors that led to the protests in Egypt. The audience could also easily relate to this. The Facebook narrative is also sometimes

seen as covering up past mistakes as it overshadows the Western role in the economic reforms and in supporting the oppressive regime.

9. Conclusion: Answering the main research question

This research has been devoted to answering the main research question, which is: What do people in Egypt think was the influence of social media on the Egyptian revolution of January 2011? The objective of this research has been to understand what role social media played in the revolution, but also to find out how Egyptians perceive the importance of the use of social media compared to other factors and processes. Another goal of this research has been to examine if there are any differences between various groups in Egypt in the level of agency they want to ascribe to the use of social media in the revolution. Finally, this research also aimed to find explanations for these differences.

The first sub-question of this research has been devoted to answering how social media affected the revolutionary process in Egypt. The social media tools became in reach to more and more Egyptians after the 1990s, because of government investments in the IT sector. These social media platforms were used by the middle and upper socio-economic classes to connect, to channel their anger about the political situation in their country, to politically organize themselves and to coordinate the protests during the first few days of the revolution. Not only other Egyptian activists, but also international news organizations were retrieving the messages posted on the social media platforms for their own news broadcastings. The use of these social media platforms thus made it easier to communicate and the platforms can therefore be seen as a catalyst. The appropriation of the social media platforms for political purposes helped the Egyptians to achieve the revolution in a faster pace. Without the social media platforms it would have been more difficult for activists to organize themselves. By the non-hierarchical ways of communicating and organizing trough the social media networks, the activists created a public movement that was leaderless. This empowered the protesters with greater force by swarming through all the streets towards the Tahrir Square, which was difficult to stop by the security forces.

Nevertheless, by solely focusing on the use of social media, no well-balanced judgment can be made on the perceived importance of social media. Therefore, this research has placed the use of social media in a wider framework of interdependent factors and processes. The second sub-question of this research therefore answers the following question. What do people in Cairo think were other contributing factors to the January 2011 revolution and how do they rate the importance of these factors compared to the influence of the social media?

To answer this question, this research categorizes the processes and factors important in the Egyptian society into four categories.

These categories are: 'Public discontent', 'Grassroots activism', 'Connectivity, organization and coordination', and 'Attaining hope and overcoming fear'.

Connecting, organizing and coordinating the revolution is identified as one of four categories that seemed important for the revolutionary process. Social media has helped the middle and upper socio-economic classes to organize themselves. However, other more traditional ways of communicating have been used as well. Only the middle and upper socio-economic classes could afford a personal computer as this was still an expensive product. For the organization of the protests, word of mouth and television broadcastings are perceived as more important by the people in Egypt than the social media platforms. Flyers were spread, marches were planned, the mosque was used as a meeting place and the Muslim Brotherhood helped to coordinate the process on Tahrir Square once the communication networks were offline.

Communication methods will never be a motivating factor to start a revolution, however. Three other categories have also been identified in this research as contributing to the revolutionary process. The first category comprises the public discontent among the Egyptian citizens. The socio-economic inequality was increasing, people were dealing with corruption and the security forces were very abusive. The second other category comprises the 'Grassroots organizations' that were emerging in Egypt. The Kefaya movement organized protests against the authoritarian rule of the country, huge labor protests took place in El-Mahalla El-Kubra and the 6th of April group bridged the middle class intellectuals and the activists living in the large cities, and the working class people mostly living in the industrial cities in the Nile Delta. The last identified category of factors and processes that contributed to the revolutionary process comprises the courage and the devotion the Egyptian citizens have shown. They organized the revolution, and put their personal lives in danger for the greater goal of a free and democratic Egypt.

When the perceived importance of the use of a communication tool such as Facebook is placed in a wider framework of factors and processes that contributed to the revolutionary process in Egypt, one has to conclude that the use of social media was just one factor, although perceived as important by many, that contributed to the revolutionary process. Without social media the first wave of protests on January 25, 2011, might not have been organized, but most Egyptians feel that this revolution was inevitable because of the situation the country was in.

The third sub-question answered in this research explores the differences between various population groups in their opinion about the agency of social media. Based on the quantitative data acquired

through the collection of questionnaires, this research concludes that the people in Egypt who are well educated with an internet connection at home and who use Facebook, perceive the use of social media for the organization of the revolution as more important than others. Those who have had a higher level of education, are often better off in Egyptian society. This group of people is thus in a better position to afford a personal computer with internet access in their house and are thus more likely to use the communication platforms that the internet offers such as Facebook and other social media platforms.

The fourth sub-question presented some explanations for the coexisting of the different narratives about the importance of the use of social media for the organization of the revolution. The social media users perceive the use of social media as more important because of three reasons. The first is that the people living in the richer neighborhoods, who could afford a computer with an internet connection at home, often saw the problems on the streets, which they either weren't aware of or in denial of, for the first time through these new platforms. The working class people on the streets were well aware of the problems, the corruption and the police abuse. The second reason is that the social media platforms were strengthening and amplifying the experienced personal grievances of the Egyptian people through the publications of stories of other citizens. This is something many people who weren't using social media were less aware off. The last reason proposed in this research, is that the social media users felt they were the organizing actors who created the first opportunity for change, using the tools they appropriated for their purposes. The people who didn't use social media and who weren't using the internet in a political way, mostly came in on the 28th of January and in the days after that. At that point, the Mubarak regime had shut down the communication networks. By then social media were not very important anymore for the coordination of the protests as the Tahrir Square was already occupied, which then became the center of attention.

During the first days of the revolution, most of the news corporations were using the information from social media sources because of the changes towards citizen journalism, broken communication links inside Egypt and because the chaotic revolutionary process didn't allow mainstream journalists to cover every event. People in Egypt who weren't using social media, didn't have the possibility to share their experiences to the outside world, as they did not have access to social media. News organizations around the world, which were often using information from social media, were thus mainly informed by either social media users inside Egypt or journalists who would mostly only approach Egyptians who could speak English and were thus highly educated. Because of this, news organizations were important in emphasizing

the importance of social media. The news organizations represented the revolution in Egypt as a 'Facebook revolution' because these agencies often retrieved their own information from social media, because it was catchy, because it was an easy story to transfer to the audience and because it overshadows the Western historical role in supporting the oppressive regime.

The main research question has been: What do people in Egypt think was the influence of social media on the Egyptian revolution of January 2011? To provide the boundaries for the level of influence of social media, the theoretical framework described the two ends of the spectrum in thinking about the agency of social media in the Egyptian revolution. On one end of the spectrum Twitter and Facebook are represented as instigating factors that have become engines of political change that upended decades of Egyptian authoritarianism. On the other end of the spectrum the protests in Egypt and the increasing use of social media are represented as two simultaneous developments, without a causal relationship.

This research shows that there is a relationship between the use of social media and the way in which the revolution has unfolded in Egypt. Although statistically significant differences have been found between various population groups in Egypt, most of the Egyptians think that social media had an important influence on the revolution. Social media is perceived to have made the revolutionary process unfold in a faster pace and the initial organization and coordination through social media platforms have made the revolution a leaderless revolution.

This research has also shown, however, that social media played a significant role, but that it should not be seen as an instigating factor. The role that social media platforms played, must be placed in a wider framework of interdependent processes and factors that are also perceived as important to the unfolding of the revolutionary process. Labeling the revolution as a 'Facebook revolution' is perceived as taking away the agency of the revolution from the people. The social media platforms that are meant to be used for slacktivistic activities, have been transformed into a tool used by the Egyptian people for political purposes. Egyptians do want to stress how important it is that they found ways to communicate in a repressive regime, but the agency must be kept with the Egyptian people and not with the tool they have appropriated.

10. Discussion and future research

This research has used a mixed method methodology to acquire the data necessary to answer the research questions. The results show that there are differences between various population groups in their perceived importance of the use of social media for the organization of the revolution. The comparison between the different population groups is mainly made by using the quantitative data, collected with the use of questionnaires. Unfortunately, because of constrains in funds and time, less data has been acquired than aimed for. Nevertheless, some statistically significant relations appear between various populations groups in Egypt and the importance they ascribe to social media. This research, however, only scratches the surface of possible information about how the 'Facebook revolution' narrative is perceived among average Egyptians and what explanations can be given for the differences in understanding.

Other research has been conducted to measure the importance of social media as perceived by social media users and activists (Wilson & Dunn, 2011). No well-funded and comprehensive research has been carried out, however, to analyze the differences in understanding within the Egyptian society based on populations from different neighborhoods or from different socio-economic classes in Egypt, of how the revolution has been organized and what factors were important for the massive uprisings. Such research will be vital to understand how the 'Facebook revolution' narrative has been created and why it resonates among the world, while many Egyptians feel that it is an oversimplification of the situation in their country.

Another aspect that has to be mentioned, concerns the role of citizen journalism. The Egyptian revolution is often used as an example of how citizen journalism empowers the population in repressive circumstances (Wilson, 2012). Research on citizen journalism in the Egyptian revolution is often aimed at how the Egyptian population used social media to produce their own news and the level of empowerment that is achieved through the appropriation of these new tools (Ledwell, 2012). In an interview with Dr. Sahar Khamis and Katherine Vaughn, Mohamed Mustafa, one of the coordinators of the National Coalition for Change campaign and one of the organizers of the January 25 revolution, explains that: "The use of new technologies helped to spread the word out about the planned protest, to ensure a popular base of support for it and, thus, to assure those organizing the January 25 (protest) that there will be enough numbers of people supporting them" (Khamis & Vaughn, 2011). But he also explains that: "Because not everyone in Egypt has internet access, we had to also make sure through street activism that those who do not have internet access could also be reached and that their sentiments are in support of the revolution" (Khamis &

Vaughn, 2011). This group of people did not have access to social media and could therefore not become citizen journalists and couldn't inform the rest of the world of their organization methods and how they perceived the revolution.

In societies with high inequality rates, social media platforms are only accessible to a minority of the population, creating a bias in the information that is spread on these platforms. A bias in news reporting could emerge about events in societies in which the majority of the population doesn't have access to these new media platforms. In this research, a connection is thus made between the emergence of citizen journalism and the production of the 'Facebook revolution' narrative by the international media institutions. No research has been conducted yet, on how the production of news about the Egyptian revolution based on the information produced by a minority in the Egyptian society affects the discourse in the news. Further research should examine the relation between the overemphasis of the importance of social media by news agencies and the use of social media to acquire information, produced by social media users in societies in which only a minority has access to these platforms, by these same agencies.

Many researchers have strongly emphasized the importance of social media in the revolution of Egypt (Keif, 2012; Wilson & Dunn, 2012). But, during the days that the revolution reached the point of no return, in which the masses joined the revolutionary process and in which Tahrir Square became occupied, the communication networks were shut down (Hamamsy, 2011). This made some authors state that shutting down the internet and mobile phone connections by the Mubarak regime forced people to become activists and leave their houses to look for themselves what was going on in their country (Gerbaudo, 2011). One of the goals of shutting down all communication networks was to keep people in their homes (Hamamsy, 2011). This process should be researched more comprehensively, as this research shows that there is a connection between the high turn up rate on January 28, and the regime's decision to shut down the communication networks. New research could shed light at the question of how slacktivism can turn into activism, and the relation between the internet black-out on the January 28 and the massive number of protestors that day.

11. Afterword: After the revolution

This research has focused on the use of social media until Mubarak resigned. The use of social media during the revolution also had some interesting effects on the Egyptian political domain and the process of finding a new leader after the revolution of 2011. This section is not aimed at describing the current state of the Egyptian political situation. This section is added to give a reflection on the effects that the use of social media have had on the political process after Mubarak stepped down, without the assumption of giving a comprehensive overview of the whole political process after the resignation of Mubarak.

After President Mubarak resigned, there was no revolution leader who could take over his position (Karawan, 2011). Because of the organizing structure through social media, the revolution did not have a leader in command. According to Karawan (2011), there was no evidence that the army was eager to take over, but in the absence of any obvious and credible alternative it assumed power on February 11, 2011, with the stated objective of: "restoring stability, putting the country on the road to democracy and restoring civilian government" (Karawan, 2011:43).

The political process after a revolution is often very hectic, but a year after the resignation of Mubarak, presidential elections had been organized. Mubarak's regime repressed any formation of political parties during his reign, so the only organized group was the Muslim Brotherhood led by Mohamed Morsi (Pargeter, 2013). The other main actor in the elections was Ahmed Shafiq, the last Prime Minister to serve as part of Mubarak's administration (Danish-Egyptian Dialogue Institute, 2012). It had been difficult for the liberal and secular minded groups to find common ground and to organize themselves, so many secular and liberal minded started their own parties.

The election was organized in two stages. In the first stage Morsi received 24.3% of the votes, followed by Shafiq with 23.3% (Danish-Egyptian Dialogue Institute, 2012). The second round proposed a difficult decision for many Egyptians, as they had the option to vote for someone who stood for the old regime or for the Muslim Brotherhood. Many Egyptians voted for the Muslim Brotherhood, because they didn't want a figure from the old regime back in power, while many other voters chose for Shafiq because they didn't want to have a religious oriented president (Danish-Egyptian Dialogue Institute, 2012). In the second round Morsi got 52% of the votes, and Shafiq 48%. On June 24, 2012, Morsi was declared president (Danish-Egyptian Dialogue Institute, 2012).

The revolution was a leaderless revolution, because of the networked organization using social media. This leaderlessness created a

power vacuum which was taken by a group which was contested by many of the activists who attended the revolutionary protests of 2011. According to Pargeter (2011): "The Brotherhood ultimately came to power through the shock of revolution, a revolution which it could hardly claim as its own" (Pargeter, 2013:236). Many Egyptians thus felt the Muslim Brotherhood had hijacked the revolution and protests against the Muslim Brotherhood went on. A wave of protests took place in Egypt in June 2013, which made the Egyptian army decide to overthrown President Mohamed Morsi on July 3rd, 2013. There is thus still a long road ahead for the Egyptians to develop a well functioning political system.

12. References

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13. Appendices

13.1 Appendix 1: Interviewees

The names of the interviewees, with the date of the interview and some background information of the interviewee.

Ramy Amin
01.12.2012   Works as a cartoonist for a big state
                              newspaper. He grew up in a journalists family.
                              His mother and brother are both journalists for
                              an independent newspaper.

Noha Bakr
28.11.2012   Political science professor at the American
                              University in Cairo and an assistant to the
                              Minister of International Cooperation.

Sabine Dorpmuller
26.11.2012   Assistant professor for the Netherlands-Flemish
                              Institute in Cairo in Arabic and Islamic
                              studies. She was one of the main organizers for
                              The "Islam, Citizenship and New Media"
                              conference organized by the Netherlands-
                              Flemish Institute in Cairo (NVIC) and the Al-
                              Ahram Center for Political and Strategic
                              Studies (ACPSS).

Mohamed El-Bahrawi
and Victor Bassem
04.12.2012   Co-founders of a grassroots group with a
                              Salafi background called Salafyo Costa. They
                              are interviewed together in one setting. The
                              political group they founded strives to bring
                              together Egyptians of different faiths, sects
                              and political orientations.

Hadeer Elmahdawy
31.10.2012   Active political activist, who worked as a
                              journalist for El-Badil, the first independent
                              newspaper in Egypt which was closed before the
                              revolution.

Zeinab El-Guindy
07.11.2012   Activist with a big active base on Twitter
                              with 70,000 thousand followers. She now works
                              for Al-Ahram, the biggest newspaper in Egypt.

Wael Eskandar
24.11.2012   Egyptian journalist and blogger based in
                              Cairo. He blogs at notesfromtheunderground.net,
                              writes for Al-Ahram Online and has contributed
                              to Al-Jazeera's inside story program.

Sherif Gaber
29.11.2012   Member of Mosireen, a non-profit media
                              organization born out of the explosion of
                              citizen media and cultural activism in Egypt
                              during the revolution.

Ahmed Maher
04.12.2012   Journalist and co-Founder of *The Midan Masr*
                              newspaper. Midan Masr is a monthly independent
                              opinion paper which mission is be a focal point
                              for the rich, passionate, and heated explosion
                              of voices and opinions after the revolution.

Ali Mikkawi
01.12.2012   Was actively participating in the revolution
                              and reported for Canadian news agencies during
                              protests such as CBC and CTV.

Ahmed Montasser
03.12.2012   Photographer, media trainer, video
                              journalist and documentary filmmaker, who works
                              as a Director of Visual Production for The
                              Egypt Media Development Program (EMDP).

Namira Negm
22.11.2012   Visiting professor in international law at
                              the American University of Cairo and on

sabbatical from the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Eduard Padberg
02.12.2012   Foreign correspondent for the Dutch Trouw newspaper during the revolution.

Julien Schmid
15.10.2012   Film maker and lecturer at the German University in Cairo in the Faculty of Media Design. Julien Schmid has extensive knowledge on new media usage in Egypt and has actively taken part in the protests.

Shaheer Shaleen
15.10.2012   Engineering student at the German University in Cairo. Founder and chief editor of the GUC Insider, an independent management newspaper. He is much involved in the campus politics, but also has a wide knowledge of the Egyptian political situation.

Christopher Wilson
15.10.2012   Program and research manager responsible for managing the research program of the Tahrir Data Project. In this research project, snowball sampling among activists is used to determine their media use during the Egyptian revolution of January and February 2011.

13.2 Appendix 2: Interview question list

- Personal introduction
- Education/background
- Have you attended the protests and how often?
-
- How did you first hear about the protests?
- How did you get informed about the progress of the protests during those weeks?
- What communication platforms did you use to communicate about what was happening during the protests?
- What were you doing during the weeks of the revolution, how did you interact with the event?

- Could you take me through the events which were important to the start of the protests?
- What actors were important for the organization of the protests and why?
- What were the most important factors that made the revolution in Egypt happen?

- What are the first terms that come up to you if you would want to label the revolution?
- What role do you ascribe to the social media on the Egyptian revolution of 2011?
- Do you think that the term Facebook revolution or Twitter revolution is correct for the revolution?
- What do you think was the role of mass self-communication practiced by citizen journalist?
- Do you think that social media were the main source of information for the people who were protesting?
- Do you think that social media were main source of information for all the people in Cairo?

- Do you think that the revolution would have happened if people couldn't use social media?
- What was the impact of the shutting down the internet and the access to social media on the information use and ways to distribute information?
- Do you think that the revolution would have happened in the same period in the same way if people couldn't use social media?

- What were other contributing factors to start of the protest of January 2011?

- How do you rate the importance of these factors compared to the influence of the social media?
- What are the differences between old and new media in their use and impact in society.

- What do you think of the importance of Satellite television such as Aljazeera?
- What do you think of the importance of the Khaled Said group compared to the organizational efforts of the Muslim Brotherhood?

- How do you think that it can be explained that people think differently about the use of social media in the revolution?

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Nationality

Age

Gender

Neighborhood

Do you feel politically active? (cross in front of the right answer)

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree

Did you attend the protest between the 25th of January and the 12th of February?

	Yes		No

If yes, what was the first day you attended a protest (25/01 – 12/02):

How many days did you attend the protests between the 25th of January and the 12th of February?

How important were these media for the organization of the protests?

	Very Unimportant	Unimportant	Reasonable	Important	Very Important
Verbal					
Radio					
Newspapers					
Television					
Phone					
Texting					
Facebook					
Twitter					
Blogging					

How did you get informed about the progress of the protests during those weeks? (more than one possible)

	Verbal		Radio	Television		Twitter
	Phone		Text messaging	Facebook		Blogging

How did you communicate about what was happening during the protests? (more than one possible)

	Verbal		Facebook		Twitter
	Phone		Text messaging		Blogging

How many times per week do you access the internet?

- -

Do you have a Facebook account?

Yes		No

How often per week do you check Facebook?

- -

Do you have a Twitter account?

	Yes		No

How often per week do you check Twitter?

- -

When did you start using Twitter and/or Facebook?

	Before the Revolution		During the Revolution		After the Revolution

Do you have internet at home?

	Yes		No

Do you have a mobile phone which supports internet access?

	Yes		No

What is your current employment situation? (cross in front of the right answer)

	In paid work (including self-employment
	In education
	Unemployed
	Permanently sick or disabled
	Retired
	Looking after the home

What level of education did you complete? (cross in front of the right answer)

	None
	Grade school
	High school
	University