DPI
Democratic Progress

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The DPI aims to create an atmosphere whereby different parties share knowledge, ideas, concerns, and suggestions facing the development of a democratic solution to key issues in Turkey and the wider region. The work focuses on a combination of research and practical approaches to broaden bases for wider public involvement by providing platforms for discussion in the form of roundtable meetings, seminars, workshops and conferences. This is being carried out in order to support and contribute to existing work on Turkey whilst also extending to the wider region.

DPI's work will incorporate research and discussions on a wide range of strategic and relevant topics including constitutional reform; preparing for constitutional changes in conflicting societies; post conflict societies; freedom of expression and association; cultural and language rights, political participation and representation; women's role in resolving the conflict; access to justice and transitional justice including truth and reconciliation commissions.

DPI aims to facilitate the creation of an atmosphere whereby the different parties are able to meet with experts from Turkey and abroad, to draw on comparative studies, as well as analyse and compare various mechanisms used to achieve positive results in similar cases. The work supports the development of a pluralistic political arena capable of generating consensus and ownership over work on key issues surrounding a democratic solution at both the political and the local level.

This paper investigates the potential of New Media in helping to develop localised democratic cultures based on inclusive dialogue, participation and engagement, which are key components of the development of democracy. It investigates the capacity of New Media, with its non-hierarchical, networked structure to help develop a healthy civil society which engages with the key issues in the region.

Through taking a comparative and broad perspective, this study shows how New Media may become an indispensable tool which may be employed to challenge dominant discourses and prompt discussion on key and often invisible issues. New Media can empower citizens to participate and engage with key issues, allowing them to comment on and monitor activity.

New Media and the Development of Democracy

Introduction

What are the implications for democracy of the development of New Media? This area of study is very fast-moving and the various analyses which look to establish concrete conclusions about the transformative capacity of New Media become outdated almost immediately. This is especially true in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) where the continuing events of 2011 are challenging perspectives on social and political change. This investigation does not attempt to preach about the intrinsic virtues of the digital world: we are well aware that digital space should not be considered as inherently democratic.[1] The focus of this paper shall be on the *potential* of New Media to aid in the transition towards democracy and the development of a healthy civil society based on dialogue, participation, engagement and consensus. We must approach the issue of New Media and Democracy from a comparative perspective, with particular reference to Egypt where much attention is focused thanks to its cultural and historical significance in the region.[2] It is important to note here that we cannot offer an exhaustive analysis, nor do we suggest that there exists any 'miracle cure' which contains the source code for democracy. The internet has offered a well-established platform for discussion and in light of the series of revolutions and significant popular pressure for reform throughout the Middle East, the potential for the self-generation of a localised democratic culture has rarely been greater.

New Media can offer the inclusive and open space for a conversation about dominant discourses to occur, outside of the hegemony of established institutions such as the government or the traditional media. This space can encourage mass participation in the conversation which can allow individuals to challenge dominant narratives and develop new, more democratic discourses concerning individual, cultural, social and political representations. With the transmission of new ideas in the

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[1] Loader, B. & Mercea, D. 'Networking Democracy?', *Information, Communication & Society,* vol. 14, issue 6, (2011), pp.757-769, p.760; Bremmer, I., 'Democracy in Cyberspace: What Information Technology Can and Cannot Do', *Foreign Affairs*, no.86, (2010), pp.86-97, pp.86-7
[2] Elseewi, T., 'A Revolution of the Imagination', *International Journal of Communication,* no. 5, (2011), pp.1197-1206, p.1202

networked space of New Media which allows a vast conversation to take place, citizens can engage with one another based on an inclusive set of values. New Media offers an open and inclusive discussion space which allows expression of oppositional positions. Through discussion of these ideas, users are engaging with one another democratically. This may be crucial to the prevention of an escalation of opposition and the polarisation of society. New Media, as a space for discussion, encourages mass peer-to-peer conversations, inclusive dialogue and active participation, which are crucial components of the development of democracy.

Chapter 1: The Potential of New Media

What is New Media?

Web 2.0

Traditionally distinguished from 'old' media including newspapers, magazines and even television, New Media is a term typically used to encompass the assortment of so-called 'digital' media which complement and conflict with the traditional media. These media are usually informal, often principally social and are not easily reducible to specific categorisations: much of the content is extremely diverse and even mundane activity can harbour political content.[3] Essentially, 'New Media' should be understood as a series of platforms; it encompasses a vast field of digital activity including web logs (blogs), micro-blogging (such as Twitter), Social Media (like Facebook), video-sharing (as on YouTube), online reporting (by both institutions and individuals) and RSS feeds (information): in short, New Media is synonymous with digital mass peer-to-peer communication as it involves the usage of mobile devices from cell phones and smartphones to computers and laptops. New Media has evolved and exploded onto the scene with the development of 'Web 2.0', the new generation of internet applications in which the content is almost entirely User Generated (UGC). The emphasis on UGC is crucial in this analysis since it is this which harbours the greatest potential for development of any kind, since this content is necessarily participatory both for the creator and for the viewer.[4]

A Wider Definition

We shall consider 'New Media' in its widest possible sense- that is to say, any form of political and/or social activity which is enabled by the advent of internet technology: this includes offline activities such as citizen journalism and informal

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[3] Mejlias, U., 'The Twitter Revolution Must Die', *International Journal of Learning and Media*, Vol. 2, No.4, (2011), pp.3-5, p.3

[4] Loader, B. & Mercea, D. 'Networking Democracy?', *Information, Communication & Society,* vol. 14, issue 6, (2011), pp.757-769,p.759

social/political organisation. This particular point is vital since New Media understood here is not merely restricted to digital 'online' activity but encompasses a large array of activity offline. Many of the actors or initiatives we reference (for example filmmakers and independent films) may not regard themselves to be digital activists but their reliance on digital platforms and technologies to create and distribute content puts them within the scope of New Media. The reason for this lies more in the structure of New Media than its digital nature: it is the informal, networked structure of activity which has shown the greatest potential for the development of a strong civil society.[5] The focus of this paper is on the potential for civil society and new platforms for dialogue offered by New Media rather than its capacity to drive revolutions. Our broader definition allows us to move away from the restrictive distinction between certain types of online and offline activity: the Egyptian de-centralised movement Kazeboon (a spin-off of Cinema Tahrir) who screen user-generated videos of police and army brutality in live street 'pop-up' cinemas across Egypt can be considered New Media under our definition because of the nature of their content and the structure of their organisation and activity, in spite of the fact that screenings are not online. They use online user generated content specifically for offline screening, to give such content a wider audience which includes those not engaged online. Citizen journalists, independent filmmakers and even more 'official' Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) which rely on informal, user generated activity are to be considered part of the New Media.

Theorising the Internet and Networked Space

A Diverse Conversation

As we have seen, we must first do away with any assumptions that the internet has an inherent transformative capacity to democratise- much like the rest of the social world, the virtual is best conceptualised as space, space which can be colonised by a variety of ideologies and competing interests. New Media allows access to a vast array of information that might otherwise be restricted in society. As such it 'enables

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[5] See Khamis, S. & Vaughn, K., 'Cyberactivism in the Egyptian Revolution: how Civic Engagement and Citizen Journalism Tilted the Balance', *Arab Media & Society*, issue 13, (2011), pp.1-37, p.5

individuals to bypass the traditional gatekeepers to, and sources of, information'.[6] The internet can, has and will continue to offer diverse content from all over the moral sphere of each beholder. It causes outrage and horror as well as hope and development- it will continue to be a place of contention and struggle, in spite of an alarming trend towards greater restriction on information.[7] Understanding the virtual as space and networked space at that, is crucial in light of the diverse content available. We imagine that this space is topographical: rather than layered or clearly divided, internet activity is conceived as part of a diverse but single map of individual interconnected interactions. These interactions (whether collisions or collusions) are a form of engagement even if these interactions are not constructive. Here is where the true nature of 'New Media' lies: it takes place within a space where oppositional values meet, a space which is by definition interactive.

Users are, by virtue of the environment, involved in a 'conversation' with each other in the networked space[8] and involve themselves in a form of civil engagement in their participation 'in ongoing political, economic and social efforts that are meant to bring about change'.[9] This can occur regardless of whether the state considers their engagement to be legitimate. Some have called this space a 'public sphere', a space 'between civil society and the state, in which critical public discussion of matters of general interest was institutionally guaranteed'.[10] Others have expressed doubts as to whether the internet fully meets the criteria of a 'public sphere', stressing negative phenomena such as 'social herding'[11] or 'shouting matches'[12] which can solidify and

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[6] Iskander, E., 'Connecting the National and the Virtual: Can Facebook Activism Remain Relevant After Egypt's January 25 Uprising', *International Journal of Communication*, No. 5, (2011), pp.1225-1237, p.1227

[7] See Akdeniz, Y., 'Freedom of Expression on the Internet', Organisation for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE) Report, (2010), http://www.osce.org/fom/80723, accessed 01/03/2012

[8] Fealty, M., ''Slugger O'Toole': The New Media as Track Two Diplomacy', in Popilkowski, J. & Cull, N. (eds.), *Public Diplomacy, Cultural Interventions & the Peace Process in Northern Ireland: Track Two to Peace?*, (Los Angeles: Figueroa Press), pp.89-98, p.94

[9] Khamis, S. & Vaughn, K., 'Cyberactivism in the Egyptian Revolution: how Civic Engagement and Citizen Journalism Tilted the Balance', *Arab Media & Society*, issue 13, (2011), pp.1-37, p.5

[10] Habermas, J., in El-Nawahy, M., & Khamis, S., 'Political Blogging and (Re-)Envisioning the Public Sphere: Muslim-Christian Discourses in Two Egyptian Blogs', *International Journal of Press/Politics*, vol. 16, No. 2, pp.234-253, p.235

[11] Coleman in El-Nawahy, M., & Khamis, S., 'Political Blogging and (Re-)Envisioning the Public Sphere: Muslim-Christian Discourses in Two Egyptian Blogs', *International Journal of Press/Politics*, vol. 16, No. 2, pp.234-253

entrench views in light of the perception of opposition. These criticisms are important qualifications since the conversation may not be constructive and their engagement may even be destructive: such space is not inherently democratic.

The Coffee-House: a Place for Inclusive Dialogue?

However, in conceptualising the space occupied by New Media, we shall employ the image of online space as a '21st century coffee-house',[13] an image with particular historical relevance to and resonance with the political history of much of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and Europe.[14] The coffee-house is evocative because it is a space which has tended to harbour discussions from the mundane to the political, occasionally giving a platform (but not more than a platform) to oppositional or fringe perspectives as well as encouraging involvement for those outside of the corridors of power. Interviews with members of the online female organisation Machsom Watch, which monitors human rights of Palestinians at checkpoints, have indicated precisely this: New Media allow those that are ignored, marginalised or excluded from the decision making process to participate, to 'do something' as one woman put it.[15] Moreover, the coffee-house is an arena for discussion, a space for dispute where different opinions can be expressed and arguments can be developed constructively as long as participants 'play the ball and not the man'.[16] In this way the coffee-house is an important place for inclusive dialogue.

The coffee-house also allows for a more accurate portrayal of the impact of internet perspectives- New Media does not necessarily lead to an 'Americanization' of culture brought about by globalisation, instead, New Media can allow new ideas to be

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[12] Witschge's in in El-Nawahy, M., & Khamis, S., 'Political Blogging and (Re-)Envisioning the Public Sphere: Muslim-Christian Discourses in Two Egyptian Blogs', *International Journal of Press/Politics*, vol. 16, No. 2, pp.234-253

[13] Goode, L., 'Social News, Citizen Journalism and Democracy', *New Media Society*, vol. 11, no. 8, (2009), pp.1287-1305, p.1294

[14] Ulrich, B., 'Historicising Arab Blogs: Reflections on the Transmission of Ideas and Information in Middle Eastern History', *Arab Media &* Society, issue 8, (2009), pp.1-10, p.6

[15] Wiesslitz, C. & Ashuri, T., ''Moral Journalists': The Emergence of New Intermediaries of News in an Age of Digital Media', *Journalism*, vol. 12, no. 8, (2011), pp. 1035-1051, p.1043

[16] Fealty, M., ''Slugger O'Toole': The New Media as Track Two Diplomacy', in Popilkowski, J. & Cull, N. (eds.), *Public Diplomacy, Cultural Interventions & the Peace Process in Northern Ireland: Track Two to Peace?*, (Los Angeles: Figueroa Press), pp.89-98, p.97

expressed traditionally, interpreted culturally and developed for a local context.[17] Fears that acceptance of New Media necessarily leads to an Americanisation of traditional culture can be allayed by this image of the coffee-house. Similar fears were expressed in the 1950s with the first wave of cultural globalisation. However, the most accurate analyses present these developments as a localised 'democratisation' of culture.[18] Put simply, almost in spite of some scholars' wishes, the internet will not distribute and impose American culture, beliefs or values.[19] It can offer the space for a localised development of democratic culture. In other words, New Media can represent wider public involvement in cultural activities distinct from the hierarchical, patriarchal and proscriptive hegemony of governments.[20] The coffee-house environment of New Media can have cultural as well as political significance and networked space allows for a diverse conversation.

New Media and Civil Society: an Overview of What New Media Can Do

The Importance of Civil Society

We have already seen that New Media has the capacity to challenge the cultural hegemony of the state which can create a stagnant culture of 'poor quality' which serves only to solidify stereotypical and established presentations of social types.[21] The pluralistic nature of New Media with its networked and non-hierarchical structure can offer the potential to develop national culture as well as challenge dominant social discourses.[22] However, New Media offers the potential for much more, especially in the MENA region: it has been suggested that social and New Media could, in the long run,

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[17] For a Parallel with West Germany Post-war, see Maase, K., 'Establishing Cultural Democracy: Youth, "Americanization", and the Irresistible Rise of Popular Culture' in Schissler, H., (ed.), *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany*, (Woodstock: Princeton University Press), (2001), pp.428- 435
[18] Maase, K., 'Establishing Cultural Democracy: Youth, "Americanization", and the Irresistible Rise of Popular Culture' in Schissler, H., (ed.), *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany*, (Woodstock: Princeton University Press), (2001), pp.428- 435
[19] Bremmer, I., 'Democracy in Cyberspace: What Information Technology Can and Cannot Do', *Foreign Affairs*, no.86, (2010), pp.86-97, p.87
[20] Loader, B. & Mercea, D. 'Networking Democracy?', *Information, Communication & Society,* vol. 14, issue 6, (2011), pp.757-769, p.759
[21] Aly, R., 'Rebuilding Egyptian Media for a Democratic Future', *Arab Media & Society,* issue 14, (2011), pp.1-7, pp.2-3
[22] Aly, R., 'Rebuilding Egyptian Media for a Democratic Future', *Arab Media & Society,* issue 14, (2011), pp.1-7

'promote the growth of civil society'.[23] Civil society can be characterised as 'the free space in which democratic attitudes are cultivated and democratic behaviour is conditioned'[24] and it is crucially the wider participation of the 'third sector' (that is to say individuals and organisations of individuals distinct from the state) which characterises civil engagement in civil society. Of course, our proposed link between New Media and democratic development is only relevant if we accept the 'environmental' view, which suggests that 'positive changes in the life of a country … follow, rather than precede, the development of a strong public sphere'.[25] This perspective has great significance in the MENA region where many post-revolutionary (and even some non-revolutionary) states purportedly seek to foster a more democratic culture in light of popular demand. It is possible that civil society can, over time 'undermine authoritarian rule'.[26]

The challenge for transition lies in the total penetration of authoritarianism in all sectors of society, politics and culture, whereby 'anything you can think of … was shaped and oriented in accordance with the needs and dynamics of authoritarianism' throughout the region from Iraq to Libya.[27] Most importantly 'social expectations'[28] themselves have been shaped by this authoritarianism, for all but the minority of liberal middle-class youth activists.[29] Such deeply embedded authoritarianism poses the greatest threat to democratisation: for example, even after revolutions in Libya, Tunisia and Egypt, independent and state media continue to enforce self-imposed 'red-lines' in a

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[23] Karolak, M., 'Civil Society and Web 2.0 Technology: a Study of Social Media in the Kingdom of Bahrain', *Arab Media & Society*, issue 13, (2011), pp.1-18, p.1 ; Shirky, C., 'The Political Power of Social Media: Technology, the Public Sphere, and Political Change', January/February 2011, *Foreign Affairs*, pp.3-4, available here: http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67038/clay-shirky/the-political-power-of-social-media, accessed 01/03/2012

[24] Barber in Karolak, M., 'Civil Society and Web 2.0 Technology: a Study of Social Media in the Kingdom of Bahrain', *Arab Media & Society*, issue 13, (2011), pp.1-18, p1.

[25] Shirky, C., 'The Political Power of Social Media: Technology, the Public Sphere, and Political Change', January/February 2011, *Foreign Affairs*, pp.3-4, available here: http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67038/clay-shirky/the-political-power-of-social-media, accessed 01/03/2012pp.3-4

[26] Wanis-St. John, A., & Kew, D., 'Civil Society and Peace Negotiations: Confronting Exclusion', *International Negotiation*, 13, (2008), pp. 11-36, p.16

[27] Sayigh, Y., in lecture, 'One Year On: The Challenges of Democratic Transition in the Wake of the Arab Uprisings', 25 January 2012 at Chatham House, p.3

[28] Sayigh, Y., in lecture, 'One Year On: The Challenges of Democratic Transition in the Wake of the Arab Uprisings', 25 January 2012 at Chatham House, p.4

[29] Sayigh, Y., in lecture, 'One Year On: The Challenges of Democratic Transition in the Wake of the Arab Uprisings', 25 January 2012 at Chatham House, p.5

form of self-censorship brought about by years of submission to authority.[30] Such self-censorship restricts the capacity for transparency and participation, which are principal components of civil society. The tendency to 'look up' for official approval may preclude the possibility of genuine transformation, especially in a region where many 'participate' by voting for 'stability' which tends to be linked to passivity: there is a reason why the term 'hezb al-kanaba' ('the party of the couch') has such significance in Egypt.[31] Fostering a strong civil society may provide the greatest chance for real change in countries where a history of authoritarian rule has ill-prepared society for pluralistic discourses and genuine self-expression. At the very least, civil society is a fundamental precondition for such transition. Moreover, in societies which have undergone prolonged and open civil conflict such as Turkey or Libya, civil society can contribute to peace through 'representative participation, consultative mechanisms and direct participation'.[32]

New Media, Civil Society and New Platforms for Inclusive Dialogue

What can New Media do to help foster civil society? This will be the subject of more in-depth analysis over the next few chapters but by way of an overview we can outline the general potential of New Media. New Media breaks the 'monopoly of communication'[33] traditionally held by the political and cultural elite, allowing wider participation in political and cultural life through, for example, offering alternate platforms for artistic expression. As we have seen this participation may be crucial in avoiding a hierarchical and restrictive political and cultural life, which could lead to stagnation: with the development of the internet, 'politics and people can meet again and finally start communicating'. Many commentators have indicated that the revolutions of 2011 were related to popular frustration with governments failing to

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[30] Haddad, L., 'Arab Media: Revolving Doors of Censorhsip', *Alakhbar English*, 11th January 2012, available here: http://english.al-akhbar.com/content/arab-media-revolving-doors-censorship, accessed 01/03/2012; on Tunisia See Ziad Mhrisi's comments in Tav, E., 'Media in a Post-Revolution Tunisia: A Conversation with Zied Mhrisi, Co-founder of Tunisia Live', 23rd August 2011, available here: http://www.changemakers.com/blog/media-post-revolution-tunisia-conversation-zied-mhirsi, accessed 01/03/2012; For Egypt See 'Egypt in Transition: the Media's Role in Politics', Chatham House Workshop Report, June 2011, available here: http://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/papers/view/177281, accessed 01/03/2012, p.2
[31] Loveluck, L., 'The Importance of History and Process', *TheWorldToday.org,* January 2012, p.21-23, p.22
[32] Wanis-St. John, A., & Kew, D., 'Civil Society and Peace Negotiations: Confronting Exclusion', *International Negotiation*, 13, (2008), pp. 11-36, p.16
[33] Karolak, M., 'Civil Society and Web 2.0 Technology: a Study of Social Media in the Kingdom of Bahrain', *Arab Media & Society*, issue 13, (2011), pp.1-18, p.3

engage with the public and especially with the youth.[34] This communication is essential for the spread of new ideas and the engagement in inclusive dialogue when internet users have 'truly global access'.[35]

Without the availability of different opinions in the public space, constructive dialogue (which is the necessary precondition for the solution of social conflict) cannot occur. In the absence of an established open public space, New Media can provide the platforms for this discussion: blogs and social networks such as Facebook allow alternative voices to speak when the traditional media is not free to do so. Comment boxes below posts allow discussion of issues that otherwise may be obscured in traditional media. They can also provide a platform for self-representation and allow excluded voices to have a social presence. This can challenge dominant social discourses and engage society in facing social problems that are either taboo or marginalised culturally. In conflict and post-conflict societies, legitimate self-expression and social recognition may be a crucial aspect of re-establishing peace, whilst engaging with gender issues, for example, is essential if women are to be represented.[36]

Citizen journalism, microblogs and video sharing websites can perform the crucial function of the watchdog in society, monitoring human rights violations and important events which official media refuse to acknowledge.[37] This has the dual function of holding governments to account by publicising their activity and challenging the culture of silence which encourages a tradition of authoritarianism. Many of the key challenges for democratic development in the wake of the 'Arab Spring' can at least be made visible

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[34] Karolak, M., 'Civil Society and Web 2.0 Technology: a Study of Social Media in the Kingdom of Bahrain', *Arab Media & Society*, issue 13, (2011), pp.1-18, p.3.; see Karolak, M., 'Civil Society and Web 2.0 Technology: a Study of Social Media in the Kingdom of Bahrain', *Arab Media & Society*, issue 13, (2011), pp.1-18, p.8 on Bahrain; Iran's 'widening gap between people and the regime', Bahari, M: 'The situation in Iran: Human Rights, Youth and the Media', lecture on 7th February 2012 at Chatham House; Haddad, S., 'Where Next for Yemen? Perspectives on the Youth Movement', Lecture on 7th July 2011, at Chatham House

[35] Isherwood, T., 'A New Direction or More of the Same? Political Blogging in Egypt', *Arab Media and Society*, issue 6, (2008), pp.1-17, p. 3

[36] NGO interviews Report Anadolu Kültür 'Capacity Building for the Effective Participation of Civil Society towards the Solution of the Kurdish Issue', 5th December 2010, p.4, available here: http://www.hakikatadalethafiza.org/Cust/UserFiles/Documents/Editor/Faaliyetler/NGOInterviewsReport.pdf, accessed 01/03/2012

[37] Goode, L., 'Social News, Citizen Journalism and Democracy', *New Media Society*, vol. 11, no. 8, (2009), pp.1287-1305, p.1293

by New Media and as we shall see, the encouragement of particular types of activity can lead to genuine change in attitudes across the wider public sphere.

MENA and New Media: Problems and Qualifications

Internet Penetration

Before we can continue we must first highlight some problems with New Media. The first issue relates to the extent of internet penetration throughout the Middle East and North Africa: in spite of significant regional variation internet penetration is relatively low compared to European standards. However, average internet penetration for the region is about 1.5% higher than the world average at 31.7%.[38] As of December 2011 the Gulf countries had some of the highest rate of penetration, with the United Arab Emirates (69.0%), Bahrain (57.1%), Oman (57.5%), Saudi Arabia (43.6%), and Kuwait (42.4%) taking some of the top spots. The rest of the region's internet penetration is as follows: Israel (70.4%), the West Bank (58.9%), Iran (46.9%), Morocco (49.0%), Turkey (44.4%), Tunisia (36.3%), Lebanon (33.0%), Jordan (30.5%), Egypt (26.4%), Syria (19.8%), Algeria (13.4%), Yemen (10.8%), Libya (5.9%) and Iraq (4.3%).[39] It is clear that that there is vast discrepancy in internet penetration in the region and in some countries like Iraq, where much has been made of specific bloggers such as Salam Pax,[40] internet remains the domain of a tiny elite. This is generally the case throughout the region, where significant portions of the population will not be involved with the online community. If governments wish to take full advantage of the potential of the internet, steps may need to be taken to ensure greater penetration. In many countries such as Turkey, there is an extremely promising trend: the EU's 2011 Turkey Report indicates that the percentage of households with internet access at home

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[38] Statistics from Internet World Stats, available here: http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats5.htm, accessed 01/03/2012

[39] From Internet World stats, specific data sets available at http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm, http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats4.htm and http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats5.htm, accessed 01/03/2012

[40] Salam Pax 'The Baghdad Blogger' is an Iraqi blogger who came to prominence during the 2003 invasion of Iraq in his portrayal of the everyday violence of war, life under occupation and the routine disappearance of people post-invasion: http://salampax.wordpress.com/, accessed 01/03/2012

rose dramatically from 19.7% in 2007 to 41.6% in 2010, a vast increase of 11.6% from 2009.[41] Internet penetration is definitely on the rise in the region.

User Engagement

These statistics can, however, hide the sheer numbers involved: thanks to its large population Egypt's moderate penetration of 26.4% consists of a staggering 21,691,776 users, which is only topped by Iran (36,500,000).[42] As we have seen, on the street these kinds of numbers can enact drastic change and moreover, if this proportion of people is effectively mobilised, the results can be socially significant. A further complication arises when we consider the question of online engagement: what is perhaps more important than how many people use the internet is how involved these people are. Long term and significant exposure to the Web 2.0 environment can render a smaller audience more involved with New Media activity much more 'powerful' than their numbers represent. This has particular significance in Turkey, which as of October 2011 has the third most engaged internet users in Europe and the fifth most engaged in the world, with users spending an average of 32.7 hours a month online and consuming 3,706 pages per month.[43] Twitter and local Turkish social media websites such as Eksisozluk.com are also on the rise, whilst online videos are widely watched, with 89% of the online community in February 2011 watching online videos, a significant 54% increase in Turkish online video usage.[44] Close to 100% of internet users are on Facebook in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya and Turkey[45] according to Internet World Stats.[46] In user generated space, high engagement is key to New Media for content

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[41] European Commission, *Turkey 2011 Progress Report*, (Brussels, 12 October 2011), p.113, available here: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2011/package/tr_rapport_2011_en.pdf, accessed 01/03/2012

[42] See http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm and http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats5.htm, accessed 01/03/2012

[43] comScore, 'Turkey in the Global Internet and the Future of Online Measurement' (Istanbul, 19th October 2011), available here: http://www.comscore.com/Press_Events/Press_Releases/2011/10/Turkey_Has_Third_Most_Engaged_Online_Audience_in_Europe, accessed 01/03/2012

[44] comScore, 'Turkey in the Global Internet and the Future of Online Measurement' (Istanbul, 19th October 2011), available here: http://www.comscore.com/Press_Events/Press_Releases/2011/10/Turkey_Has_Third_Most_Engaged_Online_Audience_in_Europe, accessed 01/03/2012

[45] comScore, 'Turkey in the Global Internet and the Future of Online Measurement' (Istanbul, 19th October 2011), available here: http://www.comscore.com/Press_Events/Press_Releases/2011/10/Turkey_Has_Third_Most_Engaged_Online_Audience_in_Europe, accessed 01/03/2012

[46] http://www.internetworldstats.com/, accessed 01/03/2012

cannot be created, shared or understood if users are not engaged. Inclusive dialogue online cannot take place without an active and engaged internet population.

The User: A Profile

Related to the issue of internet penetration is the profile of those that actively engage. It is very difficult to generalise about this across the wide spectrum which we are considering, however, most sources suggest that the average engaged user is male, middle class and thus more educated and (speaking extremely generally) more liberal than the rest of the population.[47] For example, 30% of Internet users in Egypt are women in a society where only 44% of women can read: those that are engaged are therefore 'from the middle and upper class segment of Egyptian society'.[48] This obviously varies depending on the rate of internet penetration, but in some countries such as Egypt there is a vast discrepancy between those engaged online and those offline for whom stability and normality are preferable to new ideas. This can act as a break on the inclusivity of these platforms and thus of the quality of dialogue, although we cannot ignore that the upper and middle classes can effect change efficiently and may be more likely to encourage pluralistic discourses.[49]

Regulation of the Internet: Closing Down Debate

Finally, internet censorship proves one of the greatest threats not merely to freedom of expression, but to the development of a democratic culture which encourages pluralism and dialogue. Self-censorship and prior restraint are well documented results of this censorship, severely limiting the development capacity of New Media. The 'objectionable' nature of content is not, in reality, the main reason for the attempt to block certain websites- it relates to the deeply embedded authoritarianism in society. It appears that, 'state organs which are designing these filters are imposing their own values on the rest of the society'.[50] Moreover, filtering systems and internet censorship have been called an authoritarian reflex: '[s]o if the

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[47] Loader, B. & Mercea, D. 'Networking Democracy?', *Information, Communication & Society,* vol. 14, issue 6, (2011), pp.757-769, p.758

[48] Otterman, S., 'Publicizing the Private: Egyptian Women Bloggers Speak Out', *Arab Media and Society*, issue 1, (2007), pp.1-17, p.2

[49] Howard, P., in Khamis, S. & Vaughn, K., 'Cyberactivism in the Egyptian Revolution: how Civic Engagement and Citizen Journalism Tilted the Balance', *Arab Media & Society*, issue 13, (2011), pp.1-37, p.4

[50] Asli Tunç, in Winterholler, C., 'Internet Filter in Turkey to Stay', *NewsEtc.*, 22nd December 2011, available here : http://en.habervesaire.com/haber/2326/, accessed 01/03/2012

government has the power to ban something, in this case the internet, or to put a filter on it, they do it. You are only allowed to do something within the limits of the authority'.[51] This analysis is particularly important with regards to societies which are supposedly in 'transition', for we have repeatedly seen that the new transitional governments are almost irresistibly re-aligning themselves with the methodologies of the toppled regimes. The arrest of prominent bloggers such as Alaa Abd El Fattah and Maikel Nabil as well as the use of military trials for civilians seems to indicate a return to pre-revolution tactics in Egypt.

The Need for Neutral Space for an Open Conversation

An important feature of democratic development is the realisation that that 'neutral' space outside of the traditional spheres of government power is not necessarily a threat to authority and that constant regulation of this space is largely inefficient and arbitrary (and thus itself a threat to legitimate authority). It is the everyday invasive, arbitrary and ineffective authority which nurtures opposition: many users get used to circumnavigating internet legislation which they perceive to be illegitimate because other users with whom they communicate can surf without restriction. This can often be the first step in perceiving authority in its entirety to be illegitimate and ineffective. The juxtaposition between governments' attempts to dominate the discourse of reality to impose their own 'preferred reality' (by obscuring the protests of the Arab Spring) and the user-generated and distributed images of the protests highlighted that they were no longer capable of dictating 'cultural reality', severely undermining government authority and legitimacy.[52] The government wishing to restore this authority in the face of mass disobedience will likely resort to discipline (violence) due to its lack of more sophisticated technologies of power. The authoritarian reflex may thus undermine authority itself. Political censorship of opposition is clearly anti-democratic, but we may argue that this censorship is similarly a reflex reaction and a relaxing of regulation of the internet in general may help create pressure for de-regulation of political content. Allowing an open space for inclusive dialogue is essential for the development of democracy, whilst censorship may close down this space.

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[51] Okan Tansu, in Winterholler, C., 'Internet Filter in Turkey to Stay', *NewsEtc.*, 22nd December 2011, available here : http://en.habervesaire.com/haber/2326/, accessed 01/03/2012
[52] Elseewi, T., 'A Revolution of the Imagination', *International Journal of Communication,* no. 5, (2011), pp.1197-1206, p.1200

Framing of censorship in terms of 'defending the family'[53] can be seen to be illogical since the Web 2.0 environment is interactive: the majority of users who access pornography sites, for example, do so consciously and do not 'stumble' across it. Domestic filtering systems are widely available for consumers to prevent children from accessing 'adult' content and can be tailored specifically to family needs. This negates the need for government censorship (except in specific cases such as child or violent pornography). Letting people choose what to access in the politically safe environment of the internet (given its limited penetration) may be a useful experiment for governments in transition towards wider de-regulation of political life. Failure to do so may have serious repercussions in terms of stability and the survival of incumbent regimes. The juxtaposition between a 'closed society' and an 'open mind' can create 'tension'; some have pointed to the events of the Arab Spring to make this point.[54]

Potential Outcomes

Censorship of the internet can prevent the internet from becoming a platform where inclusive dialogue can take place without the threat of self-censorship. Domestic, commercial filtering systems can be employed by families worried about content, providing an alternative to excessive legislation which is often applied haphazardly and used for purposes for which it was not intended. Successful, inclusive dialogue will remain precarious as long as bloggers and journalists continue to be arrested.

In order to take full advantage of the potential benefits and avoid the potential pitfalls described above, one solution may be to increase internet penetration in order to allow and encourage almost universal access to the internet: in this way, everyone that wishes to include themselves by engaging in the online conversation could get involved, allowing for much wider public participation from all spheres of life. This may help rural areas to gain a voice, for example, in arenas where they have little access. There are significant economic benefits alongside the political, social and cultural benefits described above: not only has Information and Communications Technology (ICT) expansion in the Middle East 'resulted in the reduction of the Digital Divide between this region' and other regions, but it has also been crucial to economic growth

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[53] For Example ,Turkish Internet law number 5651 on regulation on the internet is explicitly framed in such terms
[54] Khondker, H., 'Role of the New Media in the Arab Spring', *Globalizations*, vol. 8, no. 5, pp.675-679, p.675

and the development of democracy and freedom of expression 'in a region that suffers most from political, social and global conflicts.'[55]

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[55] Shirazi, F., 'The Contribution to Freedom and Democracy: An Empirical Analysis of Archival Data on the Middle East', *Electronic Journal on Information Systems in Developing Countries'*, vo. 35, no. 6, pp.1-24

Chapter 2: Visibility: Gender, Kurds and Copts

Why Social Visibility is Important

What is Social Visibility?

Crucial to the resolution of social conflict and the development of democracy is the recognition of the presence of all sectors of society and the acknowledgement of issues faced by any groups that are marginalised. Traditionally this has come to be understood as recognising minority rights, however in the Middle East the issue of minorities is compounded by the general feeling of disempowerment brought about by years of authoritarian rule.[56] With reference to the Kurdish issue the NGO Anadolu Kültür indicated that 'the most significant obstacle hindering peace is the broad issue of social visibility' across diverse realms including 'the labour market, state institutions, public civil space, institutions of education and the media'.[57] Failure to engage or recognise the Kurds' representation of themselves (in culture, language etc.) or the refusal to acknowledge the daily discrimination faced by this minority closes off dialogue. It can also prevent the establishment of mutual trust and frustrate any wishes of achieving social empowerment within the democratic society: this can lead to a rejection of that society.[58]

Visibility, Dialogue and Self-Representation

We propose to broaden this idea of the dearth of social visibility by applying it to the various minority groups across society in the MENA region, suggesting that New Media has the capacity to make the first step towards democratisation by making social

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[56] Dalacoura, K., 'The 2011 Uprisings in the Arab Middle East: Political Change and Geopolitical Implications', *International Affairs*, vol. 88, no.1, (2012), pp.63-80, p.67

[57] NGO interviews Report Anadolu Kültür 'Capacity Building for the Effective Participation of Civil Society towards the Solution of the Kurdish Issue', 5th December 2010, p.4, available here: http://www.hakikatadalethafiza.org/Cust/UserFiles/Documents/Editor/Faaliyetler/NGOInterviewsReport.pdf, accessed 01/03/2012 , p.4

[58] NGO interviews Report Anadolu Kültür 'Capacity Building for the Effective Participation of Civil Society towards the Solution of the Kurdish Issue', 5th December 2010, p.4, available here: http://www.hakikatadalethafiza.org/Cust/UserFiles/Documents/Editor/Faaliyetler/NGOInterviewsReport.pdf, accessed 01/03/2012, p.4*.

problems that have been marginalised or misrepresented visible. The problem of social visibility goes hand in hand with our next section which considers the question of dialogue and self-representation: as the 'politics of denial' is increasingly abandoned, the 'politics of exclusion and discrimination' frequently replaces it.[59] Even if marginalised groups in society have the vote, failure to engage with issues specific to them, which can be a result of ignorance, stereotypical social assumptions and outright discrimination, leaves these groups socially and politically disempowered. Social visibility is further complicated by the politics of authoritarianism, which, to the detriment of any real advancement in minority rights (or their visibility) has presented itself as the protector of minorities and women in return for total obedience.[60] Minorities like the Copts in Egypt look with great apprehension at the future in the wake of significant upheaval. Copts' historic problem of passivity is linked to the fact that most of the Coptic discourse has been concerned with 'protecting the Christian community' rather than 'fighting for the rights to full citizenship and thus questioning the community's relationship to the state and its institutions'.[61] The issue of visibility can be reflexive, formative, even, of the community's social and political self-representation. This can in turn affect their participation in public life. Social visibility is therefore a key component of the resolution of social conflict and the development of an engaged democratic society.

New Media and Social Visibility

Monitoring, Visibility and Civil Society

How can New Media help with the issue of social visibility? It is difficult to distinguish the notion of increasing social visibility from monitoring, which remains a key function of civil society. The two perform important functions in isolation of each other: monitoring, for example, is principally about advocacy and witnessing rather

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[59] NGO interviews Report Anadolu Kültür 'Capacity Building for the Effective Participation of Civil Society towards the Solution of the Kurdish Issue', 5th December 2010, p.4, available here: http://www.hakikatadalethafiza.org/Cust/UserFiles/Documents/Editor/Faaliyetler/NGOInterviewsReport.pdf, accessed 01/03/2012, p.2

[60] El-Issawi, F. 'The Arab Spring and the Challenge of Minority Rights: Will the Arab Revolutions Overcome the Legacy of the Past?', *European View*, vol. 10, (2011), pp.249-258, p.257

[61] El-Issawi, F. 'The Arab Spring and the Challenge of Minority Rights: Will the Arab Revolutions Overcome the Legacy of the Past?', *European View*, vol. 10, (2011), pp.249-258, p.256

than discussing an issue.[62] However, any distinction is shown to be arbitrary when we consider the citizen journalist who films an incident: their film at once monitors and increases the social visibility of the issue. The logging of incidents of discrimination, for example on an online platform, necessarily helps with the problem of visibility. People who participate in the technologies of New Media, such as citizen journalists, can perform key roles of an NGO such as, 'monitoring and accountability and public communication'.[63] New Media activists are performing functions of civil society by virtue of their monitoring actions (in filming or writing about an incident) which help hold governments to account by communicating this information to the wider public. Blogs and citizen journalists often question the 'transparency and accountability' of traditional media outlets, challenging the hegemony of dominant or state narratives.[64] Hence, blogs, citizen journalism and activity on YouTube are linked to the issue of visibility when the subject matter concerns particular incidents of monitoring. The online platform Ushahidi, which used crowdsourcing to monitor electoral violations during Egypt's visit to the ballot boxes shows how individuals are engaging fully with the monitoring aspect whilst highlighting the potential issue of electoral fraud.[65]

Images and an Open Discussion

At times, footage of specific incidents, such as that of the (now infamous) killing of Neda Agha Soltan by Basij Militia during the 2009 demonstrations against the results of the contested Iranian Presidential election, can broadcast one story to the whole nation or even the whole world.[66] Similarly, the widespread diffusion of the images of

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[62] Wiesslitz, C. & Ashuri, T., ''Moral Journalists': The Emergence of New Intermediaries of News in an Age of Digital Media', *Journalism*, vol. 12, no. 8, (2011), pp. 1035-1051, p.1037

[63] Thania Paffenholz and Christoph Spurk in NGO interviews Report Anadolu Kültür 'Capacity Building for the Effective Participation of Civil Society towards the Solution of the Kurdish Issue', 5th December 2010, p.4, available here:
http://www.hakikatadalethafiza.org/Cust/UserFiles/Documents/Editor/Faaliyetler/NGOInterviewsReport.pdf, accessed 01/03/2012, p.7

[64] Bradshaw, P., 'Mapping Digital Media, Social Media and News', *Reference Series of Open Society Foundations*, No. 15, (2011), pp.1-22, p.13, available here:
http://www.soros.org/initiatives/media/articles_publications/publications/mapping-digital-media-social-media-and-news-20120117/mapping-digital-media-social-media-20120119.pdf, accessed 01/03/2012

[65] http://www.ushahidi.com, accessed, 01/03/2012

[66] Jurrat, N., 'Mapping Digital Media- Citizen Journalism and the Internet', *Reference Series of Open Society Foundations*, No. 4, (2011), available here:
http://www.soros.org/initiatives/media/articles_publications/publications/mapping-digital-media-citizen-journalism-20110712/OSF-Media-Report-Handbook-Citizen%20Journalism%20and%20the%20Internet-07-12-2011-final-WEB.pdf, accessed 01/03/2012

Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation in Tunisia presented the plight of a street vendor and his humiliation in the face of the regimes authority: arguably this had a significant impact in mobilisation of opposition.[67] This all operates outside of the culture of silence which is imposed by governments unwilling to acknowledge this type of incident. This type of media can change individuals' perspective on social issues: grainy, shaky, gritty and bloody, these images transfer the viewer (who we must not forget has already invested themselves by choosing to watch the images) into the first-person perspective, right in
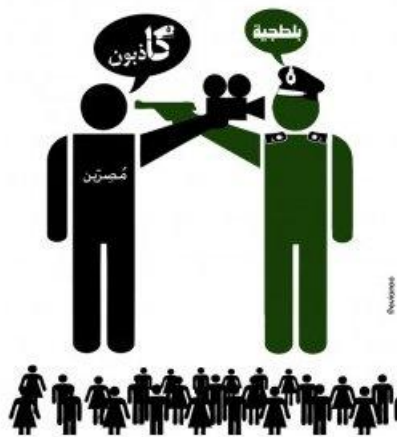
'Mosireen':"Kazeboon!" Officer: "Baltageya!" / 'Egyptian/determination' (pun):"Liars!"
Officer: "Thugs!" -Image from Mosireen[68]

the middle of the action. Applying the term 'personalisation'[69] in this different context, we can propose that the participatory nature of this New Media identifies the viewer/reader with the victim of violence well beyond the bounds of empathy. In terms of increasing the social visibility of certain problems, this is of fundamental importance.

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[67] Axford, B., 'Talk about a Revolution: Social Media and the MENA uprisings, *Globalizations*, vol. 8, no. 5, (2011), pp.681-686, p.684
[68] Mosireen, an Egyptian film collective, taken from http://mosireen.org/, accessed 01/03/2012
[69] Lance Bennet, W., & Segerberg, A., 'Digital Media and the Personalization of Collective Action', *Information, Communication & Society*, vol. 14, no.6, (2011), pp.770-799

Short Case Study: Copts

Let us consider the plight of Egyptian Copts, who, in spite of some progress claim to be the victims of violence, marginalisation, discrimination and stereotypical representation in the media.[70] Often, the expression of these grievances in the public sphere has been met with aggression and the participants have been denounced as religious fanatics even by leading intellectuals and even when they were protesting against anti-Coptic bombing campaigns in January 2011.[71] The denial of the Coptic problem as a potential sectarian problem has obscured the expression of legitimate grievances. This has helped to marginalise the community within society. The images distributed and circulated by citizen journalists and online activists of the massacre of 28 pro-Coptic protestors at Maspero on the 9th October 2011 catapulted the Coptic issue to the forefront of Egyptian commentary: this was especially since institutional bias was made clear by the brutal campaign of arrests and military trials of civilian pro-Coptic protesters, in the absence of any repercussions for the military forces who shot and ran over protesters.[72] All across the internet and particularly on Facebook, commentators railed against a public television presenter who openly incited viewers against Copts after an incident in which some soldiers of the Egyptian army were killed. Meanwhile, Coptic revolutionary Mina Daniels who was injured in the day of the Camel and killed at Maspero became a martyr of the revolution to the online community. This is important, since the implied message behind the discussion of these incidents is the 'indirect recognition of the validity of the Copts' cause as one of the many reforms that Egyptians are striving to realise in their struggle for democracy'.[73] Mina is often recognised online as a figure legitimately fighting (and dying for) for his rights rather than a

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[70] See El-Issawi, F. 'The Arab Spring and the Challenge of Minority Rights: Will the Arab Revolutions Overcome the Legacy of the Past?', *European View*, vol. 10, (2011), pp.249-258, p.255 and Rowe, P., 'Building Coptic Civil Society: Christian Groups and the State in Mubarak's Egypt', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 45 no. 1, pp.111-126 for a history

[71] Tadros, M., referencing al-Ahram's coverage of the protests 'A State of Sectarian Denial', *Middle East Research and Information Project*, January 11 2011 http://www.merip.org/mero/mero011111, accessed 01/03/2012

[72] For the footage, along with interviews see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00t-0NEwc3E, accessed 01/03/2012 be advised this footage is extremely graphic; See El-Issawi, F. 'The Arab Spring and the Challenge of Minority Rights: Will the Arab Revolutions Overcome the Legacy of the Past?', *European View*, vol. 10, (2011), pp.249-258, p.256

[73] El-Issawi, F. 'The Arab Spring and the Challenge of Minority Rights: Will the Arab Revolutions Overcome the Legacy of the Past?', *European View*, vol. 10, (2011), pp.249-258, p.256

'troublemaker' upsetting the narrative of Coptic-Muslim harmony: the chants of 'We are all Mina Daniels' are added to those of 'We are all Khaled Said'.[74]

As difficult as it may be, even traumatic for Egyptians, recognition of the sectarian problem is a crucial aspect of the democratic transition. Proclaiming unity but ignoring the everyday discrimination and even outright hostility in the media towards minorities can only intensify the divide, for to do so is to reject the lawful articulation of grievances whilst granting anti-Coptic arguments legitimacy, as those that complain appear traitorous in their attempt to upset the status quo. Often there is a refusal to recognise the legitimacy of a separate minority identity which is enforced through strict censorship on- and off-line, whilst anti-minority material is available uncensored on YouTube and other online arenas.[75] Furthermore, recognition is an integral component to the rejection of authoritarian discourses which seek to limit participation by obscuring legitimate demands through the presentation of these grievances as extremist and counter to stability. By questioning the use of such a discourse against particular minorities, it may be possible to challenge its use in the wider context and thus to erode the argument that continuing pressure on governments for political change is counter-revolutionary.

Short Case Study: Gender

A Gendered Stereotype

New Media can increase social visibility of other issues. In particular the gender question must be raised here: throughout the wider Middle East region there exists little space where the social recognition of gendered self-expression and the problems that are faced daily can be expressed.[76] Instead, patriarchal societies express a stereotypical gendered image in the media throughout the public arena. For example, in Egypt:

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[74] El-Issawi, F. 'The Arab Spring and the Challenge of Minority Rights: Will the Arab Revolutions Overcome the Legacy of the Past?', *European View*, vol. 10, (2011), pp.249-258, p.256

[75] For example, such footage is available in Turkey, see International Crisis Group, 'Turkey: Ending the PKK Insurgency', *Europe Report*, no. 213, (Brussels/Istanbul: 2011), p. 14

[76] The term gender is employed precisely because of the inclusivity of the term: whilst this paper concentrates on female issues, much of the analysis can be applied for male identity, other gendered identities and different sexual identities which operate outside of the dominant social discourse.

> 'the freedom to interrogate and challenge established genres and modes of representing gender, ... piety, class, respectability and nationalism have been vigorously policed and regulated ... resulting in a discursive terrain of subjection whose iterations produce 'that which they name''.[77]

Put simply, the reproduction and repetition of gendered stereotypes in public and social space helps makes this stereotype, 'fundamentally encrypted in cultural repertoires and structures which are everywhere seen as authentic, arboreal and sacred.'[78] Gender issues are not only ignored, but are actively obscured in the public sphere, leading, for example, to the problematic tendency to blame victims of rape and violence for their victimisation. Reporting incidents of rape or violence officially is almost universally ineffective and humiliating. The forced use of so-called 'virginity tests' against female protesters such as Samira Ibrahim by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) regime firmly underlines the problematic discourse at work as well as highlighting the refusal of the government to engage in any seriousness with the 'sexual brutality' faced by women in everyday life.[79] Prisoners were branded prostitutes and subjected to sexual torture, violence and harassment by soldiers in a form of ritual punishment for their active engagement in public life, spurred by suppressed sexuality and a culture of predatory masculinity. The online dissemination of footage of Egyptian military personnel dragging a woman, exposing her underwear and beating her enraged the blogosphere and news agencies alike, transporting the issue of sexual violence onto the agenda for transition.[80]

Visibility and the Problem of Recognition

Whilst the international sphere most recently encountered the issue with the experiences of CBS reporter Lara Logan on the 15 January 2011, Egyptians are becoming increasingly aware of the problem of sexual violence. Reports suggest that

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[77] Aly, R., 'Rebuilding Egyptian Media for a Democratic Future', *Arab Media & Society,* issue 14, (2011), pp.1-7, p.2
[78] Aly, R., 'Rebuilding Egyptian Media for a Democratic Future', *Arab Media & Society,* issue 14, (2011), pp.1-7, p.5
[79] Butt, R. & Hussein, A-R.,''Virginity Tests' on Egyptian Protesters are Illegal, Says Judge', 27th December 2011, *The Guardian*, available here: http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/dec/27/virginity-tests-egypt-protesters-illegal, accessed 01/03/2011
[80]Footage available here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vf_0p4a_GwI, accessed 01/03/2012, be advised this footage is extremely graphic.

sexual harassment is extremely common in Egypt and worse still,[81] that the dominant discourse of society places the blame on the victim, obscuring the fact that this is a serious social problem. It has been noted that the majority's identification with the oppressor (the harasser) is characteristic of oppressed societies.[82] This relationship can only change with the development of a new discourse which recognises the problem of victimisation: in identifying with the victim, societies may well challenge the oppressor. New Media has certainly contributed in the past to catapulting the issue of harassment into the mainstream: the video posted online of two women being harassed in central Cairo by the user 'engihaddad' in 2007 publicised a social problem that had been taboo to the highest degree.[83]

Towards a Dialogue on 'Invisible' Issues

Many female bloggers had been writing about sexual harassment in the run up to the attacks which took place in October during Eid in 2006, where a mob literally tore the clothes of women's backs.[84] Arguably this set the stage for the widespread condemnation of the attacks online: according to Sandmonkey, a right wing political blogger, harassment 'became a male-female issue, not just a female issue, in a society that often excuses male behaviour as a result of their nature and their frustration with life, and relies on women to control and restrain society'.[85] Other initiatives, such as Harassmap which uses crowdsourcing (encouraging women to text, tweet or email their everyday experiences of harassment in Cairo), in order to record and map incidents have had great success as well.[86] By pointing out 'hotspots' of harassment and by

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[81] Amnesty International, 'Amnesty International Report 2011: The State of the World's Human Rights', (London: 2011), p.133. ; Abdelhadi, M., 'Egypt's sexual harassment 'cancer'', 18th July 2008, *BBC News*, available here: www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/7514567.stm, accessed 01/03/2012; Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights, 'The Egyptian Women between the Wings of the Revolution and Stripping the Reality', (Cairo: 2011), pp.1-4, p.4, available here: http://www.ecwronline.org/english/press%20reless/2011/Press%20Release-%20English-%20Women's%20Status%20Report%202011.pdf, accessed 01/03/2012

[82] Badeel daily editor-in-chief Muhammad El Sayyeed Saidi in Abdelhadi, M., 'Egypt's sexual harassment 'cancer'', 18th July 2008, *BBC News*, available here: www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/7514567.stm, accessed 01/03/2012

[83] Iskander, E., 'Connecting the National and the Virtual: Can Facebook Activism Remain Relevant After Egypt's January 25 Uprising', *International Journal of Communication*, No. 5, (2011), pp.1225-1237, p.1231; video available here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DH7nQW1mP90, accessed 01/03/2012

[84] Otterman, S., 'Publicizing the Private: Egyptian Women Bloggers Speak Out', *Arab Media and Society*, issue 1, (2007), pp.1-17, p.6

[85] Otterman, S., 'Publicizing the Private: Egyptian Women Bloggers Speak Out', *Arab Media and Society*, issue 1, (2007), pp.1-17, p.7

[86] www.harrasmap.org, accessed 01/03/2012

providing instant advice and help to those that report incidents, this initiative helps empower victims and point out areas which require particular focus. All information that is uploaded is publically viewable, providing women with a platform to express their experiences. Equally important is the related issue of 'personalisation': by reading the stories of individuals who express their distress and anger publically and emotively, the reader is more likely to view the victims *as* individuals rather than a homogenised, objectifiable mass. They are thus more likely to empathise with women's plight.

Crowdsourcing, Visibility and Changing the Discourse

Harassmap is one of the first and most key projects of its type, which seeks to use 'the entire system [to] act as an advocacy, prevention, and response tool, highlighting the severity and pervasiveness of the problem'.[87] The related #EndSH (End Sexual Harassment) hashtag for Twitter[88] was employed to crowdsource ideas for how to combat sexual harassment offline: this initiative spread to Lebanon and by nature of hashtagging in general, opened up a space for inclusive dialogue about the issue. They perform essential functions of civil society, whilst highlighting an important issue that requires addressing. If their exposure is currently limited, being little over a year old, it is precisely because of an official refusal to recognise the problem of sexual harassment as a problem. Serious engagement with these kinds of initiatives would help to increase the social visibility of sexual harassment, or rather, to change the public discourse on what the causes of harassment are: frequently posters explicitly reference how covered they were when attacked and the unprovoked nature of the assault.[89] In spite of the common public belief that the way women dress effects the rate of harassment (indeed, it has been noted that many who are harassed whilst wearing the hijab blame themselves), the majority who suffer in Egypt are those who are 'modestly dressed' and wearing the veil.[90] The discourse needs to change to reflect reality: society could then

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[87] http://blog.harassmap.org/about/, accessed 01/03/2012

[88] A hashtag is used by people to categorise their tweets by putting the hashtag symbol # before a particular word or phrase: this means that a vast array of information can be collected and seen by many individuals who search for or use the #Hashtag. Thus, the #EndSH initiative allowed anyone to comment on ideas surrounding sexual harassment from across the globe and to enter into a mass peer-to-peer communication and conversation.

[89] See for example the testimony of one woman: 'Two men on a motorbike reached out and grabbed my ass. Im [sic.] covered neck to wrist to ankle. Bastards.' In Mohandiseen near Shabab, at 19.21, February 14th 2012 from http://harassmap.org/reports/view/700, accessed 01/03/2012

[90] Abdelhadi, M., 'Egypt's sexual harassment 'cancer'', 18th July 2008, *BBC News*, available here: www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/7514567.stm, accessed 01/03/2012

realise that the narrative can oppress. In the meantime the fact that citizens are grouping together (both through creating an organisation and more importantly through speaking out publically) in an effort to end a pervasive problem indicates a promising trend towards public engagement in politics outside of the traditional modes of power. This in itself is key to the development of democracy.

Alongside simple documentation of events, then, New Media is employed by citizens actively working towards promoting a particular interest whilst simultaneously performing the function of the watchdog. The most important outcome of this activity, however, is the transformation of the social image of women and minorities from passive observers to active participators: once it is clear that certain behaviour will not go unnoticed or unreported and that these sections of society will not be silent, social discourse will have to change. How this discourse can be directed shall be the focus of the next section.

Possibilities for the Future

A Shift in Perspective?

The user generated nature of New Media content offers governments and agencies great potential for relatively little political and financial cost. New Media can help change the discourse surrounding social problems, helping to solve these problems in the long term rather than offering a quick fix solution. By allowing minorities to express their problems and social worries publically and legitimately without fear of reprisal, separate identities could be expressed *within* the national identity.[91] In the case of armed conflict, failure to engage with the issues 'removes any incentive for behavioural change'.[92] In increasing the visibility of social problems the discourse surrounding the issues can be challenged and changed, transforming the nature of the

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[91] The 'refusal to meet cultural demands of Turkish citizens with Kurdish identity, constitutes the biggest obstacle to democratisation', Candar, C., TESEV report on Ending the PKK insurgency, 'The Kurdish Question Freed from Violence: Down the Mountain- How Could the PKK Be Disarmed?', available here: http://www.tesev.org.tr/UD_OBJS/PDF/DEMP/Leaving%20the%20mountain.pdf, accessed 01/03/2012
[92] Berghof Peace Support, 'Mediating Peace with Proscribed Armed Groups', (Berlin: 2011), p.5, available here: http://www.berghof-peacesupport.org/publications/RLM_Mediating_Peace_with_Proscribed_Armed_Groups.pdf, accessed 01/03/2012

problem. For example, minorities may no longer be perceived as threats to the unity of the state if the discourse is more open, since social discourse would not be escalated by the rejection of minority concerns as illegitimate and harmful. Furthermore, incidents such as sexual violence may decrease as the perception of its acceptability is changed by the increased visibility of discrimination, harassment or violence as a problem. Direct public involvement in initiatives which seek to raise the profile of these issues helps foster a strong civil society, to garner outside support and understanding as well as to grant these projects greater legitimacy. All of this not only helps with the process of social healing in transitioning societies, but helps to guarantee a more democratic society.

Official Use of New Media?

What could governments do to create an atmosphere which encourages these benefits? It may be helpful to establish the scope and nature of a particular social problem. This could help prevent social assumptions following a cultural narrative when society is confronted with an assertion that, minorities are often discriminated against or that many women are sexually harassed. It appears that there is a lack of information on how the individual civilian experiences discrimination in personal terms. In many countries, such as Turkey, 'standardized, everyday discrimination research is not done'.[93] Alongside engagement with the information already available, one possibility could be the creation of official initiatives along the lines of Harassmap, to be monitored and managed by NGOs, which allows individuals to upload and express the daily discrimination experienced by minorities (a separate initiative could be established for each group). The information would anonymous, publically viewable and encouraged in the public sphere (in other words, available and encouraged to be used in the media). Information about procedures to address the problem officially and whom to contact for help and advice could be automatically sent to those that post. Moreover, comment and help threads could be initiated for individuals to discuss potential solutions to the problems faced. Since the purpose of the information is not to 'name and shame' or point specific fingers for official purposes, the host need not

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[93] NGO interviews Report Anadolu Kültür 'Capacity Building for the Effective Participation of Civil Society towards the Solution of the Kurdish Issue', 5th December 2010, p.4, available here: http://www.hakikatadalethafiza.org/Cust/UserFiles/Documents/Editor/Faaliyetler/NGOInterviewsReport.pdf, accessed 01/03/2012, p.27

monitor content too heavily (thus decreasing the workload): they need not even endorse the views expressed since it is enough that the open space exists for people to express (and access information on) cases of discrimination for the purposes of social visibility outlined above. This could help to break the monopoly of silence. Moreover, it could help break the monopoly held by opposition or armed groups with regards to the discourse of exclusion: showing a willingness to engage, even in the smallest manner such as this, with these types of problems could encourage the process of socialisation.

Problems facing an Official Initiative

However, the majority of those that supply information to projects like Harassmap do so anonymously. Logically they would only do so if they trusted the initiative not to victimise them for speaking out: people in the MENA region have been shown to rarely have this level of trust for their governments.[94] This trust must be earned and unfortunately very little is being done to garner it in transitioning societies: the arrest of journalists and bloggers who challenge established 'truths' and the continued failure to engage seriously with any of these issues emasculates any attempts of these governments towards inclusivity and pluralism in the public sphere. One possible solution is to encourage established NGOs to log the information and advice that they already hold (and any information that they receive) into the centralised system: in this way, information would be available until people felt confident enough to log the information securely themselves. Moreover, governments may be unwilling to give credence to something that may seem to question national unity. However, as we have seen above, failure to engage with the issues merely polarises the situation and increases the divide since minorities have no way of legitimate and socially recognised public self-expression. If bombings and violence (military or social) operate alongside governmental refusal to engage, then discourses are likely to remain oppositional whilst non-violent solutions become less tangible. By employing New Media this way, governments could be seen to be engaging and listening rather than attacking and denying. Meanwhile, wider public engagement in the issue can change the polarised discourse at work.

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[94] See, for example Copts after the bombing of 2011 in Abdelhadi, M., 'Egypt's sexual harassment 'cancer'', 18th July 2008, *BBC News*, available here: www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/7514567.stm, accessed 01/03/2012

Chapter 3: Wider Public Engagement: Dialogue, Discourses and Self-Representation

Why is Wider Engagement Important?

The Importance of Individual Agency

Wider public engagement in society and politics is an essential part of the development of a democratic culture: authoritarian or non-democratic regimes often try to dampen the agency of individuals in order to control dissent. This suppression of individual agency is often integral to an authoritarian system of governance (which can obviously persist even under the guise of elections).[95] Consider the case of Indonesia, which is in strict terms 'democratic' in that elections take place, but is simultaneously authoritarian in the strict control of public and private life.[96] This discrepancy has been attributed to a culture of governance which encourages 'enterprise association', in which the individual becomes an efficient cog in the system with the emphasis on productivity and security of the whole, as opposed to 'voluntary association' in which individuals voluntarily band together to protect individual liberties in the interest of others (and thus the state).[97] One system suppresses individuality in the name of the whole; the other encourages individuality in the name of the whole. The problem with the former is that in practice, suppression of agency in favour of conformity can lead to cultural and political stagnation. When the suppression of agency is combined with stagnation, this can lead to dissent and even mass opposition.[98]

The expression of individual agency, changing individuals from passive observers to active participators is a necessary step in transforming from an authoritarian system of governance. This section will therefore concentrate on how

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[95] See Havel, V., *The Power of the Powerless*, (New York: M.E. Sharpe), (1985)

[96] Rainsborough, M., in lecture, 'Bad Elements', 13 January 2012 at King's College London

[97] Rainsborough, M., in lecture, 'Bad Elements', 13 January 2012 at King's College London

[98] Aly, R., 'Rebuilding Egyptian Media for a Democratic Future', *Arab Media & Society,* issue 14, (2011), pp.1-7, pp.1-7; for the latter points see Dalacoura, K., 'The 2011 Uprisings in the Arab Middle East: Political Change and Geopolitical Implications', *International Affairs*, vol. 88, no.1, (2012), pp.63-80, p.67 and Rainsborough, M., in lecture, 'Bad Elements', 13 January 2012 at King's College London

New Media helps the re-assertion of individual agency through the prisms of self-representation and dialogue, in order to show other features such as the engagement with new ideas, participation and the formation of new opinions. Simultaneously, we shall see that the result of these is the exercise of civil society functions.

Self-Representation and New Media

Self-Assertion in the Public Sphere

As we have seen, the assertion of individual agency for civil engagement is key to the transition away from authoritarian modes of thinking: the tendency, especially with regards to the media, to remain passive and wait for authorisation is precisely a failure to perform the functions of civil society.[99] The self-assertion of citizens in the public sphere is an essential part of the development of democracy, the way to move away from Havel's 'auto-totality' (self-imposed domination) and towards a broader, cultural *autogestion* (self-management). This is essential, since civil society is 'organised social life that is open, voluntary, self-generating, [and] at least partially self-supporting'; fundamentally all of this activity should be 'autonomous from the state'.[100] Throughout the MENA region, where a large proportion of the population are young (approximately two-thirds of the population of Egypt are under thirty),[101] where most of the ruling political elite are older and where there is a lack of 'representative politics or independent media',[102] there is very little room for political and social self-expression.

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[99] Chatham House, 'Egypt in Transition: the Media's Role in Politics', Chatham House Workshop Report, June 2011, available here: http://chathamhouse.org/publications/papers/view/177281, accessed 01/03/2012

[100] Diamond in Khamis, S. & Vaughn, K., 'Cyberactivism in the Egyptian Revolution: how Civic Engagement and Citizen Journalism Tilted the Balance', *Arab Media & Society*, issue 13, (2011), pp.1-37, p.6

[101] Iskander, E., 'Connecting the National and the Virtual: Can Facebook Activism Remain Relevant After Egypt's January 25 Uprising', *International Journal of Communication*, No. 5, (2011), pp.1225-1237, p.1225

[102] Iskander, E., 'Connecting the National and the Virtual: Can Facebook Activism Remain Relevant After Egypt's January 25 Uprising', *International Journal of Communication*, No. 5, (2011), pp.1225-1237, p.1225

Self-Expression and Challenging Discourses

As we have seen, legitimate self-expression for minorities is essential in the establishment of a wider, social peace and also in the development of democracy. Furthermore, it is essential that individuals from all over the political and social spectrum have the capacity to engage in self-expression as well. This is especially important in societies where dominant, self-referential discourses are at work which, when publically performed, reproduce not only 'racism, discrimination, regionalism and class-based disadvantage' but also alienation, non-participation and exclusion in the public sphere, thus ensuring that these discourses remain 'fundamentally encrypted in cultural repertoires and structures which are everywhere seen as authentic, arboreal and sacred'.[103] Put simply, without being allowed to engage in the conversation which proscribes individual cultural and social identities, there can be no transformation of the discourse which encourages docility and submission. Therefore it is essential for the development of democracy for there to be an inclusive dialogue which allows individuals legitimate self-expression (politically, culturally and socially) within the public sphere. This can allow a change in the discourse towards inclusivity, participation and engagement. These are key components of a healthy civil society and democracy.

Reimagining the Social World and New Space

For those, such as the Egyptians who feel excluded from political participation and from 'an interactive relationship with the state and its institutions through an inclusive public sphere',[104] the challenge for transition lies in the need for a 'fundamental cultural re-imagining of the nation, of difference, inclusion and citizenship'.[105] This re-imagining can only occur if individuals can participate firstly in their own re-imagination of their self-expression: in other words, if individuals can find a space in which they can challenge the dominant discourses.[106] Put simply, in these societies, 'the majority must choose to remain passive rather than participate in a

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[103] Aly, R., 'Rebuilding Egyptian Media for a Democratic Future', *Arab Media & Society,* issue 14, (2011), pp.1-7, p.5

[104] Aly, R., 'Rebuilding Egyptian Media for a Democratic Future', *Arab Media & Society,* issue 14, (2011), pp.1-7, p.5

[105] Aly, R., 'Rebuilding Egyptian Media for a Democratic Future', *Arab Media & Society,* issue 14, (2011), pp.1-7, p.5

[106] Loader, B. & Mercea, D. 'Networking Democracy?', *Information, Communication & Society,* vol. 14, issue 6, (2011), pp.757-769, p.759

system without credibility (Soliman, 2006) or it must create parallel spaces for participation (Iskander, 2010)'.[107] New Media offers the inclusive and open space for a conversation about dominant discourses to occur, outside of the hegemony of established institutions such as the government or the traditional media. Most importantly, it offers the space for individual self-expression.

Blogging, Self-Expression and Engaging in the Discourse

Blogging has become an effective way for individuals to participate in this dialogue: '[t]o blog is to declare your presence; to disclose to the world that you exist and what it's like to be you; to affirm that your thoughts are at least as worth hearing as anyone else's; to emerge from the spectating audience as a player and maker of meanings'.[108] Its participatory nature is fundamentally important, for a blog, such as Salam Pax's (The Baghdad Blogger), is not merely a 'channel for authentic expression'[109] but also the expression of agency. By this we mean that through blogging or commenting, the individual transforms from a passive observer or 'consumer of political party propaganda, government spin or mass media news', to an actor who actively engages in 'challeng[ing] discourses, shar[ing] alternative perspectives' through 'publish[ing] their own opinions'.[110] The young, anonymous blogger Isis, who posts about her past as a drug addict and criticises what she dubs Arab society's 'continuing obsession with virginity', comments that, '[m]y blog is a way to remind myself that I am not alone, and also it's a way to vent. Even if no one read it, I would still keep writing'.[111] The blogosphere 'provides a bridge between the private, subjective sphere of self-expression and the socially fragile civic sphere in which publics can form and act'.[112]

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[107] Iskander, E., 'Connecting the National and the Virtual: Can Facebook Activism Remain Relevant After Egypt's January 25 Uprising', *International Journal of Communication*, No. 5, (2011), pp.1225-1237, p.1227

[108] Coleman, S., 'Blogs and the New Politics of Listening', *The Political Quarterly*, vol.76, Issue 2, (2008), pp.272-280, p.274

[109] Coleman, S., 'Blogs and the New Politics of Listening', *The Political Quarterly*, vol.76, Issue 2, (2008), pp.272-280, p.277

[110] Loader, B. & Mercea, D. 'Networking Democracy?', *Information, Communication & Society,* vol. 14, issue 6, (2011), pp.757-769, p.759

[111] In Otterman, S., 'Publicizing the Private: Egyptian Women Bloggers Speak Out', *Arab Media and Society*, issue 1, (2007), pp.1-17, p.2

[112] Coleman, S., 'Blogs and the New Politics of Listening', *The Political Quarterly*, vol.76, Issue 2, (2008), pp.272-280, p.277

The ability of 'regular' individuals to consume, produce and disseminate their own, alternate media using online platforms has helped fuel the 'revolution of individual subjectivity' in which individuals in the MENA region are imagining 'their relationship with the world differently' by putting themselves 'at the centre of their own narratives in ways that challenge previous iterations of official Arab or Islamic cultures and personal identities'.[113] Those in the Arab revolutions who used mobile phones to report unfolding events helped shape the narrative of these revolutions, giving these individuals 'a sense of ownership over events' which had previously been lacking.[114] Citizen journalists who write, film, post, tag, comment and engage with an alternate set of media actively participate in the 'agenda-setting process',[115] through 'telling their own stories'. It is this participation through expression which is crucial, to the development of 'democratic discourses'.[116] The open space for self-expression offered by New Media allows participation in the conversation which forms cultural and social discourses (and thus the individuals' representation). This has allowed individuals to challenge dominant narratives and develop new, inclusive and more democratic discourses concerning individual, cultural, social and political representations.

New Media and Dialogue

New Ideas in a Wider World

The networked structure of the internet allows for the swift transmission of information and ideas across a geographically vast area: as such, New Media users in the MENA region have 'truly global access'.[117] The cross-border interactions of 'international youth' in the Arab world online helped establish a new imagination about

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[113] Elseewi, T., 'A Revolution of the Imagination', *International Journal of Communication,* no. 5, (2011), pp.1197-1206, pp.1197-1200

[114] Zack Brisson in Khamis, S. & Vaughn, K., 'Cyberactivism in the Egyptian Revolution: how Civic Engagement and Citizen Journalism Tilted the Balance', *Arab Media & Society*, issue 13, (2011), pp.1-37, p.17

[115] Goode, L., 'Social News, Citizen Journalism and Democracy', *New Media Society*, vol. 11, no. 8, (2009), pp.1287-1305, p.1293

[116] Howard, P., in Khamis, S. & Vaughn, K., 'Cyberactivism in the Egyptian Revolution: how Civic Engagement and Citizen Journalism Tilted the Balance', *Arab Media & Society*, issue 13, (2011), pp.1-37, p.4

[117] Isherwood, T., 'A New Direction or More of the Same? Political Blogging in Egypt', *Arab Media and Society*, issue 6, (2008), pp.1-17, p.3

political change which challenged the discourse of the political elite.[118] Moreover, social and New Media, through its distribution networks (sharing, tagging, linking and microblogging) allows exposure to new information and ideas that might otherwise have been obscured or ignored.[119] The extremely fast transmission of events such as Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation and the spread of protests across the Arab world were thanks, in a large part, to the information networks established by New Media.[120] Most importantly the 'ideational network' offered by New Media helps concepts, rather than ideologies, to be shared and developed in an online public sphere. In this way, 'parallel discursive arenas'[121] can be developed.

Civil Engagement Based on Values Rather than Ideologies

The online activities which characterised the Arab Spring can be interpreted as having been centralised around 'values rather than ideology … developing themes around good governance, democracy, human rights, fighting corruption, and … imagining the future'.[122] In this sense, the new generation of Muslim Brothers who are engaged online and who thus can operate outside of the hierarchy of their organisation, have 'more in common with other young Egyptian activists, whether leftist or nationalist, than they do with their less wired peers'.[123] The Young Civilians, a non-hierarchical (and often satirical) Turkish organisation which organise themselves online, focus their activity on fighting injustice against vulnerable groups and protesting against anti-democratic practices, rather than focusing on exclusive identity politics. [124] One member claimed that, '[o]ne day we find ourselves drafting a memorandum for our Alevi citizens, another day we are protesting for the Armenian community. We can even

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[118] Khanfar, W., in lecture 'Al Jazeera and the Arab Spring', 19th January 2012, at Chatham House
[119] Bradshaw, P., 'Mapping Digital Media, Social Media and News', *Reference Series of Open Society Foundations*, No. 15, (2011), pp.1-22, p.13, available here:
http://www.soros.org/initiatives/media/articles_publications/publications/mapping-digital-media-social-media-and-news-20120117/mapping-digital-media-social-media-20120119.pdf, accessed 01/03/2012
[120] Khanfar, W., in lecture 'Al Jazeera and the Arab Spring', 19th January 2012, at Chatham House, p.5
[121] Fraser, N., in Axford, B., 'Talk about a Revolution: Social Media and the MENA uprisings, *Globalizations*, vol. 8, no. 5, (2011), pp.681-686, p.682
[122] Khanfar, W., in lecture 'Al Jazeera and the Arab Spring', 19th January 2012, at Chatham House, p.5
[123] Lynch, M., 'Young Brothers in Cyberspace', *Middle East Report*, No. 245, vol. 37, (2007), available here: http://www.merip.org/mer/mer245/young-brothers-cyberspace, accessed 01/03/2012
[124] Tokyay, M., 'Young Civilian Movement in Turkey', 14th September 2011, *SES Türkiye,* available here: http://turkey.setimes.com/en_GB/articles/ses/articles/features/departments/society/2011/09/14/feature-01, accessed 01/03/2012

criticise someone/something that we previously gave support to on a subject'.[125] With the transmission of new ideas in the networked space of New Media which allows a vast conversation to take place, citizens can thus engage with one another based on an inclusive set of values rather than exclusive ideologies.

Digital Diasporas

New Media can also provide a unique opportunity for the development of democracy through these 'ideational networks': through New Media, the Diasporic community living in democratic cultures can bring new perspectives to the domestic discussion table, suggesting an encouraging possibility for future dialogues to take place.[126] The diverse and Diasporic musical collaboration involved in the creation of Hip Hop song *January 25* by 'Syrian-American Omar Offendum' and 'Iraqi-Canadian The Narcicyst', produced by 'Palestinian-American Sami Matar with appearances by Palestinian-Canadian Ayah, and African-American converts MC Freeway and Amir Sulaiman' illustrates this. The song, posted on YouTube with over 250,000 hits so far,[127] allows an ideologically diverse and geographically dispersed diaspora to 'speak as one voice'[128] and engage in a conversation with those in the 'homeland'.

The highly active Kurdish diaspora, who organise information under the hashtag #twitterkurds on Twitter are another example of how diasporas can act as a bridge between worlds by engaging in a dialogue and discussing solutions to Kurdish problems in the homeland. The Third Annual Kurdish Youth Festival which took place in the United States of America was live-streamed and discussed across the internet using the hashtag #3KYF specifically to encourage the exchange of ideas and to help develop a

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[125] Sehadit Ctil in Tokyay, M., 'Young Civilian Movement in Turkey', 14th September 2011, *SES Türkiye,* available here:
http://turkey.setimes.com/en_GB/articles/ses/articles/features/departments/society/2011/09/14/feature-01, accessed 01/03/2012
[126] For example: 'We need from Britain to support the Yemeni diaspora, the British-Yemenis to go back to Yemen and share the knowledge and share the skills and try to bring Yemen out of this corruption and have a corruption-free country', Alshamery, A., 'Where Next for Yemen? Perspectives on the Youth Movement', Lecture 7th July 2011 at Chatham House
[127] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sCbpiOpLwFg, accessed 01/03/2012
[128] Dotson-Renta, L., 'Hip Hop & Diaspora: Connecting the Arab Spring', *Arab Media & Society,* issue 13, (2011), pp.1-4, pp.1-2

cultural discourse of inclusivity.[129] Diasporas' digital interactions can 'enable the expression and negotiation of cultural identities … the achievement of collective goals (in homeland and/or host-land), and a decrease in social marginalization'.[130] These communities established a space for discussion, employing crowdsourcing technologies to achieve wider participation in an inclusive dialogue which concentrates on the development of ideas and solutions to social problems. In offering a space for inclusive dialogue, this kind of global conferencing enhances civic engagement and helps in the development of democracy.

Dialogue and Inclusivity

Coffee-House Conversations

The online environment allows engaged users the ability to actively participate in a conversation in an alternate public space distinct from hierarchically organised traditional public arenas. Blogging, Facebook sharing and posting, distributing opinions and information on Twitter and engaging with comments left on the bottom of YouTube videos generates discussion 'on a many-to-many basis'.[131] Alongside the breaking of the monopoly of information and cultural hegemony held by the traditional media and governmental institutions, citizen journalism fosters the 'democratic imagination' through the encouragement of journalism and news to 'become part of a *conversation*'.[132] This is essential since consumption of news is no longer passive but active: users can participate in the construction of the narrative through discussion with other users about the issues at stake. Editorials can be challenged, inaccuracies can be questioned and arguments can be clarified.

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[129] See the Facebook Group, here http://www.facebook.com/pages/Kurdish-Youth-Festival/149315478414212, accessed 01/03/2012 and http://ekurd.net/mismas/articles/misc2012/1/kurdsworld578.htm, accessed 01/03/2012

[130] Tan, L., 'Review of *Diasporas in a Digital Age*', *Ephemera Theory & Politics in Organization*', vol. 3, no. 11 pp.325-328, p.325

[131] Iskander, E., 'Connecting the National and the Virtual: Can Facebook Activism Remain Relevant After Egypt's January 25 Uprising', *International Journal of Communication*, No. 5, (2011), pp.1225-1237, p.1227

[132] Goode, L., 'Social News, Citizen Journalism and Democracy', *New Media Society*, vol. 11, no. 8, (2009), pp.1287-1305, p.1294

Users can also question political life, holding to account the actions or mistakes of political figures. Bahraini bloggers in 2007-8 such as AlMannai not only helped disseminate political ideas, but questioned the political capacity of MPs in the newly created parliament, criticizing their lack of 'ability to compromise and … knowledge of the political game' whilst others like Merlin called them 'amateurs … still learning what it means to be in parliament, what it means to have rights and responsibilities'.[133] Another blogger, AlHussaini, criticised the failure of MPs to engage in real political discussion by pointing out the overwhelming focus on 'moral' issues such as a ban on pork, rather than environmental or political concerns such as the quality of air.[134]

The Importance of Discussion Space in Transitioning Societies

The open forum of the blog provides discussion space for issues that are not part of the established political discourse. Simultaneously, it encourages active and engaged participation in a dialogue with a wide spectrum of users. This is especially important in transitioning societies, where fundamental political and constitutional issues are being decided upon in spite of the lack of an open or inclusive public sphere for discussion. The debate which raged on the blogosphere in Egypt surrounding whether to vote 'no' or 'yes' in the constitutional referendum in March 2011 indicates a promising trend towards a wider, inclusive dialogue on political issues:[135] it allowed proponents or opponents to meet and to hone their arguments and opinions in discussion with one another, so that the terms of the debate shifted from the traditional pro- or anti-stability discourse towards a much more nuanced discussion. This focused on whether the time was ripe to rewrite the constitution rather than reinterpret it and the degree to which the proposed amendments went far enough.[136] Many proponents and opponents agreed that the army should be kept out of politics, but it was the more complex matter of how this could best be achieved that elicited the greatest debate. This is precisely where New Media's greatest value lies: alongside the sharing of political and cultural

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[133] Karolak, M., 'Civil Society and Web 2.0 Technology: a Study of Social Media in the Kingdom of Bahrain', *Arab Media & Society*, issue 13, (2011), pp.1-18, p.8

[134] Karolak, M., 'Civil Society and Web 2.0 Technology: a Study of Social Media in the Kingdom of Bahrain', *Arab Media & Society*, issue 13, (2011), pp.1-18, pp.8-9

[135] Khamis, S. & Vaughn, K., 'Cyberactivism in the Egyptian Revolution: how Civic Engagement and Citizen Journalism Tilted the Balance', *Arab Media & Society*, issue 13, (2011), pp.1-37, p.18

[136] 'Q&A: Egypt's Constitutional Referendum', 17 March 2011, *BBC News*, available here: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12763313, accessed 01/03/2012

views,[137] it offers the open and inclusive space where many people can engage with one another to talk about everything in cultural, political and social life and make comparative assessments.[138]

Inclusive Space, Inclusive Dialogue

New Media has offered the capacity for society to engage in discussions which are 'uncommon' off-line, so that 'strangers from across the ideological spectrum' discuss issues ranging from arranged marriages to homosexuality in the comment boxes below female blogs.[139] Crucially, studies have found that not only does New Media make 'male-female collaboration' possible on social concerns that might have been considered 'women's' issues, but that, as one blogger put it, 'Men find women's blogs very interesting, probably as a clue to what is going on in our minds.'[140] Blogs and comments thus encourage users to try to get into the mindset of the other, perhaps even to 'personalise' or at least humanise the other, almost because they hold an oppositional perspective which the user wishes to understand. The most crucial aspect of New Media lies in the interaction of oppositional positions within the virtual coffee-house where inclusive dialogue takes place: One Northern Irish blogger who discusses the conflict on his 'Slugger O'Toole' blog commented that 'much of the debate on Slugger is about the clash of diverse opinion. People fight. Rarely is there agreement, and indeed, we actively encourage people not to compromise but rather to hone their arguments by adhering to the golden rule: play the ball and the not the man'.[141]

In discussing their diverse opinions publically, users are engaging with one another democratically. Offering an open and inclusive discussion space which allows expression of oppositional positions is crucial to the prevention of an escalation of opposition and the polarisation of society. It is arguably the lack of agency, the lack of a

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[137] Otterman, S., 'Publicizing the Private: Egyptian Women Bloggers Speak Out', *Arab Media and Society*, issue 1, (2007), pp.1-17, p.2

[138] Fealty, M., ''Slugger O'Toole': The New Media as Track Two Diplomacy', in Popilkowski, J. & Cull, N. (eds.), *Public Diplomacy, Cultural Interventions & the Peace Process in Northern Ireland: Track Two to Peace?*, (Los Angeles: Figueroa Press), pp.89-98, p.95

[139] Otterman, S., 'Publicizing the Private: Egyptian Women Bloggers Speak Out', *Arab Media and Society*, issue 1, (2007), pp.1-17, p.3

[140] Nora Younis, in Otterman, S., 'Publicizing the Private: Egyptian Women Bloggers Speak Out', *Arab Media and Society*, issue 1, (2007), pp.1-17, p.3

[141] Otterman, S., 'Publicizing the Private: Egyptian Women Bloggers Speak Out', *Arab Media and Society*, issue 1, (2007), pp.1-17, p.97

capacity for self-expression which breaks down discussion and polarises society: in some cases this can lead to violent social and civil conflict. In the New Media arena where '[c]itizens share, discuss, provoke, and argue with each other',[142] people actively engage in an inclusive dialogue which helps to develop a democratic approach to social, cultural and political life in its focus on pluralistic discourses and increased civic engagement. New Media thus has great potential in the development of a democratic culture.

Potential Outcomes

As we have seen, discussion and inclusive dialogue are key components in the move toward social peace and the development of democracy. One way to encourage this could be for governments and organisations to recognise the positive capacities of New Media, perhaps even to take advantage of some of the initiatives by engaging in similar activity. One option, in order to encourage wider public engagement in the political process and to ensure an inclusive dialogue, could be to attempt to crowdsource ideas surrounding particular issues employing social media such as Facebook and Twitter to encourage users to present their opinions. These could be tracked using Hashtags to source relevant comments.

The problems of trust in government intentions remain relevant. However, the more often that such an initiative is taken without repercussions for those that contribute, the more that people may wish to engage actively within the framework of these initiatives in the future. Furthermore, when sufficient trust has been built up, governments and organisations may wish to follow the lead of the digital Diasporas in establishing a digital conference on social and cultural issues through the use of livestreaming technology,[143] and through employing Twitter (or local equivalents) to allow users to pose questions and post opinions anonymously in a mass peer-to-peer open table discussion. A panel of experts and/or politicians could thus directly interact

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[142] Goode, L., 'Social News, Citizen Journalism and Democracy', *New Media Society*, vol. 11, no. 8, (2009), pp.1287-1305, p.1294
[143] Livestreaming is the process in which users can view an event online real time, through the use of webcam or video technology on a particular website: this allows mass-communication and involvement in an ongoing event if comment boxes and twitter feeds are integrated into the webpage where the event is livestreamed.

with a diverse set of opinions concerning a specific issue, whilst users can interact with one another to discuss issues openly and inclusively. By doing this, Governments and institutions could show that they are willing to engage in an open and inclusive dialogue with its citizens, encouraging wider public engagement in political, social and cultural life. This would help develop a democratic culture.

Conclusions:

New Media has no inherent transformative capacity and, by itself, will not inevitably promote the development of democracy. Alongside a wider social transition, however, New Media has great potential in helping the establishment of new platforms for wider public engagement and the development of constructive, inclusive dialogue about a diverse range of social and political issues. As we have seen, New Media faces many challenges, not in the least due to the current limited nature of internet penetration and the trend towards excessive legislation which curtails its capacity for genuinely open debate.[144] The approach in this paper has considered a wider definition of New Media in order to broach a more sophisticated analysis of the capacities of New Media through linking the on- and the offline.

The capacity of New Media lies largely in the fact that it is a non-hierarchical, networked space in which individuals can interact with one another: almost by virtue of participating online, users are engaged in a conversation with one another, allowing the spread of new ideas as well as the exposure to different opinions.[145] The image of the coffee-house has been particularly effective in describing the online environment created by diverse content:[146] users converse about a range of subjects, some seemingly banal, others more overtly political, through comment boxes, blogs and social media like Facebook. It has allowed wider participation in and dissemination of previously hierarchically organised areas of society: users can thus break the monopoly of the traditional media not merely over the news, but also over films and music.[147]

New Media has also been seen to have the potential to develop civil society and through the development of such an arena distinct from official, governmental forms of

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[144] See Chapter 1 Section 4
[145] Khamis, S. & Vaughn, K., 'Cyberactivism in the Egyptian Revolution: how Civic Engagement and Citizen Journalism Tilted the Balance', *Arab Media & Society*, issue 13, (2011), pp.1-37, p.4; Schmidt, E. & Cohen, J., 'The Digital Disruption: Connectivity and the Diffusion of Power', *Foreign Affairs*, 89, (2010), p.75
[146] Goode, L., 'Social News, Citizen Journalism and Democracy', *New Media Society*, vol. 11, no. 8, (2009), pp.1287-1305, p.1294
Loader, B. & Mercea, D. 'Networking Democracy?', *Information, Communication & Society,* vol. 14, issue 6, (2011), pp.757-769, p.759; Aly, R., 'Rebuilding Egyptian Media for a Democratic Future', *Arab Media & Society,* issue 14, (2011), pp.1-7, pp.1-7

organisation, to help in the transition of society away from authoritarianism which has penetrated all walks of life deeply in many of the countries in the MENA region.[148] One of the major challenges faced by transitioning societies tends to be that traditional forms of control are employed whilst the wider public harbour a tendency to wait for approval and vote for stability over change.[149] Thus, engagement with political and social issues through blogging, filming, commenting or even merely watching alternative media on YouTube may allow for a shift away from authoritarian culture, changing the choice set from docility for security towards activity for development: it thus encourages a more pluralistic conception of society.

New Media is particularly effective with regards to the issue of social visibility which is a crucial component of the resolution of social conflict and the development of democracy.[150] New Media can help to make visible and recognisable the presence of minority and marginalised groups within society.[151] An essential precondition to the resolution of any social or political conflict is the recognition of the issues faced by minority groups and the presence of citizen journalists monitoring discrimination, or crowdsourcing incidents of violence and sexual harassment has certainly forced society to confront issues which may otherwise have been obscured or ignored.[152] Through the prisms of the Copts in Egypt and Women in Egyptian society, we have seen that the recognition of sectarian and sexual violence problems within society is crucial to development of democracy. Moreover, the New Media have been at the forefront of these issues in attempting to change and challenge dominant discourses which seek to ignore legitimate self-expression and the existence of a problem in the first place. Self-referential, dominant gendered narratives which help perpetuate not only the issues

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[148] Wanis-St. John, A., & Kew, D., 'Civil Society and Peace Negotiations: Confronting Exclusion', *International Negotiation*, 13, (2008), pp. 11-36, p.16; Haddad, L., 'Arab Media: Revolving Doors of Censorhsip', *Alakhbar English*, 11th January 2012, available here: http://english.al-akhbar.com/content/arab-media-revolving-doors-censorship, accessed 01/03/2012; Sayigh, Y., in lecture, 'One Year On: The Challenges of Democratic Transition in the Wake of the Arab Uprisings', 25 January 2012 at Chatham House, pp.3-4
[149] Sayigh, Y., in lecture, 'One Year On: The Challenges of Democratic Transition in the Wake of the Arab Uprisings', 25 January 2012 at Chatham House, pp.3-4.; Loveluck, L., 'The Importance of History and Process', *TheWorldToday.org,* January 2012, p.21-23, p.22
[150] NGO interviews Report Anadolu Kültür 'Capacity Building for the Effective Participation of Civil Society towards the Solution of the Kurdish Issue', 5th December 2010, p.4, available here: http://www.hakikatadalethafiza.org/Cust/UserFiles/Documents/Editor/Faaliyetler/NGOInterviewsReport.pdf, accessed 01/03/2012, p.4
[151] See Chapter 2
[152] See Chapter 2

faced by women daily, but also the hierarchical and patriarchal structure of social life[153] are increasingly challenged in blogs by men and women alike, and the conversation which occurs on blogs is slowly changing the reaction to similar incidents.[154] There are great hopes for a wider change in the light of recent political changes. Governments may wish to take some part in the online discussion, at least to signal that these issues ought to be recognised socially as part of the development of democracy. The establishment of a logging website along the lines of Harassmap might be an important starting place, in order to first collect information about daily discrimination of minorities and to get individuals to contribute towards the solution.

Wider Public engagement in the solution of social problems is an essential component of democratic development. Authoritarian systems frequently seek to marginalise the individual in the name of the whole which can lead to stagnation and frustration: the individual must either be docile or otherwise find alternate spaces in which to express themselves.[155] Those used to engaging online in open discussions with a diverse group of people may be more likely to engage in such discussion offline, whilst those who actively participate online are arguably already doing so offline (in the sense that a filmmaker who uploads their footage to YouTube must necessarily be physically at the event). The greatest attraction of the online world lies in the fact that active citizens can become 'a part of the conversation'.[156]

The New Media can also help in what has become a crucial part of the democratic process: engagement in legitimate self-expression. In conflict societies, legal and legitimate expression of individual identity *within* the framework of a national identity is crucial to opening a dialogue and ending the conflict.[157] Youth, who characterise a

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[153] Aly, R., 'Rebuilding Egyptian Media for a Democratic Future', *Arab Media & Society,* issue 14, (2011), pp.1-7, p.2

[154] See the reactions to the 2007 attacks in the online community: see Otterman, S., 'Publicizing the Private: Egyptian Women Bloggers Speak Out', *Arab Media and Society*, issue 1, (2007), pp.1-17, pp.6-7

[155] Iskander, E., 'Connecting the National and the Virtual: Can Facebook Activism Remain Relevant After Egypt's January 25 Uprising', *International Journal of Communication*, No. 5, (2011), pp.1225-1237, p.1227

[156] Goode, L., 'Social News, Citizen Journalism and Democracy', *New Media Society*, vol. 11, no. 8, (2009), pp.1287-1305, p.1294

[157] NGO interviews Report Anadolu Kültür 'Capacity Building for the Effective Participation of Civil Society towards the Solution of the Kurdish Issue', 5th December 2010, p.4, available here: http://www.hakikatadalethafiza.org/Cust/UserFiles/Documents/Editor/Faaliyetler/NGOInterviewsReport.pdf, accessed 01/03/2012 , pp.2-4

large portion of Arab societies are largely unrepresented by existing political systems,[158] make up the majority of the online community: they have found an alternate space within which their perspectives, opinions and most importantly their own self-representations can be expressed and discussed. Moreover, within this space which has global access, new ideas can be disseminated and discussed and positions effectively formulated, in light of the lack of other public spheres for self-expression. Individuals can not only engage with each other but also with the key issues at hand using hashtags to crowdsource ideas and disseminate opinions globally. Most importantly, New Media allows individuals 'to imagine their relationships with the world differently', to 'put individual[s] ... at the centre of their own narratives in ways that challenge previous iterations of official Arab or Islamic cultures and personal identities'.[159] Through providing an 'essential sphere for dialogue',[160] New Media helps individuals to challenge proscriptive discourses which limit individual agency and allows participation in the conversation which forms cultural and social discourses. This allows individuals to challenge these discourses and develop new inclusive and democratic discourses. Governments and organisations may wish to take advantage of some of the initiatives enacted by groups who use New Media: one option is to employ this media to crowdsource ideas surrounding a particular social issue using hashtags to collate and collect the information. At a later date, it may even be possible to hold a digital conference in which users can pose questions and express opinions online to a panel of experts of politicians who livestream their responses. Simultaneously, users could engage in a mass peer-to-peer discussion based on inclusive dialogue and active participation in political and social life.

New Media offers alternate space in which inclusive dialogue can be take place, allowing for the development of a strong civil society based on wider public engagement and the discussion of key and often invisible issues. When put in the context of a wider, practical transition of society, New Media may be an indispensable

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[158] Iskander, E., 'Connecting the National and the Virtual: Can Facebook Activism Remain Relevant After Egypt's January 25 Uprising', *International Journal of Communication*, No. 5, (2011), pp.1225-1237, p.1225

[159] Elseewi, T., 'A Revolution of the Imagination', *International Journal of Communication,* no. 5, (2011), pp.1197-1206, p.1200

[160] [160] Iskander, E., 'Connecting the National and the Virtual: Can Facebook Activism Remain Relevant After Egypt's January 25 Uprising', *International Journal of Communication*, No. 5, (2011), pp.1225-1237, pp.1225-7

tool which can be employed to challenge dominant discourses and escape the authoritarian trap. Furthermore, during the process New Media empowers citizens to participate, engage, comment and monitor, thus encouraging a healthy civil society and the development of a healthy democracy.

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